2018

Philosophy of Power and the Mediation of Art: The Lasting Impressions of Artistic Intermediality from Seventeenth Century Persia to Present

Shadieh Emami Mirmobiny

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PHILOSOPHY OF POWER AND THE MEDIATION OF ART: 
THE LASTING IMPRESSIONS OF ARTISTIC INTERMEDIALITY 
FROM SEVENTEENTH CENTURY PERSIA TO PRESENT

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Submitted to the faculty of 
The Institute for Doctoral Studies in the Visual Arts 
in partial fulfillment of the requirements 
for the degree 
Doctor of Philosophy

May, 2018
Accepted by the faculty of the Institute for Doctoral Studies in the Visual Arts in partial fulfillment of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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“Do we need a theory of power? Since a theory assumes a prior objectification, it cannot be asserted as a basis for analytical work. But this analytical work cannot proceed without an ongoing conceptualization. And this conceptualization implies critical thought—a constant checking.”

— Foucault

To my daughter Ariana, and the young generation of students in the Middle East in search of freedom.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I owe a debt of gratitude to a number of people, without whose assistance and support this dissertation project would not have taken shape and would not have been successfully completed as it was. First, I would like to express my thanks to my dissertation director, Dr. Ali Anooshahr, whose knowledge and expertise were a guiding light throughout the writing process. His patience, as I worked through the difficulties of the research, allowed my work to flourish and unfold in an organic way that facilitated the intertextualization between the three fields—history, art history and philosophy—that I had undertaken in this study.

This project had a challenging start; however, the advice I received at our preparation seminars at Brown University, particularly from Dr. George Smith and Dr. Simonetta Moro, as well as the critical feedback offered by my examination committee, were instrumental in bringing into focus what was most important in this project. My sincere thanks to Dr. Simonetta Moro, Dr. Chris Yates, and Dr. Michael Smith for raising the critical questions that helped me plan out this complex and difficult work. I would also like to express especial thanks to Dr. Michael Smith, under whose keen supervision I began this research.

No research project can be successfully completed without the ability to promptly access the necessary sources. I am grateful to IDSVA librarian, Laura Graveline, whose outstanding support in finding some of the more difficult-to-find sources, crucial to my work, made the sleuthing part of the research more pleasurable. I would also like to thank Mr. Mehdi Hazeghazam from the Iranian-American community, who generously gave me access to his personal library of books in the Persian language, including the most recent published materials that were significant in bringing this project’s thesis thread to the present time.

My heartfelt thanks to my fellow adventurers, cohort ‘12, particularly members of my study group, Gale Richardson and Deb Bouchette, for their presence and contributions that enriched our interactions with the material tremendously. I am especially grateful to Deb for the stimulating conversations and exchanges that kept me going and thinking when the challenges of my research slowed me down.

And last, but certainly not least, I would like to thank my husband, Hossein Mirmobiny, for bringing to my attention a number of key exegetical texts that were most advantageous in this study. His continuous love and support sustained me throughout the entire course of study at IDSVA, and his encouragements made the hardships of becoming a student again, while taking care of the family and teaching, endurable.
ABSTRACT

Shadieh Emami Mirmobiny

PHILOSOPHY OF POWER AND THE MEDIATION OF ART:
THE LASTING IMPRESSIONS OF ARTISTIC INTERMEDIALITY,
FROM SEVENTEENTH CENTURY PERSIA TO PRESENT

This is a phenomenological study of patriarchy through the examination of its genealogy as it relates to/parallels with the creative process. I argue patriarchy, while itself a product of human creativity, has artificially elevated itself to prominence, and as such, has dominated and shaped subjectivities to its own end. It has done so by undermining individuality necessary for establishing the foundation of a more democratic form of government in the region of the Middle East. In this democracy, a dynamic balance and equity is envisioned between the subject and community.

Therefore, this study is concerned with the power of imagination, in the broad sense, encompassing all creative endeavors that shape the subject. It focuses on the relationship between subjecthood, freedom and the infusion of Neoplatonic ideas with iterations of Islamic principles manifested in art and philosophy serving patriarchy. This study is predicated on the idea that the exploration of art and subjectivity can uncover the hidden, implicit power relations between humans and the creative process, and it relies upon the philosophy of power to establish a theory that aims to reach beyond what Foucault developed.
Further, it intends to highlight the issue of “gap” in general, and the gap in particular that existed between the major Islamic text/principles—a variation of the Platonic “gap”—and the ideas/actions that have unfolded to this day but have never been questioned. The objective of this study is to create a space in which the Middle East and the West, each through its “other,” can recognize the importance of the process of the formation and preservation of the individual within a collective subjectivity. Finally, this research through a new theory aims to make more visible the current movements underscoring the individual subjectivity in the Middle East and to work toward protecting and preserving individual rights.
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We are convinced, we know, that in a culture everything speaks: the structures of language impose their form on the order of things. This is merely another version (a fruitful one, to be sure) of the axiom of the sovereignty of discourse, which classical iconography already took for granted.¹

— Michel Foucault

This study is concerned with the power of art and subject formation. It focuses on the relationship between subjectivity, freedom and the infusion of Neoplatonic ideas with iterations of Islamic principles manifested in art and philosophy serving patriarchy. Similar to what Edward Said accomplished in his Orientalism—bringing to our attention the outer-colonial element and its impact on the collective subjectivity of the Middle Easterners—I suggest, although from within the Middle Eastern culture, Neoplatonism has colonized subjective consciousness, negating the independent state of the subject in favor of the collective consciousness. I argue, therefore, the West is not the antithesis to the Middle East, but that one should look within to locate the antithesis. I am conscious that, because this thesis focuses on philosophical theories, it may be seen as “idealistic.” Nonetheless, philosophy more often than not, particularly when involving power, is translated into formulas that shape real life experiences. Such is the incorporation of Neoplatonism, into art, philosophy, religion, and culture of the Middle East that has had concrete and tangible products; however, it has always been seen positively and hence never been critically investigated. In this project, I have developed a critical discourse that centers on the power and knowledge that is constructed through art, in its broadest sense (which encompasses patriarchy/Neoplatonism), in a process that impacts social practices, influential in shaping subjectivities and defining the interrelationship between the subjects.
To accomplish this task, I was compelled to highlight the “gap” that existed between the major Islamic text/principles—a variation of the Platonic “gap”—and the ideas/actions that have unfolded to this day, but has never been questioned. When Plato crafted the republic as a system (Book 9), he established a rule predicated on a “gap” between the “real” and “illusion,” or the “pure” and “impure,” centered on his interpretation of the “divine.” I suggest, contrary to what Plato argues, this “illusion,” is not in the realm of experience/senses, rather it must be sought in what humans create, including in Plato’s own work.

Within his system, consequently, Plato engendered an alterity in the artists (Republic, Book 10). Aristotle, in response to Plato, argues for the usefulness of the arts in the republic (Poetics 3). Therein he believes the arts provide an appropriate space for the purgation of emotions (i.e. impurities) such as “fear” and “pity” through “rhythm” and “song,” a process he calls catharsis (Poetics xxxviii). Therefore, Aristotle deems a purpose for art in the republic. As a result, art becomes part of the instruments of political power. According to Michel Foucault “techniques of power” (1990 [1978]: 11) impose themselves on the formation of the subject and result in subjugation (92). Julia Kristeva, argues that through this purification the abject is taken back to the pre-language stage. She deems the “repetition” (i.e. “rhythm” and “song”) in the poetics as “an external rule” that aims to fill the Platonic “gap . . . between the body and soul […] [and] arranges, defers, differentiates and organizes . . . [but] no longer is meaning” (Kristeva 28). Plotinus conceals the Platonic “gap” by unifying both the “intellect” and “matter” with the “One” in his philosophy (Fourth Ennead, eighth treatise); consequently, it results in the collapse of the space between subject and object, a precondition to abjection (Kristeva 17-18). Keeping in view the role of art in subject formation and philosophy inspired by Neoplatonic thoughts infused with interpretations of Islam, the question I ask is: why has it been nearly impossible for
democratic movements to take root in the Middle East and to foster individual rights and freedoms?

This investigation, therefore, is predicated on the premise that there is a common thread between the major Western philosophical thought—particularly as manifested in the German Idealists—and the philosophy infused with iterations of Islam, both derived from the art and philosophy of Platonism and Neoplatonism. On this assertion, the arts served patriarchal powers by rendering subjects submissive and unifying them into collective subjectivities such that they acquiesce to those powers.

Whereas they may appear as mere opposites, the West and the Middle East have much in common in their foundation, not the least of which are the patriarchal paradigms that developed and consolidated over time through art and philosophy. I am aware of the fact that the utilization of the binary terms “West” and the Middle East” is problematic and that they imply a binary and arbitrary division, subject to continuous criticism. Nonetheless, the very point I have stressed here is that they overlap, both in art, culture and philosophy. However, the process of subject-formation in them took place differently, therefore bringing each patriarchy out of sync with the other. Whereas many philosophers, such as Kant, Schiller, Hegel and Heidegger (i.e. German Idealists) have viewed art as a path toward “freedom,” the impact of art as a ‘power’ influencing subjects to submit to patriarchal might lay beyond their concerns. It is Foucault who addresses power and its entanglement with subjectivity; however, he does not show that power is implemented through works of art by transforming individual subjectivity into a compliant, collective subjectivity or into a cultural ego.

Therefore, contrary to the views of philosophers like Hegel, who saw “the source of works of art . . . more free than nature” (Lectures on Aesthetics 5), art has not paved the way
toward freedom for the people of the Middle East. In that region, art works have been viewed as a source of pride, a sign of civilization—in other words, as the “light of centuries” (Agamben 2009 [2006]: 45); yet, my interest lies in the “shadows” cast from that light, which is to say how such art alters subjectivities toward capitulation to dominant powers. Finally, I assert that it is only by the exposure of the intermedial “gap”—the gap between the text and image, or between the text and actions—that the dominant power structure, with a single interpretation, can be disrupted and allow art to prompt questions, promote divergent thinking, and initiate creative ventures toward change.

The intertwining of art and power has a lengthy history, and the region of the Middle East in particular is exemplary in this respect. There are numerous illustrations that, for instance, depict the ruler with symbols signaling his divine connections. A prominent and popular subject of painting from the Middle East, instrumental in forming collective subjectivity and coinciding with the time period of interest here, is that of the figure of the Prophet in the story of Mi’raj (Ascension of the Prophet). In this image Prophet Mohammad is depicted as veiled, traveling through the layers of heaven, and through it the Safavid sufi-king could claim Divine connection without ostensible transgression beyond the boundaries of the faith understood by consensus. Constructing such an image was facilitated through employing the authoritarian iterations of Islamic thoughts offered by mystics such as Ibn Arabi. The unifying power of the image, however, concealed the gap that existed between the original Koranic text on the Prophet’s ascension and the embellished version created by Ibn Arabi, thus externalizing the legitimacy of the ruler’s position in the eyes of his subjects.

I argue that such art and philosophy did not lead to individual freedom, but rather to group or “herd mentality,” (Nietzsche 2002, 86) easily constrained and controlled by
patriarchal states. Expounded through Jacques Derrida’s “Truth in Painting,” the “supplemental” and “parergon” produced the “interest” on which the agents of patriarchy capitalized to solidify the subjects collectively under the rule of the king. Comparatively, what occurs in contemporary Europe (contemporary to the Safavids) brings out the “gap” between the texts and the artistic interpretations of them, underscoring its significance in the development of individuality resulting in the European Renaissance. Conversely, the power of the art that developed in Persia, concealed such a gap (the cost of unity sought by patriarchy) that did exist between the text and images produced, and it never materialized into a question that would foster individual responses.

The power of art in subject formation and manipulation is not restricted to the production of works of art; indeed, image making often begins with the destruction of symbols of the preceding powers alongside the elimination of adversaries. Early in October 2015, the military group ISIS “pulverized” the Arch of Triumph in the ancient city of Palmyra in Syria. In fact, this was not their first attempt at the destruction of art and architecture from antiquity; earlier, their invasion of the museum of antiquity and the destruction of its statues made the headlines to much expressed sadness and disbelief of not only the experts in the field, but of many around the world. Still, there are other examples. Another radical group, the Taliban, in March 2001 used dynamite to demolish the centuries-old standing statue of Buddha in Bamiyan, Afghanistan that had already been defaced in earlier times. Given the fact that art in the region has been held as a source of glorification and identity, such acts of erasure that have always taken place across history raise the question of: how does art help bring power and majesty to one group, while its appropriation or obliteration create an image for another? What role does art play in shaping who we are...
and in determining what we (as humans) become a subject to? What links art to social justice (or lack thereof) on the one hand, and to individual or collective subjectivity on the other?

Despite living amidst centuries’ worth of art and architectural works in most cases, a great number of people in the world suffer from injustice and tyranny. This study is concerned with how creation, appropriation and destruction of works of art, which in my view includes philosophical ideas, figure in the process of forming an acquiescent or a radical subject. There have been, and still are, many great obstacles in the path toward what every free-thinking individual seeks in a society that offers equal opportunities to its members. Arguably, the greatest agency and hindrance in forming such a society has been patriarchy. Its power techniques, particularly through art, while enabling patriarchy to forge civilizations, have hindered sustainable equity in society at the cost of unity in favor of maintaining its grip on power (whether political, religious, ideological, etc.).

“Power techniques,” to quote Foucault, in their complex structures and network of relations, have been instrumental in promoting inequality and injustice, conflicts, mass elimination of the “other,” wars, colonialism, violence, but always implied, taken for granted, and their presence is almost never visible. Foucault argues that since the formation of the political structure, called “state, . . . [m]ost of the time . . .[it] is envisioned as a kind of political power that ignores individuals, looking only at the interests of the totality or, I should say, of a class or a group among the citizens.” However, it is the integration of the older systems (i.e. Christian institutions in the West), into a new political form that produces new, more complex “power techniques.” I submit that this task cannot be done without the creative endeavors, Thus, the critical study of the art can reveal such techniques, or any other cultural product, patriarchy espouses. Similar to Foucault, who writes persuasively on
“submission of subjectivities” within Western culture, I am interested in “creating a history of the different modes by which . . . human beings are made subjects” (1994 [1982]: 332, 327). Nonetheless, my interest rests within the Middle East and subject formation by way of art.

I propose that the inability to establish a genuine democratic rule in the Middle East is rooted in the lack (or absence of a recognition) of individuality, and free consciousness due to a long tradition of patriarchy (religious, political, colonial, etc.); consequently, the issue of what and where the “subject” is never comes up. The tradition of patriarchy in the region has maintained its authority by appropriating and building on dominant iterations of a range of artistic endeavors and philosophical thoughts—from antiquity, through the Middle Ages, to present time—that support and justify the “rule of One” as the rule of the “experts.” The objective of the art produced to support such justification, then, has been to unify a diverse population into a collective subjectivity and to undermine/eradicate any attempts at divergent or unorthodox thinking.

Patriarchy, while striving to unify, thrives in conflicts, and competition is an effective tool in its powerful hands to simultaneously eliminate its rivals and to arrive at its goal of domination and tyranny. The dark evidence to these conflicts is all around us: from the “Islamic State” conflicts in Iraq and Syria, to “Boko Haram” in Nigeria, and others. These crises demand our attention now (Agamben [2006] 2009: 39-54). I define such fusion, which relies upon conflict and competition, as an artificial union that pulls the acting subject away from its own genuine humanity-focused center and toward superficially imposed, false and fabricated unifying ideas wrapped and concealed as philosophy, or better said, as works of art. Therefore, whether in their construction, appropriation or destruction, works of art—as
objects or as ideas—are equally vital in this study that investigates art, power, and their relations to subject manipulation. Nonetheless, one cannot avoid but to view the art against the backdrop of current events and power struggles.

As the violence in the Middle East escalates, and the harrowing details about the rapidly unfolding events dominate the airwaves, our first reaction might be expressed in how we distinguish ourselves from the cultures of the Middle East as a way to put distance between ourselves and the atrocities committed in that part of the world (Orientalism 91). Today, the tendency has been to sum up our differences in our religious disagreements; we blame “their religion” as the source of violence that is taking place “over there.” Having stated this, the clues reaching us from the region, for example, in the self-claimed titles, like “Islamic State” or the “Islamic Republic of Iran,” do not help the matter either. This is evidence that even from within the Middle East, the adjective of “Islamic” is not perceived monolithically; therefore, to reduce the problem to one factor is to overlook a much bigger issue. I maintain the problem goes well beyond differences in religions or even a clash between civilizations rooted in the question of identity, as once was proposed by Samuel Huntington (Clash of Civilizations 20). Indeed, it is due to the competing ascendant iterations of common ideas, which can be seen in the manifested artistic productions (or destruction) that aim to artificially unify each side against the other: whether between the West and the Middle East, or even within the Middle East itself.

Now that severe enough damages have taken place by the radical groups, it is time to look closely at the complex nature of the conflicts and what lies beneath them, whether among Muslims themselves, or between Muslims and the West. This suggests a perspective that cuts through religious, political and economic issues to focus on deeper “relational events” behind what comes into view on the surface (Semblance and Event, 23-24). For that
reason, criticizing what appears as the symptoms (e.g. radicalized gestures and action as well as the violence) will not be adequate in either the understanding of what is taking place or finding a possible solution.

While I believe conflicts arise because of the economy of competition, as evident in numerous historical examples, and that they occur because powers aim to consolidate and establish their own domination over one another, albeit to the detriment of those subjected to it, I deem the issue of rivalry meriting a separate study. Therefore, the boundaries of this project are confined to the investigation of the development of subjectivity toward freedom as opposed to the domination of a collective subjectivity informed by a unifying idea—most likely represented through some form of artistic efforts —under patriarchal struggles. Nonetheless, it must be noted, the groups involved in the current conflicts in the Middle East represent subjectivities that were shaped by the old modes of patriarchy and subsequent colonialism, and they are now feeling threatened and struggling for their survival. In the face of the great Western adversaries, therefore, they are acting upon the old strategies and tactics of terror and destruction to show they are in control.

The striving to establish hegemonic status is a problem that engenders inequity, alterity, self-alienation and radicalization for those subjected to it by means of technologies of power (e.g., art and culture), and it feeds the never ending cycles of violence and injustice in the afflicted subjects and regions, ultimately, to the advantage of the hegemonic rule. Unless the subjects affected by the “polymorphous techniques of power” (Foucault 1990 [1978]: 11) are thoroughly examined and the inner workings of such techniques exposed, the influential Hegelian Master-Slave dialectic (Phenomenology of Spirit 111) leads us into a binary loop, each side entangled in a never-ending cycle of struggle with the other, promising
only the unequal relationship. In other words, the dialectic promotes competition between two predetermined and preset entities, with a finality waiting at the end. The result suggests two possible reactionary gestures as applied to the crisis at hand: one emerging from self-alienation that accepts and submits to the power in place, no matter how pernicious it is, and the other leading to the formation of the radical who moves/revolts to eliminate all those standing in its path to arrive at the position of power itself. These two mirror the afflicted subject by way of the production (in the former) versus the destruction (in the latter) of works of art, respectively. Further, they map well onto Aristotle’s concern with “fear” and “pity” threatening the republic, for which he prescribed art as a cathartic channel (Poetics xxxviii), and about which Kristeva wrote “of purifying the abject . . . that catharsis par excellence called art” (17). In either case, the damage done under such dynamisms to the subject and subjectivity deserves a closer investigation. Lastly, subjectivity is affected by abjection that first becomes ingrained into the subject, and then, in becoming displaced, it manifests itself in horrific reactions when threatened (Kristeva 1). We have witnessed these reactions in seemingly random acts of violence against the “other.” Kristeva notes the return of the subject to the point of unity in abjection when the “I” is threatened or when the space between subject and object collapses.
There is contemporary significance to the philosophical thoughts from antiquity, as the search for “justice and happiness” remains an ongoing objective for all to this day. Plato’s argument that holds the “philosopher-king” as the only one capable of uniting the political authority with the knowledge of what lies beyond—in other words, the realm of the “real”—constructs a governing formula and a system of socialization and education for the republic (Republic, Book 9). To address Heraclitus’ flux, Plato had maintained a space between the “real” and the “illusion” (Republic 202-207), with the “real” as “form” being above any changes. In Poetics, Aristotle uses that space to purge the destructive emotions through catharsis (Poetics xxxviii). This space collapses altogether when Plotinus argues for the derivation of everything—from intellect to matter—from the “One” (IV.8), but unlike Plato, he does not “express contempt for all that is of sense” (ibid). In Plotinus’ view there is unity between all creation and the “One,” which makes the return to the “One” possible (VI.9). From here, there is a short distance to Neoplatonism in Christianity and Islam—religious institutions already immersed in Greco-Roman heritage and patriarchy—to which realizing that unity becomes the principle objective. The transcendental “Truth,” the higher state of being, or “pure self-consciousness” and unifying with it sets the path toward Idealist philosophy, exemplary in the works of German philosophers. A remarkable clue leading to what facilitates the re-emergence of the idea of unity, transcendence, and the configuration of power in nineteenth century Europe lies in G. W. F. Hegel’s work, particularly as articulated in his Master-Slave dialectic.

In the Phenomenology of Spirit ([1807] Oxford 1977), Hegel’s Master-Slave dialectic is predicated on the elevated idea of “self-consciousness.” Hegel lays out his argument by
first pointing to a “supersensible world” and how consciousness supersedes the senses (e.g. seeing or hearing) in order to achieve, through a dialectic process, that self-consciousness (79). “A self-consciousness,” Hegel argues, “exists for a self-consciousness . . . for only in this way does the unity of itself in its otherness becomes explicit for it […] [w]hat still lies ahead for consciousness is the experience of what Spirit is” (110). In other words, consciousness, striving to “experience the Spirit,” is compelled to progress toward growth, unity, and pure self-consciousness (ibid).

Hegel, himself being conscious of history (v), develops the Master-Slave model to articulate the power relationship that is projected to make the transcendence happen in time. However, he presupposes the elevated status of the “pure self-consciousness,” in line with his Christian belief, and does not reveal what makes the “master” what he is. He states: “[s]elf-consciousness, is . . . simple being-for-self, self-equal through the exclusion of itself from everything else” (113). What is its essence and important to it is the “I,” and that which is “other” to it becomes “unessential.” What defines the position of the master, I argue, is a constructed illusion (not unlike what Hegel himself has done), an idea, predicated on Plotinus’s idea of the “One.” To the unity (of the pure self-consciousness) and the diversity issued through Plotinus’s hierarchic theory of Hypostasis, and in response to the ever present issue of power (evident in history), Hegel replies by condensing it into the master-slave formula with a dialectic, yet predetermined relationship. A “consciousness” either struggles for the highest status, or submits and serves by working through its attachments (Hegel), i.e. purifies itself (Plotinus). As a result, Hegel’s theory has not only explained well the conflicts between the rising and falling powers in history, but also has projected a plan for aspiring contemporary and future powers (i.e. colonialism, capitalism, etc.). Within this dialectic, he explicates a conflict in terms of encountering another “self consciousness.
If the “other” is another self-consciousness, there rises the problem of “recognition.” Hegel notes: “[e]ach [self-consciousness] is indeed certain of its own self, but not of the other, and therefore its own self-certainty still has no truth” (113). Here, Hegel brings up the issue of recognition (i.e. unity or submission) and what it entails: “the relationship of the two self-consciousness individuals is such that they prove themselves and each other through a life and death struggle. […] And it is only through staking one’s life that freedom is won” (114). It is the demonstration of a “pure being-for-itself” that reveals absolutism and independence, and he who has not done so, even though he may be deemed as a “person, . . . he has not attained to the truth of this recognition as an independent self-consciousness” (ibid). According to Hegel, in the process, the former maintains its multiplicity, yet remains independent and “for-itself,” and the latter, becomes dependent and “not purely for itself but for another . . . consciousness in the form of thinghood” (115). Therefore, this unequal relationship translates into master and slave, respectively (ibid). In order for the dialectic progression to work, this relationship must be maintained. Hegel distinguishes the slave as the being that is “fearful[,] . . . for it has experienced the fear of death.” This is a consciousness that is dependent upon the master, and at the same time exists with attachments in the material world (117). However, through “obedience,” and “work” he “rids himself of his attachment to natural existence in every single detail, and gets rid of it by working on it” (117-119). It is worth noting that, in this “work,” the slave is associated with technology and craft. While this may be seen as “aesthetics” under analysis in this study, I argue, the slave takes the idea (i.e. form) from, and produces for, the master. The formula convinces the subject (slave) that his freedom is through this work. Through the fear of the master, the slave obtains “wisdom;” nonetheless, his “consciousness is not . . . aware that it is a being-for-itself.” It is through the work that the slave becomes aware of his true self (118).
Thus, the point in linking art and freedom becomes the counter argument in this study. Although, Hegel continues by elaborating on how eventually the slave becomes conscious of his self-worth, this formula is problematic, if Hegel’s discourse is viewed as power technique.

Viewed through the lens of Foucauldian “power techniques” and “discourse,” the topic of power and its distribution/relation is key in the development and formation of subjectivity. Foucault states: “[i]t soon appeared to me that, while the human subject is placed in relations of productions and of signification, he is equally placed in power relations that are very complex” (*Power* 327). However, the study of power relations without the deconstruction of what Foucault calls the “apparatuses”15—specifically those relying on the production of the arts, seems incomplete. After all, how can one address gender, racial and religious inequities without full disclosure of the implications of power mechanisms? Mindful, then, of power relations grounded in history, this study concentrates on a particularly significant historical period in a specific location within the Middle East. A case study of the founding of the Safavid dynasty in early sixteenth century Persia will serve to demonstrate how an emerging patriarchal power moves to validate itself upon new iterations of established and innovative artistic, religious and philosophical products. To legitimize and solidify its existence, such a power organizes and implements apparatuses, with repercussions well into the future of that region. I particularly selected this era, because it is a formative instance in the history of the country we call Iran today. Moreover, it is exemplary in instigating systematic shifts while unifying an empire, all patriarchal characteristics with which this project is concerned. The models the Safavids employed are not unlike what Louis Althusser calls “Ideological State Apparatuses” (*Lenin and Philosophy* 96) that become the active agents to maintaining their political domination. According to Althusser:
If the ISAs ‘function’ massively and predominantly by ideology, what unifies their diversity is precisely this functioning, insofar as the ideology by which they function is always in fact unified, despite its diversity and its contradictions, beneath the ruling ideology, which is the ideology of the ruling class (98).

These shifts, just as they might be manifested in traditional battles, struggles or even revolutions that challenge the power bases on the surface, are likely also to appear in new artistic movements that unify subjects collectively under a new banner. Such manifestations, I assert, are in reality unavoidable to patriarchy's survival as an ideology, but are fortuitous for our purpose, as they lay bare the inner workings of patriarchal structures and strategies. This helps us not only to understand better present conflicts, but also to foresee future strategies implemented by later forms of patriarchy, for just as with ‘discourses,’ patriarchy, too, changes with time.

The emergence of the Safavids serves as a marker, because in addition to being a critical point in the history of Iran as an independent state, it is directly linked on the one side, with the Neoplatonic philosophy from antiquity, and on the other with the present form of government currently in power in that country. In this study, whereas I believe the emergence of the Safavids and the compulsory conversion of the population to Shi'ism played a key role in retaining the political sovereignty of the country we know as Iran today, I submit it was the pre-Islamic Neoplatonic model (unified in image and word) that the founding leaders/philosophers emulated (imitated) and infused with iterations of the religion of Islam to suit their purposes. Similar to Foucault in The Order of Things (xxiv), I am interested in the “history of resemblance” and the “Classical thought,” but from the
standpoint of art and subjectivity. But Foucault’s criticism of power seems to not include himself, according to Jean Baudrillard ([1977] 2007).

Watchful of the scholar’s power, I am further interested in Baudrillard spot-lighting how “Foucault’s discourse is a mirror of the power it describes” (Forget Foucault 30). Subsequently, recalling what Nietzsche notes in measure of man against man (2006, 45-50), I echo Baudrillard in raising the question whether creating power techniques can be extended to include the intellectual domain, hence explaining why Baudrillard argues Foucault did not go far enough in his theory of power.18

I am hoping this study can exemplify an opportunity of knowing through alterity rather than excluding or opposing the “other,” a process that took place in Continental Philosophy in Europe and opened up philosophy from dialectic to dialogic.19 Similarly, I aim to open up a space through an intermedial and intertextual study of philosophy in alterity. The longer the clearing across time, to use Heidegger's term, the more opportunities for the examination of patriarchal power techniques before the moment when absolute power re-establishes itself once again and conceals its secrets in order to prolong its hold.

To be sure, the institutionalization of patriarchy across time and space is a confirmation of the fact that the accumulated wealth and the power status had to be maintained and protected. This was true then as it is now. The striving to compete is intimately interwoven with what Heidegger calls “enframing,” thereby allowing more power to be gained systematically. This raises the question of whether an “authentic” versus an “inauthentic” exercise of power is possible, which I will continue to ponder the question. Although Heidegger notes this tendency as the modern “technological frame work . . . [being] inherently expansionist” (Basic Writings 309), I emphasize the broader interpretation
of “the ordering of . . . both nature and man [as being an] attempt to enclose all beings in a particular claim—utter availability and sheer manipulability” to include the pre-modern eras as well. This systematic operation has been formulated and reformulated, integrated and appropriated, however, among different cultures in various regions including the Middle East well before modern times. The detrimental consequence has been the historic conflicts in the form of wars, economic and colonial competitions, and population displacement, among many other challenges.

The subject formation affected by domination and superiority is significant when studying colonialism and the role of art, for instance, as propaganda. This investigation will require the insight of scholars such as Fanon and Said, both of whom specifically dealt with the issue of alterity and the subjectivity of the people systematically treated as inferior through various cultural means. Fanon expresses his concern and objective as “to get man to admit he is nothing . . . and get him to eradicate his narcissism whereby he thinks he is different from the other ‘animals’” (2008, 6). Said states his concern regarding the binary division of “men into ‘us’ (Westerners) and ‘they’ (Orientals)” in another way: “such divisions are generalities [i.e. collective] whose use historically and actually has been to press the importance of the distinction between some men and some other men, usually toward not especially admirable ends” (1979, 45). Inspired by Said, Linda Nochlin examines a European “Orientalist” painting in the essay “Imaginary Orient.” Nochlin analyzes “Snake Charmer” (late 1860s) by the French academic artist Gerome, in which she argues by depicting the Middle Easterners in a negative light, the Orientalists romanticized and exaggerated to highlight the distinctions between themselves and the Middle Easterners in order to justify their own superiority and domination over them. This view illuminates the colonial intentions behind such works, and in turn, I suggest, perpetuates the cycle of
despotism in regions affected by colonialism, for the threatened colonialized and humiliated individual is an operative-in-abjection par excellence; his/her (or their) subjectivity is shaped, among other things, through the coded visual and literal forms asserting authority that constantly oppress and suppress him/her by way of “order.” In Foucault’s view such order is implied and created by our interactive experiences. He states: “Order is . . . that which is given in things as their inner law, the hidden network that determines the way they confront one another, and also that which has no existence except in the grid created by a glance, an examination, a language” (*The Order of Things* xx). This, I argue, extends the power of ordering to creativity and objects of art.

Taking Foucault's power theory further, I expand the power relationship between humans to include the subject/object relationship in order to explore how the power imbued by a dominant ideology into objects, specifically art objects, affects subjectivity with deleterious consequences. Evoking Nietzsche's view on artistic expression as a manifestation of “will to power” (*WtP* 419-422) in “man [who] can place himself so far distant from other men that he can form them” 22 (*WtP* 419), I assert, through the self-alienation brought on by the misinterpretation of such “forming,” the subject will either conform or become radicalized. Either way, the damage to subjectivity is inevitable.

In the Middle East, in tracing back the systems of patriarchy through the philosophy of Neoplatonism that was absorbed through Christianity by the dominant religion of Islam, we see the production of art, philosophy, poetry, architecture, and literature. Such productions manifest Neoplatonic thoughts and mainly mirror and serve a centralized power that aimed to *unify* and promote a collective subjectivity. 23 In other words, Middle Eastern and Western philosophical foundations overlap. 24 Where my interest lies is in the
development of individual versus the collective subjectivity. For instance, rallying behind patriotic or religious ideals creates collective subjectivity for both the West\textsuperscript{25} and the Middle East,\textsuperscript{26} and has unified around a common objective as testified to by recent history. I maintain, however, unlike the West, the Middle Eastern regions have not successfully experienced a healthy and independent subject formation. The reason may be due to patriarchy’s unifying strategies and power techniques, whether through art, literature, philosophy, religious or political ideals, without a chance to examine closely such works or techniques. As a result, the Cartesian “I” has not fully emerged.\textsuperscript{27} Such holds true in the case of the sixteenth century emergence of the Safavids.

In the case study of the Safavids, royal art produced during the sixteenth-seventeenth century Persia contains evidence of links between such visual imagery and Greco-Roman philosophy. These images, then, aimed to facilitate the theorization of a foundation for the new political system through a sort of rationalization and unification that was necessitated by the incoming Safavids. This, I suggest, is when the ideological blueprints for the contemporary government in Iran were drawn, for “the relationship between rationalization and excesses of power is evident” (2000, 328). This association confirms the claim that earlier religio-political models, which were continuously re-appropriated by all who sought power, were not appropriated exclusively by Christian power-bases, but by non-Christians, namely Muslims, as well.

Similar to Foucault’s “relational” method, I suggest the patriarchies-in-opposition fit within the same common grounds of various struggles, as Foucault explains. Their conflicts are “transversal struggles,” that is to say they are inclusive of all regions. Moreover, the objective of the struggle is the “power effects as such,” or how the power is manifested.
There are also “immediate struggles” that happen to receive news coverage, so to speak, because of their immediacy, as opposed to seeking what may perhaps be the main culprit. Further, there are “struggles, which question the status of the individual” in how the individual is governed. Additionally, there are “struggles against the privilege of knowledge,” and finally as denial of identity (2000, 211-212). Foucault thus sums up three types of struggles: against domination, against exploitation, and against one’s own tendencies to become subjugated. To this, I will add the struggle against subjugation to dominant manifestations of artistic and philosophical works, which is fundamental in a free society but lacking in despotic systems. It is noteworthy that Foucault’s three types of struggles can potentially turn into hegemonic move themselves, but Foucault seems to be silent about it. Nonetheless, these struggles are all applicable to the case study I will examine, but perhaps most significant for our purpose are how power is manifested (through art), the governing of the individual (the rule of One), and the denying of identity (the compulsive conversion).

I reference Iran's example at a particular moment in time, in which a major religio-political shift took place. It brought with it a new dynasty of kings claiming spiritual divine associations, a new wave of artistic productions, and a new branch of the religion in Shi’ism. Studying this shift uncovers the appropriation of some of the earlier patriarchal paradigms, such as Plato's “rule of the guardians” and Aristotle’s art serving the state. The synthesis between Plato's “rule of the guardians” and Plotinus's bridging the physical and metaphysical realms through the material world hierarchically, as well as the eclectic weave of Neoplatonism itself, has informed the foundation of the politics in the region to this day.

The appropriation (mimesis?) of Neoplatonic formulas by the Safavids and beyond (including the present Iranian rule of jurisprudence) demonstrates the contemporary
relevancy of an ideology disseminated through Neoplatonism, namely the theory of “Universal Man” utilized to *unify* under patriarchy. One of the subjects in art reflecting this theory is seen in the figure of Alexander, with which the Safavid sufi-kings identified not as a historic figure, but rather as the mystic *Iskandar*, who is visiting a hermit depicted in a sixteenth century painting.\(^{30}\)

Whereas the appropriation of the theory of “Universal Man” and its infusion into Islamic thought took place often by Muslim scholars, I will reason Islamic principles are in conflict with it. This is due to the fundamental distinction between the Creator and the created proposed by Islamic First Principle, *al Tawhid*. To accomplish these tasks, the study of the medieval Andalusian sage and mystic, Ibn Arabi (1165-1240), who further articulated the theory of “Unity of Existence” and gave it visual form through his writings and poetry, is a key component of this research. Ibn Arabi’s iterations that are in excess to the original text map well onto Derrida’s *parergon* and the Marxian “interest,” and that “excess” benefited the position of those in power. By adding details from his imagination (itself influenced by Greco-Roman aesthetics), Ibn Arabi embellished the original Koranic text in such a way that it generated “interest” in the particulars for the patriarchy in power; the imagery in turn inspired further literary aspirations. This ‘interest’ as manifested through works of literature or visual art then, I propose, powered by its Neoplatonic unifying attributes, creates a commodity that was exploited by the patriarchy through what Marx, in economic context, calls “the mystical character of commodity” (*Capital* 164). Ibn Arabi’s work, when projected through Marx’s theory above, becomes intriguing. Marx states: “the mysterious character of the commodity-form consists therefore simply in the fact that the commodity reflects the social characteristics of men’s own labor as objective characteristics of the products of labor themselves, as the socio-natural properties of these things” (*Capital* 163-165). Analogously,
when a mystic sage, who claims he was given permission from the Prophet in a vision to write (*Bezels of Wisdom* 45), adds details to the account of the event of *Mi ’raj*, his status and the work he creates transform the original text into a commodity that ultimately benefits the Safavid kings.

These concerns, viewed through the lens of power, can expose the power relations established not just through the traditional, institutional means of power (state apparatus, juridical oppression), but also through the unifying, mutual inspiration of art and philosophy that promoted collective subjectivities. I aim to go further by suggesting that patriarchies need such unification and collective subjectivities to ensure their successful rises to power, when clashing with other patriarchies vying for the same position at the top. To maintain the position of power/domination, authority and *unity*, patriarchy has had to obtain a hegemonic role by implementing three main strategies: to eliminate, to absorb and make everyone else conform (results in collective subjectivity), or to marginalize.

The case study of the Safavids in this project exposes the inner workings of a patriarchy at a critical moment in history, which I call a patriarchal “event.” The notion of “event” is also taken up by Brian Massumi in *Semblance and Event*. If we understand “event” as relational, that is the coming together of a series of other “goings-on,” then it becomes necessary to examine the interrelation of things within an event, the culmination of which brings about a new manifestation, in this case, a new regime of patriarchy.

Through artificial unifications the collective subject formation undermines the individual subjectivity, that is to say, it curbs the efforts toward individuality and personal freedoms in a society. While patriarchy cannot be eradicated, we can however become aware of it and consequently keep it in check. In its position of absolute power, patriarchy
conceals all the “gaps,” whether between text and image or text and text. Such “gaps” can lead to individual and diverse understandings or expressions, in other words, dialogism. For this purpose, I consider art and even philosophy as concrete documents that can trace back to patriarchy how it achieves such concealment and manages to maintain its position of power. Hannah Arendt notes how “the ‘imperishability’ of works of . . . art” connects us with the past (Arendt 2005, xxvii) and by extension, I suggest with each other. This study can then be extrapolated toward other institutions with patriarchal underpinnings, and through a network of conscious minds (Agamben's *Coming Community*), free consciousness can be fostered and maintained toward achieving an egalitarian society.

Tied together with the issue of subjectivity is the ever so significant notion of responsibility. A critical problem with collective subjectivity is the lack of accountability that accompanies it. Here, there is no oversight to set limits to radicalized actions. Arendt demonstrates how such limitlessness can distort even “Kant’s notion of duty” (2005, xxii), or how “personal responsibility” becomes subjugated by “acts of state” or “superior orders” (2005, 37). In other words, such “acts” or “orders” give importance to collective rather than individual subjectivity. However, the investigation of this issue must be postponed to another opportunity.

The first chapter, “Where is the Subject?” provides a definition of the subject as considered in this study, and addresses the problem in the contemporary conversations on the issue of modernism with regards to the Middle East. What scholars mostly have suggested thus far, even those who are mindful of the issues of “subject and object,” does not go beyond the economic, political, religious, or historical perspectives in their formulations. By intertextualizing philosophy and art against the backdrop of selected historical events, this
study, however, intends to draw attention to the issue of “subjectivity” as engaged with “art” and “artistic production” in the broadest possible sense necessary to develop a new critical discourse, through which the current conflicts can be analyzed from a different vantage point.

“Subjectivity: Informed by a Long Tradition of Patriarchy,” in chapter two addresses the preliminaries by offering definitions of patriarchy, but emphasizing the genealogical definition, which entails placing the father at the top of the family/tribal structure, a move stemming from the historical necessities that brought about the treatment of the first “other,” women, as objects. This chapter includes Frederick Engels’ accounts of “the development of the social institutions of the patriarchal family and private property” (Engels 8). A brief historical investigation into the roots of patriarchy is followed by the role of the arts from the early cities to the time of Greeks and the Romans. It then transitions into Christianity and the development of Neoplatonic and mystic thoughts; this investigation will focus on how art contributed to an artificial unification (e.g., through depicting “divine connections” of the authorities) that led to collective subjectivity benefiting those in power every time. The issue of equity will usher in the emergence of the third Abrahamic religion, Islam, and its relationship with the other two, Judaism and Christianity, with particular interest in the intertextualization of imagery, word and power. The examination of power dynamics within Judaism and Christianity with regards to the notions of intermingling of religion and power as a sure way to unify the population are considered. Furthermore, the infusion of Greco-Roman art and Persian artistic and governing models serving the early years of Islamic dynastic rules will be of particular interest.

The study of Ibn Arabi, who became known as the “son of Plato,” is noteworthy here, not only because of the association with the ideas from antiquity, but also due to the visual,
descriptive nature of his writings and their far-reaching influence to the time of the Safavids and the Ottomans. This chapter will end with a study of Islam and the issue of “other,” from the Christian West and Muslims’ interactions with non-Muslims that were later to shape the European Renaissance. The emphasis will be on how ideas from ancient Greece, Rome, and Christianity that had been integrated through the works of Islamic philosophers/scholars (some in Spain, others in Baghdad) were now being considered by the Europeans during the Renaissance (a sort of knowing through their “other”), but all supporting patriarchy.

Chapter three will consist of the case study, the rise to power of a new governing class, empowered by the already established Neoplatonic iteration of Islam. The background to the incoming Safavids is noteworthy; they are closely tied to mystic Sunni tradition, yet the founder, who is a Sufi Sheikh’s (spiritual leader) grandson, begins a campaign of compulsory conversion of the country to the Shi’ite branch of Islam. By doing so, he creates an Ideological State Apparatus, predicated on the Shi’ite tenets, to prevent Persia from being absorbed into the great Ottoman rule. This ISA was fortified by the migration of the Shi’ite religious scholars from the Amel Mountains (Jabal Amel) in Southern Lebanon, thereby changing the socio-religio-political fabric of the region, the ties of which still exist today.

What role art played in this apparatus has its roots in Ibn Arabi’s major theory, the “Unity of Existence,” and in his articulation of the “Universal Man” that proved instrumental in unifying subjects. These thoughts transpire from Neoplatonism and form a foundation for the sixteenth and seventeenth century Persian philosophers, theorists and artists. However, their discrepancies with the principle text were never questioned. Examining the arts of this era in comparison to previous art movements reveals the specific political agenda of the Safavids, which was to underscore their divine connection. This chapter will also include a detailed analysis of the Safavid royal patronage and art work that unified their subjects. Finally, a
preliminary and comparative look at the development of German Idealism and an exploration of the issue of subjectivity and its Neoplatonic roots, as well as a discussion on one of the most influential Neoplatonic Persian Philosophers, namely Mūlā Sadrā wraps up this chapter.

When René Descartes wrote his famous “cogito ergo sum” in 1637, the Safavids were at the tail end of their military conflicts with the Ottomans, and four years after Kant wrote his renowned *Critique of Judgment*, another new dynasty, the Qajar dynasty, was taking shape through the violent military and retributory campaigns of its founder. When we map these events as reflected through artistic activities, the significance of the study of subjectivity becomes evident. This includes Kristeva's notion of abjection and Lacan’s interpretation of Freud on the subject of violence and the extreme in turning against the “other ‘I’” (Lacan “The Subversion of the Subject,” *Hegel and Contemporary Writings* 219) in connection with the threatened ego/self. The artistic and psychological dynamics of Shi’ite Safavids, and Sunni Ottomans, with respect to their different iterations of Islam play an instrumental role in how their patriarchal rivalries took shape and influenced subject formation among their own people and among themselves. However, while the investigation of "abjection" vis-a-vis artificial unities in this context is significant, it must be taken up in a future project.

There is great significance in the examination of the three influential regions in the Middle East, Qajar Persia, the Ottoman Turkey and Egypt, during the time of modernization and reform. The examination of their art reveals, on the one hand, the nature of the rivalry between them and their art as source of pride and identity, and on the other, a competitive European economic engagement, which will be discussed in turn in chapter four. Among topics of special interest are the state of the subject during the reformation as the fruits of
technology offers glimpses of individuality and criticism. This chapter thus, will address the pressures that were building upon the contacts (military and diplomatic) already made between the West and the Middle East, particularly Persia, that brought with it new technology, and education. It demonstrates that the external centers, around which European ideas and identities had gathered, were rapidly changing.

There were two obstacles in the path of achieving social and political reforms in Persia. These were the Shi'ite doctrine and the intrusion of the great powers. There was earlier a change in the ethos of the society when the country had been converted to Shi'ism, which viewed political power different from the Sunnis. Whereas the Sunnis would accept an unjust rulers and seek to legitimize their position of authority (a sort of an artificial unification), the Shi'ites refused to follow such rulers; instead, they considered their religious leaders the only authority to follow (another type of simulated unity). Moreover, due to the intrusion of foreign powers (e.g., Britain and Russia), the Persian government was reluctant to expand trade and communication relations with the European States. Islam (or whatever iterations of Islam that suited the power base) held the country together, and the monarch was seen as the ruler who was supposed to defend the "Islamic land" against the non-Muslims.

The notion of emulation is a significant part of this argument, because it is both a destroyer of the space and a dynamic that requires an unequal relationship. Foucault’s insight draws our attention to the fact that “[t]he relation of emulation enables things to imitate one another from one end of the universe to the other without connection or proximity: by duplicating itself in a mirror the world abolishes the distance proper to it […] However, emulation does not leave the two reflected figures it has confronted in a merely inert state of opposition. One may be weaker, and therefore receptive to the stronger influence of the
other” (1994, 20). The emulation of the Western systems of education and artistic training had already led to the sending of groups of young students to Europe. It brought about the founding of the first Art school in 1851 in Tehran.

This investigation will demonstrate how ideas from antiquity that strengthen patriarchy have endured and served as paradigms for various groups, informing subjectivities that are inclined toward an external center and away from individuality and individual thinking. In other words, there is no equivalence here for the Cartesian thinking “I.” However, this is certainly not the whole picture. Chapter five highlights the interconnected intellectual exchange with Muslims that indeed manifests itself through the theory of optics and proves critical to the European Renaissance. These thoughts continue to promote the goals of eminence and prominence among the male-dominated political and religious powers in contemporary times. But, most important is how the collective subjectivity has informed human history through conflicts and psychologically damaged and undermined individual subjectivity. The early Orientalism and colonialism are then examined through pertinent philosophical theories, as they map onto the dynamics of a mobilized economy, and the systematic way through which identities and subjectivities are shaped. Fanon’s and Said’s discourses on colonialism are of particular interest here, because a greater part of this history involves how subjugation of humans by other humans has been justified through the collective consciousness. This chapter will also address the concept of taqlīd, a variant technique of mimesis that ensured the continuity and unity.

Following the collapse of the Qajar dynasty, and the rise to power of the Pahlavi dynasty’s founder, Reza Khan, further modernization of the country got underway, which included the founding of the country’s first university and establishing the cross country
transportation and railroad lines. However, the modernization was met with the disapproval of the religious camp. Suppression of the competition and the movement toward a nationalistic, centralized power had already begun by Reza Khan, who upon later assuming the position of monarchy, became known as Reza Shah. Thus, the final chapter will commence with a brief history that links the early modernist movements to nationalism and government sponsored reforms. While there had been grass-root movements since the Constitutional Revolution to implement women’s education, social, economic and other health reforms, the centralized power of the king eliminated such initiatives in order to establish its own programs (e.g. the emancipation of women from the veil in 1936).

Following the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, nationalism as an ideology was promoted by the European powers, since it ensured the fragmentation of the Middle East. It was also coincided by the crack-down on the opposition and the tightening of personal freedoms by the autocratic rules. The more actions taken by the secular, centralized government toward modernizing their countries (as with Iran and Turkey), the unhappier the religious class, who had grown and penetrated every aspect of people's lives. Strategies were adopted by the secular government to keep the clergy in check. The tensions between the religious and secular authorities turned them into each other’s “other.” By mid-nineteenth century, “imitation” (taqţīd) is implemented into religious rituals and everyday activity, fostering collective subjectivities and discouraging individual agency on matters of faith. The broadening of power base from religion to political, even to the economic domain, eventually made the clergy class very influential and powerful with great access to organizing and mobilizing the population, particularly those in the central commercial market (bazaar).\textsuperscript{34} The steps taken by the government disadvantaged domestic merchants against the foreign merchants and investors, and this, among other undercurrents, was one of the grievances of
the merchants, associated with the central market merchants, pertinent as we approach the 1979 revolution in Iran. Thus, the support from domestic merchant class for the religious leaders was growing.35

The final chapter will focus on the formation of the Islamic Republic of Iran emulating the Platonic formula, but appropriated as the ‘rule of jurisprudence’ rather than rule of philosopher. The mapping of the formation of collective subjectivity from the Constitutional Monarchy to Constitutional Revolution, from democratic movements toward Modernity, and what role the arts played in this equation, is the objective in this chapter. The investigation of how the religious authorities eventually step out from under the shadow of the secular government (the king) and finally achieve political rule after the revolution of 1979 in Iran is of great significance here.36

An evaluation of the philosophical constructs that supported the founding of a patriarchal government based on religious perspectives will also be of interest here, and can be traced back to the migration of the Shi‘ite clerics from southern Lebanon. The formation of a political system predicated on a specific reading of Islam enables patriarchy to maintain a position of power and domination over everyone else. Studying the works of ideologists like Ali Shari‘ati (Iran), with his new definitions critical to the revolution of 1979, provides evidence to yet another philosophization and politicization of Islam once again facilitating patriarchy’s absorbing and unifying powers. Shari‘ati actually distinguishes his interpretations from what he calls "the Safavid Islam" that he saw as a courtly endeavor, and argues in support of the independency of Islam (according to how he interprets it) from the court. The point was capitalized on by the clergy vying for power with the monarchy, leading up to the revolution of 1979 in Iran.
The gradual process of complete takeover and elimination of the “other” groups (particularly those who had helped bring the class of clergy to power in an initial move toward unity) and restricting individual rights and freedoms soon ensued. Constant restrictions and tight control over every aspect of people's lives, particularly in artistic expressions, became dominant. Foucault’s notes on revolution (2000, 449) and his letter to Mehdi Bazargan, the prime minister of the Islamic Republic at the time (2000, 439), will also be addressed. This chapter will end with the intertextualization of some of the current philosophical theories.
CHAPTER ONE

WHERE IS THE SUBJECT?

And . . . where, strictly speaking, am I? My historical coordinates are altogether different [...] The sequence of historical periods means nothing to me [...] I talk about history, think about it, do my best to understand its mechanisms and linkages, . . . [b]ut during this short period, which marks my formal entry to a time of ever-broadening horizons, on the psychic level I have continued to inhabit a meta-history in which the before and the after are confused with the after and with post-history. And between the two, I find myself postponing an End without which there can be no Beginning. 37

— Daryush Shayegan

In September 2014, the Berlin-based research program, Transregional Studies Forum and the Beirut Orient-Institute, organized a conference (Summer Academy) held in Beirut, Lebanon, under the title “Language, Science and Aesthetics – Articulation of Subjectivity and Objectivity in the Modern Middle East, North Africa, South and Southeast Asia.” 38 In this conference, the three domains of Aesthetics, Science and Language were structured for focused discussions. Each group argued the effects of Western-led modernist movement on the three fields in the region, with the emphasis that “the notions of subjectivity and objectivity, the individual and the subject [are] . . . key concepts of modernity.” 39 Aside from a series of lectures that were offered at the Beirut Orient-Institute, and the American University of Beirut, all conference formats (i.e. research project presentations, plenary sessions, etc.) “were restricted to [the] Academy participants.” 40 While many “key notions,” such as “center/peripheries, global/local,” modernity/tradition, and translation/mistranslation were “intensely addressed,” the discussion on the “subject” itself seemed conspicuously absent from the program.
This study, with particular attention to the Middle East and Iran, sets out to develop a critical discourse that centers on the power and knowledge that is constructed and dispersed through art, in its broadest meaning—which includes and deems patriarchy and Neoplatonism as artistic endeavors—in a process that impacts social practices, influential in shaping subjectivities and defining the interrelationship between the subjects.

In this chapter, following a brief definition of the term “subject,” it is necessary to address the problem of Neoplatonist philosophy, particularly with regards to “beauty,” as developed through multi levels of “translations” and “interpretations.” The issue of “translation,” is of great interest in this project, for it is through the process of translation that attempts are made to cover the “gap” between meaning and text/art work. Keeping the “subject’ in view, I will then present selected current conversations on the tension between the advent of modernism and the Middle East region. This is to demonstrate that, despite being conscious of the key components in modernism, the acknowledgement of the notion of the subject as shaped by many factors, especially art—that which this project is engaged with—remains beyond the scope of contemporary theorists’ concerns with regards to the Middle East. Despite the current discussions signaling an awareness of the modern theories among the thinkers in the Middle East, the criticism revolves around the usual suspects: politics, religion, legal matters, etc, and not inclusive of the issue of the subject. This necessitates the present study that underscores the opening-up of a space for the “subject” as an independent, but critical component of modernity, pertaining to the region, without excluding the other concerns. Prior to entering the conversation, however, it is imperative to define the term “subject,” pivotal to this study.
DEFINING THE SUBJECT

While it is not clear when the use of the term “subject” entered the humanities initially, the traces of it in the history of the Western philosophy lead one back to Kant, and farther to Descartes. But, for the purposes of this project, the term “subject” references that which has been shaped or constructed by variety of external elements. At the core of this subject lies ego, which is distinct from “subject” (Lacan [1966] 2004), and is the product of misrecognition, but critical in the process of individuation for the child (Lacan 1978). The ego is predicated on “being there” (*Dasein* in Heideggerian terms), and its subjectivity takes shape around it as moving through time and space. Once the subjectivity expresses itself independently, it manifests individuality. Therefore, while intimately related, these terms are not meant as interchangeable in this study, but rather they each represent a specific phase. The issue of subjectivity is perhaps the initial stage and the interface with the subject’s surroundings, including the subject’s “other,” which is why it is critical to address.

There is very little argument on the recognition of the formation of the subject as a crucial component in modernism. What is unclear is how the notion of the “subject” is either taken for granted or is curiously absent from the conversation, when discussing modernism in the Middle East. Moreover, the ambiguity of the term has contributed to this challenge. The term “subject,” connotes a grammatical agent (as in the one who acts), yet it is also legally and politically charged (as in being a subject of a ruler/king); while it is active (as in “subject of”), it can be passive (as in “subject or subjected to”) as well.

The matter of language can complicate things further still, as noted by the French linguist, Emile Benveniste (1902-1976). He argued for a distinction between the one who “speaks” and the existence at the core of the very subject who performs the act of
“speaking.” Therefore, contends Benveniste, it is the language that first shapes the subject. Benveniste states: “It is in and through language that man constitutes himself as a subject, because language alone establishes the concept of ‘ego’ in reality, in its reality which is that of the being” (Benveniste 224). He notes the problem in the self-declaring Cartesian cogito and further explains: “Consciousness of the self is only possible if it is experienced by contrast. I use I only when I am speaking to someone who will be a you in my address” (ibid). This definition appears to complement what Lacan argued in his “mirror phase” theory, for the child “seems . . . to manifest in an exemplary situation the symbolic matrix in which the I is precipitated in a primordial form, prior to being objectified in the dialectic of identification with the other, and before language restores to it . . . its function as subject” (Lacan 2004, 4).

I submit, then, being a subject to oneself, requires passing through the stages of “misrecognition” to form the child’s ego (Lacan), to shaping the subjectivity through language (Benveniste), connecting with others, and becoming aware of this process, with the “being” intact at the core as the primordial necessity. Although becoming conscious of one’s subjectivity is extremely critical—that which has yet to fully materialize in the Middle East and has been the source of imbalance between it and the West—it is not an end. In other words, my objective is not merely to remain in a fixed position within the Humanist view of subjectivity that subsequently requires dignity and rights for the individual alone; it is to also underscore what proceeds this development, more in-line with the continental philosophers (e.g. Derrida, Foucault), who advocate decentralization of power and, as best articulated by Deleuze and Guattari, connecting to one’s “other” in a more organic way.
The question may be raised with respect to a comparison between Europe/Christianity that has experienced reformation, and the Middle East/Islam that is struggling to reform. I am aware of the problem that is noted by Talal Asad (1993). In his *Genealogy of Religions*, Asad addresses the problem that through modernism, the West has created the impression that somehow there is more significance in studying its history of thought, in comparison with the history of non-Western, namely Middle Eastern regions. He notes:

It has sometimes been noted that peoples from non-Western countries feel obliged to read the history of the West (but not each other’s history) and that Westerners in turn do not feel the same need to study non-Western histories. The history of modern Western thought, for example, can be (and is) written on its own, but not so the history of contemporary Arab thought. One opposition between the West and the non-West (and so a mode of connection between them) is constructed historically by these asymmetrical desires and indifferences.

Asad, in contrast to Said’s theory in *Orientalism*, which argues that Western knowledge was a “systematic discourse” through which Europe has come to terms with its “other” (Said 1979, 3), draws attention to the importance of agency of the colonized (1993, 2). While Asad brings up a critical point, he does so as a collective consciousness, and the issue of the subject is eclipsed by his broad anthropological and historical concerns, particularly with respect to the role of religion. In his argument, Asad suggests that anthropologists should understand the West first, if they are to make sense of that which is imposed on the non-Western population in the name of modernity. For example, he approaches the problem “by discussing . . . two elements in medieval Christianity that are no longer generally accepted by modern religion: the productive role of physical pain and the
virtue of self-abasement” (1993, 2). Nonetheless, while he demonstrates the significance of knowledge and power, Asad seems to be more interested, not so much in the subject, but in the larger, encompassing issues.

The process of becoming subject to oneself, nonetheless, since the formation of the early cities, as I have suggested in chapter two, has involved the elements of “debt” and “fear” that motivated and impacted the fluctuation mixed with tension between the individual and the group consciousness. Stated differently, the fear of becoming a “subject or subjected to” the conquering power agencies (due to debt, for instance), frequently has given rise to a tendency toward a struggle for (or to join with) a superior position at the cost of individual consciousness, effects of which are still felt today. There is a gap between the subject and the issue of “individuality,” misunderstood in the context of mystic tradition (erfan) in the Middle East that this project is engaged with. Nader and Fereshteh Ahmadi in Iranian Islam: The Concept of the Individual (1998) is an example of such misunderstanding. What is perhaps best refracted in the work of Ibn Arabi and in his theory of Perfect Human (al Insan al Kamel), is a “subjectivity with considerable potential” (Vahdat 126), to which I will return in detail in chapter three.

Despite the significance of the topic of “subjectivity,” and what has formed and informed it in the Middle East, the discussions have, more often than not, steered either toward the direction of praising a glorious past, a sort of “regression toward an original mythology” in the region, or the consequences of modernity as imposed by the west, infringing on the region’s traditions. A significant component in the tradition within the Middle East has been the influential, however problematic, Neoplatonic philosophy.
THE PROBLEM OF NEOPLATONIC PHILOSOPHY

Generally speaking, there are three groups of philosophers under consideration in this study: philosophers who are preoccupied with creating systems (e.g. Plato, Hegel), and those who are focused more on the individual responses (e.g. Kant, Nietzsche). The third group searches for an intersubjective, dynamic balance between the two. Setting the third group aside for the time being, much of what constitutes the base of Western philosophy, is entangled in a tension: the tension between the two former groups. This tension is akin to the tension stemming from how one theorizes the relationship between the individual and the group; between content and form; particular and universal, or stated more broadly, how one finds one’s place within the larger scheme of things. Plato’s *Republic* aimed to create a system in response to what he saw as the Athenian democracy (people-power) having gone corrupt. This system received its authority and legitimacy from Plato’s philosophy on what he deemed as “good” and “ideal,” predicated on the idea of perfection beyond this world (*Republic*, Book 6 and 7). The theory Plato had imagined and crafted, could not tolerate other interpretations and competing views put forth through others’ imaginations. Therefore, Plato’s system, in promoting a centralized source of power (knowledge), required the expulsion of the artists (*Republic*, Book 10). In his re-interpretation of Plato’s philosophy, Aristotle argues for using the artists to create a “space” to purge from the community what would potentially be disruptive to the republic (*Poetics*, xxxviii). But, times of stability are often interrupted by periods of chaos for reasons beyond what the members of a community can control. Such times often leave people looking for answers by turning to an inner world. There are different names for this “world:” Plato calls it the “real,” others use terms such as “metaphysical,” “spiritual,” or see it as one with the Divine. It is not my intention here to negate such a “world,” but to emphasize the subjective nature of the language and
interpretations used when we describe it for each other. I argue, it becomes problematic, when such subjective knowledge, as real as it may be to the one who believes it, becomes form and imposed on others. This is the case in Neoplatonism.

Neoplatonism developed following the formulation of the highly personal and imaginative, albeit a hierarchical, philosophy of Plotinus. Plotinus (204/5-270 CE) was active during the Late Roman Period, (third to fourth centuries CE), “almost coextensive with one of the most disastrous periods in Roman history” (Russell, 284). Plotinus also suffered from ailments of the body, even “seemed ashamed of being in the body,” according to his pupil, Porphyry (Enneads, 1), which may have influenced his philosophy as evident in his teachings (Enneads, 2). Katharine Gilbert and Helmut Kuhn in A History of Esthetics also notice that Plotinus lived on easy terms with religious mysteries of purification flourishing in Rome and Alexandria at the beginning of Christian era[;] . . . he was a practical teacher in the busy heart of a complex stirring world (91).

“Withdraw into yourself and look,” states Plotinus himself, inviting all to “close the eyes and call instead upon another vision which is to be waked within you, a vision, the birth-right of all, which few turn to use” (I.6, 8-9). As still true today, during the times of crisis and the collapsing of the external support, when there is no place to turn to for reassurance, and as also later noted by Kandinsky, one is compelled to turn inward, at a “spiritual turning-point” (AiT, 86-87), which is necessarily and initially in the personal realm and indivisible from imagination, until it enters the collective consciousness through aesthetic manifestations. 51
One of the significant arguments in the *Enneads* is the role of “beauty,” to remind the absentminded of its essence (I.6.2). In fact the two are so intertwined that some have even argued “[o]ne of the best ways to begin a study of Neoplatonism is through a study of its aesthetics.” But, I believe, prior to tackling the aesthetics, or the concept of “beauty” in Plotinus’s *Enneads*, it is critical to explore the philosophical system put forth by Plotinus, through his pupil, Porphyry (*Enneads*, 1). It is not difficult to see the “valuation” system in Plotinus’s thought process; as a true Platonist, Plotinus, believes that there is a “real” world beyond the “illusion” to which we are exposed.

The map of the foundation of Plotinus’s philosophy is laid out in the Fifth Ennead (V.1). In “The Three Initial Hypostases” Plotinus begins by a question: “What can it be that has brought the souls to forget the father, God, and though members of the Divine and entirely of that world, to ignore at once themselves and It?” (V.1.1) Thus, he begins in the material world, the environs of illusion, that which is created, and progresses toward the “One”. He states:

Let every soul recall, then, at the outset, the truth that soul is the author of all living things, that it has breathed the life into them all, whatever is nourished by earth and sea, all the creatures of the air, the divine stars in the sky; it is the maker of the sun; itself formed and ordered this vast heaven and conducts all that rhythmic motion: and it is a principle distinct from all these to which it gives law and movement and life, and it must of necessity be more [honorable] than they, for they gather or dissolve as soul brings them life or abandons them, but soul, since it never can abandon itself, is of eternal being (V.1.2).
Plotinus identifies, therefore, in creation, there is a core (i.e. the Soul)—distinct from what it creates, although connected to the source—which takes its worth from that source, the “One,” and in turn, gives value to the “stark body . . . blankness of Matter, the absence of being” by “entering the material” turning it into “a living and a blessed thing” (ibid). But, unlike “the material body,” the Soul is unified, because “[b]y the power of the Soul the manifold and diverse heavenly system is a unit: through soul this universe is a God: and the sun is a God because it is ensouled” (ibid). Encouragingly, he then notes once one realizes this, there is not much farther toward God. He explains: “The Soul once seen to be thus precious, thus divine, you may hold the faith that by its possession you are already nearing God” (V.1.3). However, in his greater scheme of things, there is another step, because “Soul, for all the worth . . .is yet a secondary, an image of the Intellectual-Principle.” Therefore, the Soul, receives its value from the “Intellectual-Principle.” Just as speaking of reason is not reason, but only an image of it, “the soul is an utterance of the Intellectual-Principle,” in its entirety. For its perfection, “it must look to the Divine Mind, which may be thought of as a father watching over the development of his child born imperfect in comparison with himself” (ibid).

Despite imperfection, Plotinus believes there is “loveliness . . . [in] this world,” which “comes by communion in Ideal Form” (I.6.2). Plotinus attributes “a faculty peculiarly addressed to Beauty” as belonging to the Soul, nonetheless, it recognizes “the Beautiful” because it is “accordant with the Ideal Form” (I.6.3). There are “beauties of the realm of sense, images and shadow-pictures . . . that have entered into Matter—to adorn, and to ravish, where they are seen.” However, senses do not have access to the “loftier beauties . . . [that] the Soul, taking no help from the organs, sees and proclaims them […] [s]uch vision is for those only who see with the Soul’s sight” (I.6.4).
This beauty, Plotinus further argues, “induce[s] wonderment, . . . longing and love and a trembling that is all delight [...] and those only that feel the keener wound are known as Lovers” (ibid). Those who feel the difference between the worldly beauties, and “the beauty outside the sense, . . . [must] declare themselves” (I.6. 4-5). To further clarify, he then contrasts “beauty” with “ugliness,” to show that “Beauty is the Authentic-Existents and Ugliness is the Principle contrary to Existence,” which he equates to “evil,” thus “Beauty-Good and the Ugliness-Evil” (I.6.6). Ascending toward the “Good,” therefore, is

for those that will take the upward path, who will set all their forces towards it, who will divest themselves of all that we have put on in our descent: so, to those that approach the Holy Celebrations of the Mysteries, there are appointed purifications and the laying aside of the garments worn before, and the entry in nakedness—until passing on the upward way, all that is other than the God . . .(I.6.7).

In Plotinus’s system, this purification is justified because it unifies the “faculty peculiarly addressed to beauty,” endowed by the Soul, with the beauty that resides in material, that which we perceive, and more specifically, recognized by the artist. The beauty in the material form, argues Plotinus, comes from the “Ideal-Form;” this is what the faculty recognizes and with which unifies (I.6.3). In the Fifth Ennead, Plotinus further explains how this beauty is translated through the mind of the artist, already endowed with the “higher beauty,” and when the work of art is created, it is thus not in the material nor is it in the artist’s “eyes and hands,” but in bringing the two together, or as Plotinus puts it, “by [the artist’s] . . . participation in his art” (V.8.1). The implications in this deduction have been pointed to by Gilbert and Kuhn: “The beauty of the statue comes from the way it has been worked by the workman, rather than from the simple external facts of relation of parts and
color” (113). Nonetheless, the concern for shaping the subject due to this idea, rests outside their interest. They go as far as emphasizing the act of unity that takes place in the process. Gilbert and Kuhn state:

A product is dead and less than the artist; the artist is a particular man, and less than his art; the art is dependent on an external material medium and so is not self-sufficient; the creative act dominating Nature is alone self-sufficient. Here act and vision are one; color and shape arise together within the process (115).

Plotinus’s argument on “Beauty” solidifies the subject’s bind to his interpretation of the Divine through “the material thing [that] becomes beautiful—by communicating in the Reason-Principle that flows from the Divine” (I.6.2). This argument, elevates that which one (i.e. the artist) creates, above the “being,” itself and takes for granted all that is predicated on Plotinus’s interpretation of the “Divine.” Thus, there is a problem when one’s imagination or interpretation, perceived as principle, mingles with subject’s faith, and dominates or rules over others. But how does one’s subjective “truth” gain a superior position? There is an economy of debt at work in such a dynamic: the excess meaning/value given to what has been created (i.e. added interest) diminishes the being’s intrinsic worth, and due to lack of independent verification, one feels taken over by the perceived power. On this problem Nietzsche states:

All the beauty and sublimity we have bestowed upon real and imaginary things I will reclaim as the property and product of man: as his fairest apology. Man as poet, as thinker, as God, as love, as power: with what regal liberality he has lavished gifts upon things so as to impoverish himself and make himself feel wretched! His most unselfish act hitherto has been to admire and worship and to know how to conceal
from himself that it was he who created what he admired [...] When a man is
suddenly and overwhelmingly suffused with the feeling of power—and this is what
happens with all great affects—it raises in him a doubt about his own person: he does
not dare to think himself the cause of this astonishing feeling—and so he posits a
stronger person, a divinity, to account for it.56

It is not just the admiration of a “creation” alone, but also how there is power in the
interpretation, itself created, albeit within certain predetermined cultural guidelines and
concerns. Nietzsche recognizes the art that is created by way of this interpretation when he
states “Man as poet, as thinker . . .,” for who would deny himself of the “beauty,” Plotinus is
pointing to:

Withdraw into yourself and look. And if you do not find yourself beautiful yet, act as
does the creator of a statue that is to be made beautiful: he cuts away here, he
smoothes there, he makes this line lighter, this other purer, until a lovely face has
grown upon his work [...] When you know that you have become this perfect work,
when you are self-gathered in the purity of your being, nothing now remaining that
can shatter that inner unity, nothing from without clinging to the authentic man, when
you find yourself wholly true to your essential nature . . . (I.6.9).

Accordingly, Plotinus urges one to “withdraw into himself, foregoing all that is
known by the eyes” (I.6.8). If we consider “seeing” with one’s eyes an individual
act/experience (an act that in Lacan’s Mirror Theory leads to individuation), it then follows,
not surprisingly, that such outlook does not lead to the formation of the individual’s
subjection. Instead, one is enticed with ambiguous notions such as beauty and love—
subjective ideas that have turned into form—to become an “illuminati,” one whose claims of
enlightenment is unverifiable. Evaluation of the “beauty” as inferior to the “beauty outside of sense,” has implications: it means downplaying the lived-experience in favor of the imaginary and interpretative knowledge that is debatable.

Beauty and love are the lure, although reliant upon the Intellectual-Principle, which keeps Plotinus’s philosophical system together. Nonetheless, the system offers such exquisite beauty and potential for creative endeavors, that artists and thinkers alike have overlooked its problematic aspects. Gilbert and Kuhn note: “Plotinus makes Beauty both transcendent and immanent, and this strains to the breaking-point the logical consistency of his system. But, what is loss to logic is at least part gain to esthetics” (117). To be sure, the “being” in Plotinus’s value system remains hinged to the metaphysical center, the “One.”. This may explain how its interpretations generated, with ease, varied iterations in Christianity and later in Islam. The history of Western religious art is filled with numerous examples of Neoplatonic interpretations. Gilbert and Kuhn point out that Plotinus’s philosophy had far reaching influences “on later thought—medieval, Renaissance, and even modern” (117). One finds Saint Augustine nearly repeating word for word Plotinus’s description of the harmonious way in which everything endowed with beauty moves together (ibid).57 Such interpretations and literature spilled over during the systematic campaign of collecting and translating knowledge from the antiquity by Muslims. Following the translation movement in the ninth and tenth centuries, it is no surprise then that many of the Islamic geometric patterns—interpreted according to the permissible cultural paradigms—also reflect such harmony (S.H.Nasr 1992, 338). Therefore, to examine Neoplatonism in Islamic thought, one must return to the earliest instances of the formation of “Islamic philosophy” and its reasons.
Tracing back the notion of “Islamic philosophy,” in looking through any text on the history of intellectual thought in Islam, one comes across references to a very well-known text called “Theology of Aristotle.” Despite the title, this book is erroneously attributed to Aristotle; however, it offers a revealing clue to the formation of philosophical thought in the Muslim intellectual history. The so-called “Theology of Aristotle” is indeed the product of the translation movement that took place in the early medieval Baghdad, and “is in fact an Arabic version of parts of the *Enneads*” by Plotinus, with added “aspects of Theology that seem to be genuinely innovative and original” (Adamson 2002, 2). It became “the most important direct source for Neoplatonic ideas in the Islamic world.” This text informed many scholars, “from al-Kindi to al-Farabi and Ibn Sina (Avicenna) to the later *ishraqi* (Illuminationist) school.” This line of influence continued in Iran, as it will be discussed later in this study, to other Muslim thinkers, from al-Ghazali to Mulla Sadrā, Hajj Mulla Hādi Sabzevāri and straight to Iran’s revolutionary leader, Ayatollah Khomeini. What is the significance of this particular text?

Peter Adamson argues that the “Theology of Aristotle” came about to fill the gap in Aristotle for Muslims, by “providing extensive doctrines about the nature of God and eschatology.” This seems plausible since Muslims were clearly aware of two distinct schools in Greek thoughts according to S.H. Nasr. He states:

Muslims came to distinguish between two different schools, each possessing a distinct type of science: one, the Hermetic-Pythagorean school, was metaphysical in its approach, its sciences of Nature depending upon the symbolic interpretation of phenomena and of mathematics; in the other, the syllogistic-rationalistic school of the followers of Aristotle, the point of view was philosophical rather than metaphysical,
and its sciences were therefore, aimed at finding the place of things in a rational system, rather than at seeing, through their appearances, their heavenly essences.\textsuperscript{61}

The knowledge collected by the medieval Muslims from the antiquity was varied and often conflicting. One of the objectives of the translation movement was to produce a “unified” philosophy that reflected a cohesive empire (Adamson 2002, 3 and Gutas 29).

“[T]he growing insistence on the essential unity of philosophical truth, on the harmony between Plato’s and Aristotle’s doctrine . . . is indicative of an attitude of compromise which made philosophy fit to serve as a scientific interpretation of monotheistic and creationist religion.”\textsuperscript{62} This means that it became necessary to produce a philosophical theory that could also accommodate a political system, not to mention one that could respond to other sprouting intellectual activities due to the translation movement that challenged that unity.\textsuperscript{63} Neoplatonist philosophy brought into the mix the perfect ingredient that facilitated a Plato-inspired governing system.

Therefore, the translation movement in general, and the translation of the \textit{Enneads}, later known as \textit{Arabic Plotinus} in particular, albeit in parts, was “purposeful and systematic.”\textsuperscript{64} According to Dimitri Gutas, there were two paths of development, once the translation activities commenced: “first it expanded in the direction of scholarly precision and accuracy for the existing fields, and second into increasingly new areas and subjects considered worthy of translation” (116). It must be noted the translation and other intellectual activities in the region is often viewed as contemporaneous with the establishing of the city of Baghdad, however as pointed out by Gutas, the intellectual work predates the founding of the city, which indicates more of a continuity than a change as argued by Michael Morony (1984).
Morony’s argument is in agreement with the thesis in this study that the West and the Middle East are not in a binary opposition. He draws attention to the advent of Islam in “western Asia and northern Africa” not as “a watershed between the ancient and medieval histories of . . . these regions,” but rather a continuity (3). He deems “two major forms of continuity: direct survival . . . and continuity through transmission” (507). This brings into focus the institutionalization of pre-Islamic Arabia in Islam in the region (ibid). What is noteworthy here is the role of political power behind this institutionalization, as the incoming Abbasids were trying to solidify their rule.

In addition to “useful” knowledge such as astrology, astronomy and medicine (Saliba 2007), philosophy became a subject of interest, even though, “it was . . . a discipline for which there was the least amount of practical need,” as argued by Gutas (119). Nonetheless, very early on the rulers realized it was “socially relevant,” for it offered an opportunity to “legitimize” an ideology to rule over their non-Arab subjects (Gutas 29). This required developing a “religio-political discourse” and bringing together a number of competent scholars. Gutas confirms:

The introduction of philosophy into the Islamic world is indelibly linked with the name of al-Kindi (died ca. 870), the first philosopher in Arabic, and the circle of scientists and collaborators that he gathered around him.

Gutas quickly reminds us that al-Kindi was not a philosopher in a contemporary sense, but that he was a polymath and believed “mathematical or geometrical proof to be of the highest order” (120). Admittedly, al-Kindi sought to “approach mathematical accuracy in his argumentation” in order to “advance knowledge,” rather than reiterating or memorizing the information from the texts. Further, al-Kindi aimed to utilize mathematical methodology.
to “the theological and religious discussions of his time” (ibid). For this reason, he required the translation of key texts, such as “Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, and selections from Plotinus and Proclus in Arabic known as the *Theology of Aristotle*” (ibid). This task necessitated the continuous sponsorship and support of the caliphs, princes and other notables (Gutas 121). This makes the role of the patrons in the translation movement noteworthy, which demonstrates the direct political interest in the translation movement. The impact of the translation movement paved the way for what was to become a unified Abbasid imperial rule lasting five hundred years. But why is there significance in the role of interpretation or translation, particularly with respect to power?

**The Philosophy of Translation**

The theorization of what constitutes the place of the individual within the group, or the relationship between the subject and power, often requires an effective process of translation and interpretation. Richard Kearny in the Introduction to Paul Ricoeur’s *Philosophy of Translation* elucidates translation as exemplarily “performed” by Ricoeur, for he “navigated and negotiated transits between rival intellectual positions” (vii). Further, translation is not merely a “linguistic product,” but also “a form of intercultural mediation taking place in a specific social and cultural context,” according to David Limon (29). The space in between is taken up by Homi Bhabha (1994), who aims to decentralize the Eurocentric discourse, and move his focus to what shapes our existence today, which is “living on the borderline of ‘present’” (1). Whereas Limon is interested in the “gap” that he “perceive[s] . . . between what many translation scholars say should be the case . . . and the reality” (30), Bhabha proposes “to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences” (2). The issue of translation in the era of post-
structuralism has become rather a complex discourse, for it engages many concerns, thus itself a worthy subject of a separate investigation. However, for the purpose of this study, it is necessary to briefly touch on the significance of the task of translation, but more importantly, to draw attention to a specific concern, which is the added information and innovative results through the process of translation.

In *On Translation*, Paul Ricoeur deems two models of translation: first is the “linguistic paradigm,” which focuses on the link between words and their meaning, within a language or between languages; second, it is the “ontological paradigm” that involves the subject, whether internal (a subject to its own self), or intrasubject (between the subject and its “other”). 70 Walter Benjamin, in the “Task of the Translator” ([1913-1926] 1996), argues that “[t]ranslation . . . ultimately serves the purpose of expressing the innermost relationship of languages,” and that it is the “intention” that the translator’s task is centered on (255). Benjamin further notes that “languages supplement one another in their intentions […] the way of meaning is supplemented in its relation to what is meant” (257). The issue of “supplement” is noted by Derrida in *The Truth in Painting* (1987), when he brings up “surplus value” (5). He states:

In another language, given enough space, time and endurance, it might be possible for long discourses to propose laborious approaches to it. But, untranslatable it remains in its economic performance, in the ellipsis of its trait, the word by word, the word for word, or the trait for trait in which it contracts: as many words, signs, letters, the same quantity or the same expense for the same semantic content, with the same revenue of surplus value” (5).
It is the “surplus value” that engenders the interest, that which refutes Kant’s “disinterestedness.” In The Truth in Painting, Derrida demonstrates, albeit interpreting between the visual and written languages, because there is always a “remainder,” a “surplus” in meaning, interpretation of the “truth” in something is never impartial, as in “the thing itself.” He states therefore, “[t]he truth . . . is no longer itself in that which represents it in painting, it is merely its double,” no matter how good it resembles (ibid). Whereas for Ricouer text is “any discourse in writing” (1981, 145), as evident in the aforementioned quotes, Derrida has a broader definition for the text. The inclusive way in which Derrida treats “text,” facilitates an understanding of the text as ranging from knowledge to events and visual works of art. In his parergon theory, which lends itself well to the analysis of a work of art I have discussed in chapter three, there is an overlap in the interest, which he argues always exists, with respect to a work of art (or an interpretation of it), and the “surplus,” which exists when representing it. In his analysis of Cranach’s Lucretia, with regards to the notion of parergon, Derrida states:

If any parergon is only added on by virtue of an internal lack in the system to which it is added . . . what is it that is lacking in the representation of the body so that the garment should come and supplement it? And what would art have to do with this? What would it give to be seen? Cause to be seen? Let us see? (1987, 58).

In the same spirit, I ask the question of the painting called The Ascension of the Prophet (16th century, discussed in chapter three), where the visual version of the Koranic text displays more details. It is the added details, I argue, which is the source of interest in the subject, and as argued by Marx, it is the source of what benefits he who owns the product. The translation and the added interest can be analyzed from another perspective. As sources
of knowledge and law, the scriptures have played an integral part in subject formation. Mohammad Arkoun, in his article, *Rethinking Islam*, points to an intriguing aspect of interpretation, when it comes to the “Heavenly Book.” He contends that in the “societies of the book,” which he defines as “those that have been shaped since the Middle Ages by the Book, as a religious and a cultural phenomenon,” there is a “verticality which has constituted the religious imaginaire in the Near East” that has made the criticism of the subsequent interpretations of it “unthinkable” (2003, 30). He states:

> Truth is located in Heaven with God, who reveals it in time and through the medium He chooses: the prophets, Himself incarnated in the “Son” who lived among people, the Book transmitted by the messenger M[o]hammad. There are different modalities for the delivery . . . but the Word of God as God Himself is the same from the point of view of the anthropological structure of religious imaginaire (ibid).

Thus Arkoun discerns two meanings for the “Heavenly Book:” one as the Word of God, and the other as the “Word of God as God.” The interpretation of the “Word of God,” has taken place in Abrahamic religions by the theologians, each in its manifested form (i.e. Hebrew, Aramaic, and Arabic); “they used either literalist exegesis of the scripture itself or rational categories and procedures influenced by Greek philosophy” (ibid). He further explains that this was done through “[g]rammar and logic,” but not in a way that leads to a critical method (ibid). Arkoun, therefore, argues that even though the belief is that the scriptures are revelations from God, in mediation, and their expressions in human voices, and later written form, they become “historical, social and cultural events and manifestations” (ibid). Consequently, for example “[t]hat Jesus is presented as the “Son of God” and the Qur’an a speech worded by God Himself are theological definitions (i.e. added interest) used
in systems of beliefs and non-beliefs particular to Christian and Islamic dogma (2003, 31). There is also a translation or interpretation of value that maybe considered here; an example would be when Franz Fanon suggested—with regards to the Hegelian Master-Slave theory—that the Lacanian theory of the “Other” was more relevant to the situation of the colonized than Marx’s interpretation of master-slave ([1952] 2008). Analogously, in the post-colonial context, Bhabha offers a different interpretation of how to come to terms with cultural differences. He states: “The borderline work of culture demands an ‘encounter’ with newness that is not part of the continuum of past and present. It creates a sense of the new as an insurgent act of cultural translation” (10). On the problem of translation, Asad highlights the fact that there is “inequality of languages,” which he deems as “the global patterns of power created by imperialism and capitalism.” He notes:

[m]y argument is directed against the assumption that translation requires the adjustment of ‘foreign’ discourses to their new site[;] . . . they should retain what may be a discomforting—even scandalous—presence within the receiving language (199).

The “interpretation of cultures,” as alluded to by Asad, in the context of social anthropology becomes critical when it transcends the linguistics to enter “modes of thought.” From this perspective, the issue of translation as applied to what transpired in the process of importing modernism to the Middle East, and in particular Iran, broadens.

CONTEMPORARY CRITICAL CONVERSATIONS

Iranian thinker, Daryush Shaygan, in Cultural Schizophrenia, Islamic Societies Confronting the West (1992) argues that as a “major historical phenomenon,” modernism “in its broadest sense” has never been dealt with “objectively, in terms of its philosophic content,
but always in terms of its traumatic impact on our traditions, our ways of living and thinking” (Shayegan 3). The consequence has been what Shayegan calls a “moral component” that has complicated the attitude toward the West in “either admiring . . . or shutting itself off from European influence” (Shayegan 4). Further, he argues, during the reforms, when the Muslim thinkers understood the importance of, and pursued the “individual rights and liberties,” they overlooked the fact that such worthy objectives they were striving for did not occur due to a sudden and miraculous appearance. Shayegan states:

[O]ne essential [element] escaped the earliest thinkers, as it does most of their present-day successors: these basic ideas, whose qualities were so admired, were not the results of some recent miracle, but the end-product of an exceptional historical process . . . [that] could not be transplanted without displacing and marginalizing the traditional values to which we are so attached, and which occupied every corner of our public space.73

From another direction, meaning Europe’s interaction with the art and culture of Persia, some interesting arguments have been proposed. In his book, *Persophilia* (2015), Hamid Dabashi takes on Europe’s literary and culturally-charged love-affair with “all things Persian.” By juxtaposing the two interconnected lenses of Raymond Schwab (*The Oriental Renaissance* – 1950) and Edward Said (*Orientalism* – 1978), and by drawing on Jürgen Habermas, Dabashi argues: “critical as these two texts are,” neither one considers the “category of bourgeois society . . . as the principle site of knowledge production about the Orient” (2). Therefore, he emphasizes how “European bourgeois society . . . contributed to the creation of the public space—in both form and content” (5). In Dabashi’s view, for example, how Europe formulated its perspective about the “Orient” impacted how the
“Orientals,” or more specifically Persians, ultimately viewed themselves (22-23). However, the issue of power as tied to the uncritically cited examples does not enter the argument.\textsuperscript{74} As with Shayegan, Dabashi considers the “public space,” but ties it to the issue of identity, and aims to demonstrate how that identity was shaped through the perspective of the Europeans’ admiration of the Persian art and culture (228). Nonetheless, Dabashi, focused on the “societal” approach, is ultimately “interested in Persian cultural heritage and what happens to it when, in the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and under the influence of European imperial encroachment, it finally exited the Persianate court and emerged to form a bona fide public space that it would eventually call Vatan/Homeland” (11).

Both Dabashi and Said (in \textit{Culture and Imperialism} – 1984-86) point to “resistance” through “national independence” and “self-determination” (Said 1984-86, xii and Dabashi 5) as consequences of European imperialism, but neither author locates the place of the individual (i.e. the subject) within such self-determination or “public space.” Dabashi nevertheless, strives to demonstrate how the “postcolonial public sphere [in Persia] was triggered by the European bourgeois public sphere in formal and representational affiliations” that was either rejected or emulated by the Iranians (Dabashi 228). As his “concern is with the active formation of a public sphere on the colonial site, where both the local bourgeoisie and its antithesis were concurrently constructed,” he acknowledges both “the bourgeois culture of accommodation” as well as “the multiple and varied cultures of resistance.” Thusly he explicates the chasm in the bourgeois space as appropriated from the European model, which he argues became augmented for the “colonial site” (Dabashi 5). Shayeghan, however, articulates this chasm in
[t]he tension between the unveiling of new zones of reality and the atavistic compulsion to exclude or eject them from the field of knowledge, [which] was bound to create fissures in the consciousness: although things were changing externally, mental projections still functioned according to the old mode of representation (4).

Utilizing literary art forms, Dabashi delineates a path through which Persian literature entered the “various European intellectual movements,” displacing it in a way that “was shocking, destabilizing, yet also invigorating, provocative, [and] self-regenerative.” It is due to these nuances, that a “critical momentum” was engendered, in time for the “Persian poets and literati,” as they were searching to create a “public space” to “rearticulate themselves” (Dabashi 13). Conversely, Shayegan notes the problem of “mental distortion” emerging from an “internal chasm,” that stands in sharp contrast to the external nuances. He states this “problem can only be raised by people born into these civilizations” (Shayegan 4). Whereas Dabashi focuses on the transcultural exchanges between the bourgeois “public spaces,” Shayegan is concerned with the internal conflict, which he terms “a contradictory double fascination” that stems from “the enchanted vision of a world still infused with the aura of collective memory, and the equally compelling allure of the new and unknown” (Shayegan 5).

Perhaps Shayegan, more clear and to the point, but without addressing the issue of subjectivity directly, provides a picture of the subject that is caught in the gap between the traditional and the modern. He eloquently highlights the ‘delay’ which exists in what such subject projects and what is actually present before it, that which is “not just a chronological dislocation, but an ontological divide” (Shayegan 6). The world of such subject remains protected from “revolutions caused by scientific and technical upheavals [that] produced
paradigm shifts which molded consciousness to the imperatives of each new way of looking.” The consciousness of such subject “is still rooted in a world of enchantment;” while it is continuously stimulated and drawn “to new things[,] but their genealogy and archeology remain unknown” to it (ibid). But Shayegan’s work is not without criticism.

In his book, *Venture of Philosophy in Contemporary Iran* (2013), M.H. Sadigh-Yazdchi analyzes Shayegan’s thoughts, and finds traces of a peculiar connection. Shayegan was a pupil of Henri Corbin (1903-1978), the renowned French Iranologist and professor of Islamic Studies at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Études in Paris. Yazdchi argues that Corbin, who was trained under Louis Massignon (1883-1962 - a Catholic scholar of Islam and an expert on the Sufi, Mansour Hallaj), developed an affinity for the theological and philosophical Islam (Yazdchi 88), particularly in Shi’ite apocalyptic narratives. According to Yazdchi, utilizing a critique of Heidegger and the nihilistic philosophy of Nietzsche (which he argued signaled the end of philosophy and end of the subject in the West), Corbin closely examines the idea of Shi’ite jurisprudence (*velayat*), as the redeemer of what he calls “subjectivity’s impasse” in Western philosophy (90). Thus, he innovatively melds together the Shi’ite theology with philosophy, and declares it “the panacea to the impasse of metaphysics in the West” (ibid). This becomes significant when Yazdchi reveals Corbin’s influential thoughts were picked up by Ahmad Fardid, theoretician of Islamic Republic of Iran, and S.H. Nasr, Islamic Mysticism scholar. Yazdchi also argues that Shayegan, up until recently, thought along the same lines in situating Iran and Iranians within the mystic-influenced/constructed cultural past (121). Therefore, as what undermined the process toward modernism and true reforms, Yazdchi highlights a connection that brings Neoplatonic tendencies to the twentieth century for Iran.
One of the recurring themes in addressing reforms in the Middle East has been how to reconcile modernism with traditionalism. According to some thinkers such as Tariq Ramadan, “there is indeed, in the classical Islamic tradition, a central reference to the need for a renewal, revival, and consequently, reform of our reading and understanding” (Ramadan 36). On the issue of tradition, particularly post September 11, 2001 however, many theoreticians have turned to a critical view of the religion, namely Islam, when addressing the current problems in the Middle East. There seems to be a gap between a “so-called Islamic revivalism [that] has monopolized the discourse on Islam,” and what Arkoun calls “silent Islam” (2003). Arkoun argues for “a need to encourage and initiate audacious, free, productive thinking on Islam today” (2003, 18). In his view, currently, the politicized Islam has dominated all “cultural and social space,” thus making it nearly impossible for other thinkers within Islam to put forth their “critical approach” (2003, 19). Emphasizing “thinking,” Arkoun states:

[T]he main intellectual endeavor represented by thinking Islam . . . today is to evaluate, with a new epistemological perspective, the characteristics and intricacy of systems of knowledge—both the historical and the mythical. I would even say that both are still interacting and interrelated in our modern thought after at least three hundred years of rationalism and historicism (2003, 19).

Arkoun explains by pointing to “thinking Islam,” he aims to “indicate a general direction of thinking and the main conditions necessary to practice an ijtihad,” which he interprets as “[one’s own] intellectual effort to find adequate answers . . . recognized equally by Muslims and modern scholars” (ibid). Nonetheless, he distinguishes this practice, from the traditional ijtihad, which was established by Islamic jurists in the 8th - 9th centuries and
was restricted to the epistemological work—that which still exists, but strictly within the
domain of orthodoxy. Instead, he proposes “a modern critical analysis of the structure of
Islamic reason.” In his “critique of Islamic reason,” Arkoun requires bypassing the practice
of “traditional Islamic studies” by Muslims, as well as the “orientalists’ historical
philological analysis,” which he calls “classical Islamology.” Arkoun argues that the
traditional Islamic studies approach has not been able to appropriately address the modern
problems of Muslims in the modern “Muslim societies.” As a result, the political scientists
and fundamentalists have moved in, (those who created, or contributed to creating, the
political Islam) to fill the vacuum (Arkoun 2002, 10-11).

As an example of “tools for new thinking,” Arkoun offers his criticism of the
“periodization of the history,” which he argues has been “dictated by political events” (2003,
20). We identify periods in Islamic history by the dynastic rules, such as “Umayyad,
Abbasid, and Ottoman periods.” Instead, Arkoun suggests, one must look to the
“discontinuities affecting the conceptual framework used in a given cultural space” (ibid). He
explicates:

The concepts of reason and science (ilm) used in the [Koran], for example, are not the
same as those developed later by the falasifa [philosophers] according to the Platonic
and the Aristotelian schools. However, the . . . episteme introduced by the [Koran]
has not been intellectually reconsidered (ibid).

In his argument, Arkoun utilizes the example of the phrase “the problem of God,” and
states that such a phrase remains beyond the “thinkable” and consequently becomes
“unthought” in the “orthodox’ Islamic thought.” Thus, Arkoun describes a chasm between
the “cultures and systems of thought related to pagan, polytheistic,” and by extension, their
“modern secularized societies” and “Muslim orthodoxy” with regards to thinking (ibid). He proposes that the “implicit postulates” within the discourse should be “discover[ed] and analyz[ed],” if one is to “control the epistemological validity of any discourse” (ibid).

Arkoun is concerned with unraveling the enduring ties between the “unthinkable/unthought” and the orthodoxy to demonstrate a path toward “a radical reconstruction of mind and society in the contemporary Muslim world” (Arkoun 1994, 1). This task, he aims to achieve by, for instance, placing the Koran in its “historical, cultural, social, psychological and linguistic” context, by way of a “multidisciplinary analysis employing socio-historical psychology, cultural anthropology, semiotics, semantics, and hermeneutics.”

In response to Arkoun, Nasr Abu Zayd, in *Reformation of Islamic Thought* (2006), asks the question whether there is “a genuine possibility of achieving real reformation without constantly clinging to . . . religious tradition, to justify and appropriate the acceptance of reformation” (2006, 101). According to Abu Zayd, it appears that the model of associating modernity with Western influence still persists, which has widened the gap between reformists and the traditionalists. Abu Zayd acknowledges the flow of the wave of civilization [that] was probably born somewhere around the basin of rivers, probably in black Africa, Egypt or Iraq, before it moved to Greece, then returned to the Middle East in the form of Hellenism. With the advent of Islam, a new culture emerged absorbing and reconstructing the Hellenistic as well as the Indian and Iranian cultural elements before it was handed to the Western new world via Spain and Sicily (2006 101).

He further notes the contributions of thinkers such as Averroes, through whose work “new intellectual light” was transferred to the “European dark ages.” Nonetheless, just as
Arkoun does, Abu Zayd brings his focus back to the Koran in order to initiate any kind of reform by Muslims themselves. Abu Zayd’s contribution to the conversation, however, rests in bringing the “human dimension to the historical and cultural dimension of the [Kor]an” (2006, 97). He points to the often-overlooked interactions of humans (such as the rearrangement of the Koranic chapters, and the addition of signs of vocalization, after the passing of the Prophet), as well as referring to the historical context by both sides—the orthodoxy as well as modernists—in order to justify their own interpretations (2006, 98). Abu Zayd further states:

Like the classical theologians and classical jurists, the proponents of modern hermeneutics endeavor to articulate their positions by creating a focal point of gravity that can be claimed as universal—the irrevocable and the eternal truth. The anti-modernists would merely shift the focal point of gravity to claim the opposite.

Abu Zayd is keen to recognize that the solution lies in a “focal point of gravity to which all . . . variations . . . [can] be linked.” He further expands on the “human dimension,” not in the “canonization,” but in viewing the Koran as discourse(s) rather than text (2006, 98). Therefore, Abu Zayd emphasizes the “communication” aspect of the Koranic revelation and calls for a “democratic and open hermeneutic” approach that is about “the meaning of life”(2006, 99). Despite his critical approach, similar to Arkoun, Abu Zayd finds himself in a binary position with the West, whereas in this study, I argue for interpreting the emergence of monotheism initially as a method of criticism; this approach liberates Islam from being a binary to polytheism, Neoplatonism, and generally to the West, a method of criticism of systems which have led to self-alienation, undermining social justice.
Comparable to the focus in this study, Abu Zayd underscores the lived experience, which he has referred to as “the meaning of life” to be connected to the “meaning of the [Kor]an,” for “the [Kor]an was the outcome of dialogue, debate, augment, acceptance, and rejection, both with pre-Islamic norms, practices and culture, and with its own previous assessment, presuppositions and assertions” (2006, 99). However, he makes no mention of the subject within this “meaning.” In conclusion, however, Abu Zayd asks: “[a]re Muslims ready to rethink the [Kor]an or not?” Rethinking the Koran (from a fixed, closed text to a dynamic discourse), he argues, requires willingness to discuss the relationship between the West and the Muslim world. Abu Zayd does not seem optimistic on this subject (2006, 101).

From the anthropologic perspective, Talal Asad is compelled to respond to current Western anthropologists, whose publications “containing the word ‘Islam’ or ‘Muslim’ in the title” are on the rise, for “political reasons” (Asad [1986] 2009, 1). For this purpose, he has introduced the concept “discursive tradition,” which is an “intervention in the anthropology of Islam,” by shifting from “the interpretation of behaviors” to the “inquiry into the relation of practices” (ibid). This is due to the idea that there is no one Islam, but rather islams, according to Ovamir Anjum, and it is within the diverse interrelations of the latter that Asad centers this idea (Anjum 659). Recently, responding to the current movements within Muslim regions, Western scholarly work has attempted to “conceptualize Islam” in order to be able to “speak of the issues of authenticity, continuity, and legitimacy of Islamism”(Anjum 656). He further argues that Orientalist theoreticians have failed to notice the “lived Islam” that cannot be “essentialize[d].” This is where some anthropologists, like Asad, have countered the essentialist views; but, there are also others. Anjum states:
Some scholars, primarily anthropologists, have responded to the tendency to essentialize by giving up the idea of conceptualizing one "Islam" and instead have focused their inquiry on what they call various "local islam.s." Others have focused on sociological or political-economic approaches in explaining the modern forms of political and social activism among Muslims to the exclusion of "scriptural" Islam from their analysis (656).

Still there are others who have striven to seek the answer to individual freedoms, such as freedom of expression, within the legal and moral domain of the main religious texts ("[Kor]an and Sunna"). Islamic legal scholar, Mohammad Hashim Kamali, in Freedom of Expression in Islam (1997) has undertaken such a task. Kamali’s framework consists of two major themes: “affirmative evidence in support of freedom of expression, and the limitations, whether moral or legal” (1). He aims to demonstrate that the “main objectives of freedom of expression . . . are the vindication of truth and the protection of human dignity,” and that there are plenty of references to ensure individual freedoms in Islam.\(^8\) (ibid). However, despite exposing the orthodoxy in Islamic Shari’a, Kamali does not explain how these principles are constantly undermined and not practiced in the majority of governments in the Middle East claiming to abide by the Islamic principles. The discussions on rights and freedoms after the advent of modernism, without the establishing the place of and acknowledging the subject and all that shapes it, therefore, has not been productive. However, looking back at the pre-modern times, one may be able to find instances of demonstration of human dignity among Muslim literary figures that have been misinterpreted as individualism.
In his autobiography, Jalal al-Din Suyuti, the fifteenth century Egyptian scholar, follows a specific format, which is modeled after the “recognized tradition of Arabic autobiographical writing” (Reynolds, 1). This convention encompasses a number of motivations put forth by the author, such as: “Speaking of God’s bounty,” (qtd from Koran 93:11), as well as acknowledging the life circumstances of his forbearers and guides. Most importantly, the idea that encourages Muslims “to emulate one’s virtues and meritorious acts . . .[which is] found in many areas of Islamic intellectual and spiritual life” is the same idea that holds Prophet Mohammad as an example of the “Ideal Man.” (Reynolds, 3). On individuality as contrasted to conformity, Amin Banani argues against such binary division, and considers a practical aspect for “conformity,” particularly with respect to the members of Persian noble class, which possibly could have had political effects (19-20). On Al-Suyuti, despite its contrast to “some medieval and pre-modern European autobiographies the public recognition (‘confession’),” such form, contrary to the author’s suggestion, does not signal individuality of the “self.” Al-Suyuti directly states in writing his autobiography the role of his guides:

I have emulated them and have written this book in order to speak of God’s bounty and to thank Him, not out of hypocrisy, nor for my own credit, nor out of pride. God is our source of help, and to him we entrust ourselves.\textsuperscript{81}

This statement appears more in line with what Abu Zayd’s criticism notes in “creating a focal point of gravity that can be claimed as universal” (2006, 98), than individualism. The main point here is that the issue of the subject was not in the domain of the “thinkable,” to use Arkoun’s term. Ramadan, on the other hand, argues that despite all disagreements between various groups of Muslims—whether among the experts or the
general community—there is consensus that “the tool of critical interpretation of texts . . . are indispensable means to face contemporary challenges” (36). Nonetheless, there is no mention of the place of the subject. Arkoun’s objective is to “historicize” the “divine category [of] Revelation” and transition the “religious imaginaire” to a “social imaginaire” that would bring about the “deconstruction” and applicability of the hermeneutic method (2003, 31).

The appealing idea of hermeneutic, with respect to the religious text has prompted Mohammad Mojtahed Shabestari to express astonishment at those who question criticism of religious thought. Shabestari notes asking such inquiries “is due to a lack of regard for the notion of criticism on the one hand, and equating religious thought in [such an] era with a finalized truth” (193). He proposes in his book, *Hermeneutik, the Book and the Tradition* (2005), albeit to the community of the religious scholars, the necessity of diverse interpretations and establishing interactions between the fields of knowledge, yet does not include the issue of the individual (Shabestari 7, 200).

Unlike Arkoun, who is seeking historicization of religion, Abdulkarim Soroush paints a transhistorical picture of religion in his *More Abundant than Theology* (1996), underscores the significance of ideology. However in his view, which is colored by Neoplatonism, religion does not abide by the same limitations (Soroush 125). The idea of the individual for Soroush is predetermined, and is exemplified in a specific figure (Abuzar Ghafari), who epitomizes the hero against social injustice (Soroush 102). His solution from delivering one from getting caught in between “modernism” and “post-modernism” lies in mysticism (Soroush 363). However, contrary to Soroush, Seyed Javad Tabatabaei has his sight more on the administrative problems and chaos that have ensued due to systematic incompetence and mismanagement of the resources. Having abandoned any hopes of religious reformations,
Tabatabaei proposes his theory of “Iranshahri,” which is predicated on the pre-Islamic political thoughts of the Sasanian period (2015, 139). In his view, as a model, the political art of government of ancient Iran is the only solution to eliminate current administrative problems. Nonetheless, the conflict between the ancient Iranian civilization and what it became following the advent of Islam is problematic for Aramesh Doostdar, for he sees the source of the problem in Iranian’s affinity for all religious matters, which has led to the problem of not thinking for the population (414). Neither Shabestari, nor Sorouch or Doostdar have brought up the issue of the subject, which is fundamental in the rights issues.\(^{82}\)

There are only a handful of thinkers who look to philosophy to make sense of what has taken place in the recent history in Iran. Sadigh Yazdchi draws attention to the fact that within Islamic culture philosophy has consistently been viewed as a religious endeavor (5). He is keen in his criticism of misappropriation of European philosophy by theoreticians who aimed to justify an Islamic revolution. He names Ahmad Fardid, whose theories were built on intentional misinterpretations of philosophers such as Heidegger to such a degree that toward the end of his life he had stated “Heidegger [was] in the direction of the Islamic revolution” (Yazdchi, 13-14).\(^{83}\)

The preceding pages offer reviews of selected current literature on the topics of interest in this research. The topics vary from modernism versus tradition, to religious reformation, to postcolonial discourses. I demonstrated that, despite the engaging and dynamic issues debated, the discourse on the place of the subject and the power of artistic endeavors, in their broadest sense—that which is the focus of this project—is absent from the conversation. To effectively set up the context, I began the chapter with a definition of the subject, clarification on my approach, and then transitioned into discussing the main ideas of
Neoplatonism, with the focus on its aesthetics. This also necessitated briefly addressing the philosophy of translation, and its significance in this study. What follows in the next chapter explicates in detail the formation of the subject, and a thorough accounts of how I have defined the artistic endeavors in this study.
CHAPTER TWO

SUBJECTIVITY: INFORMED BY A LONG TRADITION OF PATRIARCHY

The modern Western state has integrated into a new political shape an old power technique that originated in Christian institutions. We can call this power technique “pastoral power.”84

—Michel Foucault

Patriarchy traditionally has established itself on two seemingly conflicting strategies: an artificial unification through apparatuses of power (identity, nationality, law, economy, art) on one side, and maintaining its position of power based on “othering” and conflict on the other. Like well-oiled machines, patriarchal mechanisms of power have been shaping subjectivities in accordance with their interests and positions.85 Such apparatuses, which historically include artistic productions, have been so effective that distinguishing between a subjectivity shaped by patriarchy and one that is critical of it has proved challenging. In what ways has patriarchy shaped to its own ends individual and collective subjectivities through works of art?

Historically, feminist or pro-feminist discourses have mainly fallen within the patriarchal binarism in various paths they have taken, from liberal feminism to radical and cultural feminism; that is to say, they have striven to counter symptoms of patriarchy in order to achieve equality and recognition, and thus have defined their objectives along the same dualities.86 One of the theories feminists or pro-feminists have often referenced has been the “matriarchal myths” employed to “redeem and revalue ‘the feminine’” without the consideration that arguably the sources of such myths themselves may have been patriarchal (Eller, 2000, 15).
Therefore, what I aim to achieve in this chapter is to draw attention to the phenomenology of patriarchy through a genealogical examination of the links between patriarchy, art and subject formation in their historical contexts. To reach this aim, it seems necessary to trace back the history of human creativity to its earliest known stages. I argue, once the early humans learned how to give material form to what impressed them the most, namely “power” they experienced in their environments, they discovered a way to possess what was intangible. Similarly, throughout history, patriarchy, itself a manufactured idea, has given tangible forms to ideas that have secured its power and shaped the identities of those it subjected to this power.

Giving physical form to ideas was the predicate of what eventually manifested as property and itself subject to debt and economy, inevitably and eventually encompassing human relations in the early communities, as argued by David Graeber. In this chapter, similar to Foucault, I am interested in particular in the moments of disruption in history—in the case at hand specifically—that which changed human concern from life-centered communities to land and property-centered societies that further affected the relationship between its members, particularly women, from subjects to objects. I am also interested in “a history no longer constrained to be a history of the past, but capable of being a ‘history of present’.”

A Genealogy of Patriarchy: Origins of Art, Alterity and State

It is difficult to speak of the term “patriarchy” without finding oneself, on the one hand, entangled in the history of its metamorphosis, and on the other, in feminist discourses on the subject. Using the term “patriarchy” in our own time seems antiquated and irrelevant, if we are not conscious of how it came into existence or of its ever-changing, long and varied
history. Feminist movements, now in multiple branches, have tried to provide definitions of patriarchy. [B]ell hooks opens her essay entitled “Understanding Patriarchy” with: “[p]atriarchy is the single most life-threatening social disease assaulting the male body and spirit in our nation.” Judith Butler notes that feminism has gone as far as to “establish a universal status for patriarchy in order to strengthen the appearance of feminism’s own claims . . . held to produce women’s common subjugated experience” (Gender Trouble 5). Luce Irigaray defines patriarchy as “an exclusive respect for the genealogy of sons and fathers, and the competition between brothers” (The Irigaray Reader 23). Such statements fit and serve patriarchy well, for it benefits from distinguishing itself in opposition and “othering.” Nearly all feminist discourses at one point or another have placed patriarchy in a binary position with regards to gender, even though they fully understand that patriarchy is too great a phenomenon to be reduced to gender alone. Such discourses have extended to pro-feminist views nonetheless.

Leonard Shlain, in his national bestseller work The Alphabet versus the Goddess (1998) draws a line between patriarchy and the female-centered communities by juxtaposing them in the contrast between the word and image respectively. This leads us to the question: can there be a more encompassing definition of patriarchy? Gerda Lerner acknowledges the problem with using the term “patriarchy” in its “narrow, traditional meaning.” She defines patriarchy as “the system, historically derived from Greek and Roman law, in which the male head of the household had absolute legal and economic power over his dependent female and male family members” (1986, 238). However, as David Graeber demonstrates, the history of this phenomenon goes farther back to the time of the early cities, stemming from the dynamic encounters between the “desert pastoralists” and the “urban life” (176-178). Nevertheless, neither scholar considers the role of art or creativity in the equation.
In this study, I define patriarchy as a creative endeavor itself; it is a manufactured, man-made conception, formed through a synthesis between pastoral authority and city-inspired systems/organization. Characteristically, it is adaptable and metamorphic, thus multifaceted, and strives to disguise itself as a natural or eternal entity, thereby justifying its existence through domination and the diminishing of differences at any given time. Such domination has led to inequity established and maintained partly through art.

As testified to by art historical evidence, more than any other method, patriarchy has instituted its presence through imagery. How does imagery, then, come to be associated with the feminine as suggested by Shlain? I argue, contrary to what Shlain has proposed, both image and word have been patriarchal instruments that have formed and informed the subjectivities of dominated subjects in favor of maintaining patriarchy’s own position of power. I further suggest, as the “one” atop the pyramid of power and as an ideology, patriarchy thrives through control and demands recognition from its collective subjects; it is uneasy with the issue of individuality and its unpredictability.93 For this purpose, traditionally, it has sought unity by way of conflict, even in the guise of ‘matriarchal’ spiritual theories, which it has successfully achieved, albeit an artificial unity, through works of art among other creative products. I call it “artificial” because this unity is predicated and reliant on inventiveness, and it comes from a necessity.

The historical accounts of patriarchy correspond to a phenomenological definition, for there is a moment in history when the female/mother-centered societies changed to patriarchal structures and spread throughout the early communities. At least, that is part of what has been circulating widely among many groups.94 It may be necessary here to distinguish between the terms female or mother-centered with “matriarchal,” for I believe,
historically, “matriarchy” implies a hierarchy akin to patriarchy. Nonetheless, there is no evidence a similar structure between the female-centered and the patriarchal societies existed, or if such societies existed, they were not part of patriarchal power apparatuses. Moreover, matriarchies have fueled an evolutionary theory that leads us toward the supremacy of patriarchy. 95

Cynthia Eller in *The Myth of Matriarchal Prehistory* feels compelled to dispute that, historically speaking, there was a matriarchy (2000, 7). She challenges feminists’ support of the theory and notes that “there is a theory of sex and gender embedded in the myth of matriarchal prehistory and it […] is drastically revalued in feminist matriarchal myth.” She argues the image of women goes from “shame or subordination” to that of “pride and power,” which “up until now . . . has done an excellent job of serving patriarchal interest”(7). What is of particular interest here is the shift in focus from interpersonal dependence to relying on the land, from mother caring for her children, to mother-earth feeding all (Shlain 33-34).

**Prehistory, Myth and the Birth of Art**

The task I have embarked upon is a criticism of what humans, since prehistoric times (although through different processes and mechanisms), have created by way of imagination; they have subsequently added further layers of “artistic” and inventive interpretations to these creations, but elevated them to a divine or supernatural status, while they remain human creations. By doing so, humans have not only created inequity, but also shaped subjectivities toward an imagined and fictional collective subjectivity to suit one group’s interest against another. This process precipitated by the materialization of visions and ideas. In this study, I define imagination as that which takes shape in a sense of urgency and necessity, but without
the presence of reason. As the forthcoming explanation and experimentation will demonstrate, the human mind creates images and ideas, where it needs to connect what he has no logical explanation for. This can be distinguished from intuition, which as Bergson believed, comes from a place of hyper sensitivity (Caygill 2013), and is a kind of “sympathetic impulse.”

We may consider a distinction between what prompted giving shape and material form to figures and what might have been a preceding, rudimentary form of oral cultures.

Humans (in their present form) have been around for approximately one hundred fifty thousand years; however, creation of what comes close to what we call “art” today has taken place only in the last one-third of that existence. In the late prehistoric times, the evidence that does reach us includes female statuettes and cave paintings; these bring to mind examples such as Woman of Willendorf (Austria, circa 24,000 BCE), Hall of Bulls (Lascaux Cave, France, circa 15,000 BCE), or the Oxen in Altamira (Spain, 11,000 BCE). There have been many theories, although none with absolute certainty, on what the meaning, purpose or even the context of such works may have been. These theories range from “art for art’s sake”
to Henri Breuil’s “sympathetic magic,” to such art being “a symbolic system.” What we may be able to continue to ponder nonetheless is what the experts have named the “creative explosion,” or the birth of what we call “art” today, and what that “art” can tell us about its creators.

What did compel the early, prehistoric humans to reproduce forms found in nature? How did they determine what to reproduce? After all, these images are far from child art and nothing if not naturalistic. Archeologists, anthropologists and art historians have been debating about the subject of such art for decades. Prehistoric female statues that have been found all over Europe, for instance, have puzzled the experts to this day in whether they were meant as goddesses to be worshipped or as charms that may have brought the hunters luck. Others see their overstated features as symbols of what mattered to the prehistoric people, namely fertility and new life, as is suggested by the exaggeration of gender specific parts of the body. Eller disagrees with the ‘fertility’ interpretation—mostly taken for granted by others—as she notes both in Paleolithic and Neolithic female figurines, “the most conspicuous problem . . . is that they rarely show signs of pregnancy, childbirth, or lactation” (134).

Whatever the purpose may have been, the link between creating “art” and some level of consciousness in the prehistoric people cannot be overlooked. Georges Bataille in Lascaux or the Birth of Art argues that the moment of birth for art came when “[r]esolutely, decisively, man wrenched himself out of the animal’s condition and into ‘manhood:’ that abrupt, most important of transitions left an image of itself blazed upon the rock” (preface). More recently, through the analysis of images and the later development of writing, another theory has been proposed. Shlain, projects a conflict between the patriarchal
and the female-centered societies with the written “word” as the suppressor of “image.” In other words, he sees imagery more in line with the feminine and deems its decline to be due to the emergence of writing. Shlain argues “that the central factor in the fall of the Goddess was a revolutionary development which occurred during the . . . period – literacy. First writing, and then its more sophisticated refinement, the alphabet, tolled the death knell of feminine values both metaphorically and . . . literally” (39). Nonetheless, considering the alphabet or the written language itself developed from imagery, can it be argued that both images and letters were associated with patriarchy, with one patriarchy replacing another? In order to better understand this question, one must look further into the origins of prehistoric human creativity and imagination.

The theories suggested by the experts on the subject of Paleolithic art, as briefly mentioned earlier, vary from the art as being “sympathetic magic” to such caves being places of worship, hence tying art and religion closely. These views were later challenged when further scientific studies were conducted. In a study by Andre Leroi-Gourhan and Annette Laming-Emperaire, the theory of “sympathetic magic” was rejected, because the scientific analysis demonstrated the animals hunted and those consumed by the Paleolithic people were different from those depicted in the cave paintings (Gourhan [1983] 1989, 31). In the late 1980s, Leslie Freeman, following her study of the Altamira Cave in Spain, rejected the idea that the various images showing a herd of bison “dead, asleep or disabled;” she argued they were indeed showing the animal dust-wallowing – a behavior seen during mating.

These new theories demonstrate, as expressed by David Lewis-Williams in *The Mind in the Cave* (2002), that “[w]hat is now needed is not . . . more data (though more data are
always welcome), but rather a radical rethinking of what we already know” (8). The evidence, then, suggests that such imagery may have been created to embody, pin down and possess what was seen as magical, fleeting and intangible power, whether in life, death or just sheer physical power. Could such illusions have happened when humans took fire inside the caves and saw the shadows moving on the cave walls, or is there a “neuropsychological” explanation for the process behind the cave paintings? While I have no intention to validate my argument through science, the scientific evidence outside of what is mainstream thinking has proven to be noteworthy on what may have stirred the cave painters’ imagination. This evidence is predicated on light deprivation producing shapes and colors in the visual cortex in such a way that the person visualizes images.107

Painted images during the late Paleolithic period are mostly found inside the deepest, darkest parts of the caves, and it seems plausible the prehistoric artists may have experienced a hallucinatory vision of the powerful animals they observed outside. The absolute darkness, or very little light, then, may have incited images of the animals whose powerful presence and behavior had already made an impression on the prehistoric artists. Once inside the cave, it must have seemed like magic when the visual part of the brain recalled the experience in hallucinatory forms and colors.108 Prehistoric humans may have wanted to hold onto the experience, thus painted the images and sometimes shapes and colors inside the caves. Lewis-Williams explains that consciousness is a “historically situated selection” and “not a universal, timeless ‘given’” (104). The theory of giving material form to contemporaneous experience can apply to both two and three dimensional works of art. The question that arises here is: why give material form to an experience or idea? And more critical to this study, what were the implications of such development for the early communities?
Answering these questions may be facilitated if one addresses theories such as “goddess-worshipping” or “woman-honoring,” both of which have artistic repercussions and have preoccupied feminist movements and others to this day. However, this preoccupation has occurred without the questioning of how the creation of these myths may have had its own history (Eller, 2000, 30). In fact, thanks to works of cultural theorists such as Shlain, these myths have become women’s own view of their own matriarchal past. While acknowledging that no paintings of female figures have been found, Shlain emphasizes the importance of exaggerated, gender specific features of female statuettes found in great numbers in southern France alone (Shlain 30) and quotes Joseph Campbell, who states: “So, from the Pyrenees to Lake Baikal, the evidence now is before us of a Late Stone Age mythology in which the outstanding single figure was the Naked Goddess…” (ibid).

Such “invented” myths, as argued by Eller, have prevented women from achieving “a future that helps all women, children, and men flourish” (2000, 8). Thus, it is critical to pause here to consider the problematic nature of such myths. While prehistoric times aimed to pin down hallucinatory images in the caves, is it another level of consciousness that strives to create a sense of pride or identity by inventing myths in later times? Consequently, here I must draw a direct link between the consciousness that prompts the creation of, for instance, the prehistoric art and the developing of the myths transpiring from such creations. Stated differently, the art works in question do not just represent what could have been owned (and enjoyed, which would substantiate the positions of privilege for their owners); the interpretations and myths emanating from this art can also prove epistemic, to be possessed and to become a source of claimed privilege. Therefore, the material representation of the “goddess” is primarily at the center of this discussion.
There are numerous examples in the history of the early cities\textsuperscript{111} that demonstrate material form given to an idea or ideal serving as a symbol or sign signifying some sort of domination and power. This may have taken the form of a human figure representing a deity within a community. However, what has been taken for granted is that the sources of the attributed power have been what humans themselves projected onto the art work, just as historically, experts’ speculations have had the potential to become historical facts over time.\textsuperscript{112} Matriarchalists, Eller argues, insist that somehow worshipping goddesses “enhanced” the position of women in society, yet we have no proof of this (106). Through examining three key Neolithic cultures, “heralded by feminist matriarchalists as matricentric,” namely Çatalhöyük, Malta and Minoan, Eller reveals that there is not enough convincing evidence to believe they either were engaged in goddess worshiping for long, if any at all, enjoyed a matriarchal rule, or even if goddess worship benefited women (Eller, 2000, 142-156).

Further, Eller blurs the line between what Shlain tries to neatly divide, with respect to images being associated with female and written language with patriarchy, by noting that in both Western cultures as well as others, “[d]isproportionate images of females is a widespread . . . phenomena . . ., and we know that it can coexist with male dominance” (141). She also draws attention to an important point that substantiates how patriarchy defines itself in opposition. Eller comments that there is an abundance of female imagery present among cultures with “male monotheistic religions,” where “deities are not always represented; in fact they can be completely—or largely—invisible, as is the case with the putatively male god of the major Western religions” (ibid). An example of this is Ishtar in Mesopotamia, whose absence in text is well compensated for in the production of her images, whereas “numerous male deities discussed in the texts have no ‘visual counterparts’,”\textsuperscript{113} which Shlain
deems as the distinction between the two (female/image versus male/word), but it may also point to their co-existence (ibid).

While such images can be viewed as remnants of the past, they appear to have served patriarchy in defining itself through its opposition. Eller’s argument here not only undermines Shlain’s thesis, but also could mean that one patriarchy may have absorbed another, without the total elimination of the signs of the old patriarchy. But, the questions of whether there was a “patriarchal revolution” and where the underpinnings of misogyny lie still remains.

Foundations of Misogyny from the Neolithic Cultures to Antiquity and Beyond

There is very little argument about the male voice having been the dominant voice in the written history of not just the Western cultures, but humanity in general. Margaret L. King and Albert Rabil Jr. in the introduction to the series “Other Voices in Early Modern Europe” (2003) note “[t]he recent achievements [of women] have their origins in things women (and some male supporters) said for the first time about six hundred years ago. Theirs is the ‘other voice,’ in contradistinction to the ‘first voice,’ the voice of the educated men who created Western culture.” How the male voice came to dominate has a direct bearing on how men treated their first “other,” that is to say, women. Lerner states: “[l]ike men, women are and always have been actors and agents in history […] [yet] women have been kept from contributing to History-making, that is, the ordering and interpretation of the past of humankind” (1986, 4-5). King and Rabil Jr. point out:

The other voice emerged against the backdrop of a three-thousand-year old history of the derogation of women rooted in the civilizations related to Western culture:
Hebrew, Greek, Roman and Christian. Negative attitudes toward women inherited from these traditions pervaded the intellectual, medical, legal, religious and social systems that developed during the European Middle Ages (xi).\textsuperscript{116}

From where did this “inheritance” originate? Was there a link between subordination and derogation of women historically? Surely the traditions mentioned by King and Rabil Jr. were not where it all started. Lerner explores the different positions on the subordination of women. In the course of her investigation, various voices in the debate, from traditionalist to Marxist to anthropologist, trace the subordination of women to different corners of history and human experience. However, following the examination of “hard evidence,” including those from Çatalhöyük, Lerner concludes that “female subordination is not universal,”\textsuperscript{117} regardless of lacking proof for a “matriarchal” society (35).

Both Eller and Graeber agree that “a decisive change” took place around 3000 BCE that changed the “social organization” in ancient Mesopotamia and brought on “a more patriarchal, hierarchical, and warlike direction” (Eller 2000, 157 and Graeber 178). Graeber detects in the Sumerian texts of the period a marked change in the status of women and the social freedoms that “[render] them wards of their husbands” at the end of the Bronze Age. He argues there is a relationship between the signs of “human progress” as evident in the “advance of science and technology, the accumulation of learning, economic growth” and freedom; however, the connection works in the opposite direction when it comes to women (Graeber 178).

An uneven rate of development seems to have occurred, as Neolithic, rural communities gradually transitioned into urban centers, otherwise known as “archaic states” or early civilizations. Social organizations changed from “kin dominance to patriarchal
families as the chief mode of distributing goods and power” (Lerner 54). However unequivocally, they all did not make such transitions, especially if we consider those who decidedly, or unavoidably, remained “pastoralists” in the margins of the urban areas despite their continued interactions with the inhabitants of the cities. As Lerner and Graeber note, these changes nonetheless affected women’s status. Lerner states:

In Mesopotamia . . . female subordination . . . becomes institutionalized and codified in law; prostitution becomes established and regulated; with increasing specialization of work, women are gradually excluded from certain occupations and professions. After the invention of writing and the establishment of formal learning, Women are excluded from equal access to such education.118

Therefore, according to Lerner, the social reorganization and the development of hierarchy brought about a shift from “kin-based” to “class-based” society and yielded two distinct conflicting communities (55). Graeber picks up on this shift and further explores the dynamics between the two: the kin-based, which he calls “pastoralists,” and the urban communities. While he confirms the “profound cultural changes” brought on by the “pastoralists,” Graeber appears dissatisfied that the slow “restrictions of women’s freedom” were merely the outcome of the “gradual infiltration of pastoralists from the surrounding deserts who, presumably, always had more patriarchal mores” (178).

Graeber is in agreement with the feminist view that war and “centralization of the state that accompanies it” are two of the most important factors in the harsh treatment of women. Nevertheless, to these he also adds the issue of debt. He states: “In . . . Mesopotamia . . . an explosion of debt . . . threatened to turn all human relations—and by extension women’s bodies—into potential commodities” (179). Therefore, Graeber deems an
“economic game,” with an underlying interchangeability of debt and morality, to be the determining element in the relations: the losers would lose everything, including their women, and the (male) winners would seek extreme measures to protect their own women from falling into the same circumstance of “being bought or sold” in this game (ibid). The fallout of this economic arrangement was that the life for the poor on the fringes (i.e. among the pastoralists) came under the protection of the father, and the rural areas became a safe haven for those running from the laws of the cities. There is clear conflict between the two as Graeber explains:

Patriarchy originated, first and foremost, in a rejection of the urban civilizations in the name of a kind of purity, a reassertion of paternal control against great cities like Uruk, Lagash, and Babylon, seen as places of bureaucrats, traders, and whores. The pastoral fringes, the deserts and steppes away from the river valleys, were the places to which displaced, indebted farmers fled […] religious literature . . . echo this voice of rebellion, combining contempt for the corrupt urban life, suspicion of the merchant, and often, intense misogyny.¹¹⁹

The existence of the tribal people outside the cities and their interactions with the city people have always occurred according to Graeber. One of the signs of their intermingling is the supplanting of the language of the city people (who are often associated with civilization) with the language of the desert people (Graeber 178), which perhaps demonstrates the versatility and accessibility of the oral versus the written language often associated with the elites. This leads one to think upon the differences that emerge culturally and, as focused on by Graeber, economically. A sort of “othering” always takes place that then gets balanced when the language of the pastoralists dominates, or in the case of the post-Roman era with
the so called barbarian tribes, they become the nobility in Europe. Therefore this holds true for the early Medieval Europe after the fall of Rome, as it did for ancient Mesopotamia. Perhaps observing the position of the first “other” (i.e. women) can illuminate further the dynamics of the othering process. What was the status of women in the oral tradition, as traced back to the early Greek life, for instance, illustrated by Homer?

According to Eller, Homer’s references to women fall under two categories: aristocratic women and slaves (2000, 168). Despite the freedom enjoyed by aristocratic women in Homeric Greece, as pointed out by Eva Cantarella, “a . . . [Greek] woman’s principle tasks were . . . to be beautiful, to take care of domestic tasks, and to ‘above all be obedient’.” The pseudo-scientific works of Aristotle, who wrote in the fourth century BCE, still reflects the misogyny that existed. Aristotle believed women were inferior to men, based on his binary reasoning. He thought form, deemed the essence of all things, to be associated with men, and matter linked with women. Hence, he argued that “male principle in nature” is active and perfect, and female is passive and incomplete. Further, Aristotle suggested that the “male principle in nature” always seeks to reproduce itself, and viewed a progressive path for the “deprived” feminine in seeking that perfection, of course through the guidance of men. (King and Rabil Jr., xii).

Aristotle’s writings has had long lasting ramifications, not just for the Greeks, but beyond the geographic boundaries of ancient Greece, anywhere touched by Greek language, art and culture. “Greek poetry, drama, and myth are full of the ‘problem’ of women [as,] […] the misogyny evident in Greek literature permeated Greek society.” Further, inequity between men and women extended to their sexual relationship, as “[h]eterosexual sex was understood as ‘an unequal transaction by which woman steals man’s substance,’ and so men
were better advised to have sexual relations with one another” (Eller 2000, 168). But, perhaps more telling of this misogyny is the law that gave the male head of the household the power of guardianship over women and children that could even determine their life or death, as more baby girls were left to die than boys (Eller 2000, 169).

Graeber paints a similar picture of classical Greece, however from the economic standpoint. The era of an established Homerian value of man predicated on his honor came to an end, as argued by Graeber, “when commercial markets began to develop” following the issuance of coinage to pay soldiers and to serve as a means to transact “fines and fees and payments made to and by the government” (186-187). Graeber states:

One of the first effects of the arrival of a commercial economy was a series of debt crisis, of the sort long familiar from Mesopotamia . . . ‘The poor, as Aristotle succinctly put it in his Constitution of the Athenians, ‘together with their wives and children, were enslaved to the rich’ (ibid).

While the “male honor” developed in the aristocracy’s disdain for the market (albeit emulated by all, even those in rural communities), women’s honor, argues Graeber, was reduced to “sexual terms: as a matter of virginity, modesty, and chastity.” Women’s honor was marred if she “played a part in public life” or appeared without a veil in public. The issue of veiling of women is also addressed by Lerner, although she sees it as a manifestation of class. According to Lerner, veils were visible marks that distinguished women who were under the protection (or ownership) of a man (139). This was an established regulation, the disobedience of which had severe consequences for the poor, slaves and prostitutes who attempted to veil themselves, and it was deemed “a major offense against the state.” Lerner references an Assyrian document that gives any man who “has seen a harlot veiled . . .
arrest her, produce witnesses (and) bring her to the palace of tribunal” (135). Interestingly, many of the punishments from the ancient texts of laws and regulations have found their way into one of the most influential books in the foundation of Western civilization and particularly its art: the Bible.

EMERGENCE OF MONOTHEISM: JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM: WORD, IMAGE AND POWER

The advent of monotheism approximately 3800 years ago in Jewish tradition was when Abraham received his “first encounter with God, who made a covenant with him.” The weight of this covenant, as pointed to by Lerner, has been at the foundation of what distinguishes the “chosen people” from everyone else (163). But what significance does monotheism represent emerging at the time when polytheism was more tolerant, well established, practiced, and persistent despite this new competition? Before addressing this significance, we must consider that Judaism, Christianity and Islam all trace their heritage back to Abraham as the biblical patriarch, and all deem themselves monotheistic. Further, there seems to be correlation among Judaism, Christianity and Islam with how word, image and the hybridization of the two were utilized. Stated differently, Judaism established itself through words; Political Christianity began with words, but solidified its power through image; and Islam took advantage of both word and image in rising to prominence and in maintaining its position of power. In short, whether in writing symbols or visual imagery, they successfully transformed monotheism, from—what emerged to accomplish initially—a new way of thinking and critical assessment of the status quo, to a system of laws and rules, adaptable for political and patriarchal purposes and gains.
Monotheism and Patriarchy

Monotheism conflicted with how the place or relationship of people was defined within the community and with how communities interacted with one another in connection to the sources of power dominating those communities. Shlain notes:

The Israelites’ sectarian prejudice stood in sharp contrast to other religions of those times. Polytheism had many hierarchical layers. There were national gods, local gods, family gods, and even personal gods. […] Monotheism encouraged people to think in new ways.\textsuperscript{126}

Shlain, points out that despite the many “bloody conflicts fought over land, women, booty, or to avenge a perceived wrong, there were no religious wars in the ancient world before monotheism” (80). It seems to follow then that monotheism had been viewed as a binary alternative—what was to replace the polytheistic structure of the societies of that time—for monotheism, as argued by Shlain, had no tolerance for other deities. From another perspective, it can also be argued that monotheism initially emerged as criticism of how the hierarchical and unjust systems, predicated on material representation of dominant ideas and deities, had led to inequity for the majority of the people, particularly the impoverished members of the society, for it promoted a sort of a leveling of the playing field, so to speak. Nevertheless, following its synthesis with the urban formulas of organization (just as language did in the aforementioned examples), monotheism was adopted as a model for governing, thus was solidly built into autocratic systems. If we interpret the Jewish law of prohibition of imagery beyond material to encompass formulas and abstract thinking, and if we were to view patriarchy critically, this was clearly in violation of the commandment that forbade creating anything in the Divine’s “image,” to which I will shortly return.
It is curious that Shlain notes monotheism to be a religion that “does not mirror human society,” and whereas humans are “social animals,” in monotheism essentially, God is alone, has no parallel, nor does he have a mother, father, wife (on the assumption of Him being male) or offspring. However, instead of exploring what possibilities the significance of this perspective offers, he suggests: “if everyone agrees that only one God exists, and different groups conceive of Him in different ways, then whose perception of that deity is the correct one?” It may be reasoned that the idea was: no one’s perception was indeed correct, therefore a sort of equality could have prevailed. To be fair, Shlain builds this argument in order to proceed toward demonstrating the abstraction monotheism allows, which “can set people free from superstition. But there is a terrible price to pay for devotion to an abstract God” (81). What Shlain is missing here can be further elaborated addressing the prohibition of imagery.

The Second Commandment, “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven images, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth” (Exod. 20:4) has been interpreted by Shlain and others as a “proscription against making images . . . repeated throughout the Torah . . . (Deut. 4:15-19)” (82). Taken as a stand-alone statement, which is what appears to be the case with Shlain, it prohibits imagery of any kind. Nonetheless, being mindful of the established conventions of the polytheistic societies, as what follows the First Commandment, “I am the Lord thy God. Thou shalt have no other gods before me” (Exod. 20:2-3), the Second Commandment seems to be closely connected to, thus following, the preceding statement. Law and order in polytheistic societies were heavily reliant on physical representations of their deities in material form, that is to say human-crafted likenesses of what they believed the deities
represented. Shlain, emphasizing that God’s Second Commandment “injunction is all encompassing,” questions:

Why would drawing a bird in flight or a fish leaping in sunlight represent a threat to Him? The Second Commandment forbids Israelites from conveying any iconic information: no illustrations, no colorful drawings, and no art . . . Why should a prohibition against making images be the second most important rule for righteous living? (83)

What Shlain questions here is in support of his argument on the intolerance of monotheism as a male-oriented tradition in its opposition to the worshipping of idols as a female-oriented practice. Whereas, it should have been directed toward the criticism of the problem of polytheistic societies that were predicated on the hierarchy grounded in the access to the gods obtained through physical possession. The ancient societies may not have fought over their religious beliefs, but the possession of the representation of the deity (or symbols of wealth) of the conquered people was certainly critical to the triumphant side and seen as the sign of that deity sanctioning the winner, or the conqueror’s deity as more powerful. This was due to an overlap between the sacred and secular powers. As Lerner notes in the ancient Mesopotamia, “it is characteristic of leadership in . . . [the] early period that there is a merging of divine and secular power personified by the ruler” (59). In some cases, the ruler established himself by taking over the temples (Lerner 62). So, perhaps the prohibition of giving material representation meant there would be no symbol of oppression against the vanquished, hence undermining an artificial and imposed hierarchy that undoubtedly led to inequity. Generally speaking, possession of the physical manifestation of people’s beliefs was one way through which power was exerted over the population. Although this may be an
example where one could argue that among the ancient cultures, no one had sympathy for the vanquished and they were expected to receive the harshest of treatments, to which my response would be, perhaps this is what monotheism had emerged to change. However, in reality this is not what happened.

It seems the study of patriarchy necessitates a closer look at what documents the beginnings: The Book of Genesis. Lerner believes that we often forget how much of what is written in the Bible is actually drawn from earlier texts, and how much of the Bible has been instrumental in forming laws to this day. She states:

It is . . . taken for granted that earlier Sumero-Babylonian, Canaanite, and Egyptian cultural materials were adapted and transformed by the writers and redactors of the Bible and that contemporary practices, laws and customs of neighboring peoples were reflected in its narrative.  

Lerner keenly points out that regardless of the belief in the Divine essence of the book, it has been “the work of many hands” giving it shape, in the case of the Book of Genesis, over a period of four hundred years (162). Her numerous examples bring into focus, not only the linkage between the pre-existing traditions, but also the different and sometimes conflicting accounts in the biblical stories of creation (182). What is certain nonetheless is that the woman represents man’s first “other.” Thus, more pertinent to this study are the stories about women and specifically the portrayal of Eve in the story of Genesis. According to Lerner, the two different written versions of the creation of Eve reveal an inconsistency in relation to Adam. One interpretation, which is also the most literal, has dominated the studies of the subject for thousands of years; it is that which deems Eve inferior to Adam, for she is believed to have been created out of Adam’s rib (183). Although feminists have tried
to offer alternate interpretations, it seems it has been a great challenge to dispute the one
dominant interpretation that indeed has suited patriarchy so well. As a result of this
dominance, other perspectives are then marginalized and eventually forgotten. Among such
alternate interpretations, Lerner mentions a brilliant one from a seventeen-year old Rachel
Speght, the daughter of an English clergy man. Rachel argued, as quoted by Lerner: “Shee
[Eve] was not produced from Adam’s foote, to be his low inferior nor from his head to be his
superior, but from his side, near his heart to be his equal” (Lerner 184, and Rachel Speght, A
Mouzell for Melastomus, the Cynical Bayter and foul-mouthed Barker against Evah’s Sex,
London 1617). Therefore, the challenge here may not lie in the lack of creative, competing
interpretations, but rather in how one becomes dominant and serves the interest of patriarchy.
The short answer is through violence that alienates individuals and prevents them from being
a subject to themselves. History of monotheism offers great examples of this alienation,
almost all involving a sort of “sleight of hand,” that is to say a creative way of unifying with
one stroke, and discriminating with another, for patriarchal purposes.

The canonization of the Mosaic Law was finalized around 450 BCE by Ezra, the
scribe, during the time the Kingdom of Judah became allies with and under the domination of
the Persian Empire (Lerner 162). With the political and military support of the Persian
Imperials, a particular interpretation of Jewish history rose to prominence in Ezra’s work.129
In his version, Ezra gave the emphasis to the purity of the blood of the “chosen people.”
(Book of Ezra, 9:2).130 Therefore, with violence enforced by the Persian Imperial rule, Ezra
“dislodged” the Jewish inhabitants of Jerusalem before he was able to instate his own
interpretations of the Mosaic Law. While generally Moses has been regarded as the founder
of Jewish monotheism, the roots of monotheism, as mentioned earlier, go back to
approximately four hundred years earlier, to the time of the biblical patriarch Abraham,
whose covenant with God is a fundamental factor in distinguishing his descendants, presumably through a paternal lineage, as the “chosen people” (Lerner 163). The key to understanding this presumption, Lerner argues, is in “the social conditions which are reflected in the Book of Genesis.”\(^{131}\) Noteworthy here is, Ezra’s interpretation of “chosen people” is held up to assert a debt to be paid, a debt for which war and vengeance seem to have been recurring themes among the people in that region since the biblical times.\(^{132}\)

Considering the fact that such social conditions continue to hold contempt for women and the “othering” of non-chosen people, Ezra’s interpretations effectively preserve the same regard for the place of women as for alterity in the non-chosen people. In such conditions, most appropriate here is the examination of the exchange value in a human economy.

Graeber elaborates further on such “conditions” discussed by Lerner from the perspective of debt. He unpacks the issue of “violence” and its institutionalization during this historical time period to explain how a unique being, particularly a woman, whose identity and ties were defined by her relationship to her family or community, would be “ripped” from her social cohesion before she would be subject to slavery or exchangeable with objects through war or vengeance (159). Such violence, according to Graeber, is not merely a metaphor, but actual, as in when “the ancient Hebrews spoke of their daughter in ‘bondage,’ they were . . . talking about literal ropes and chains” (ibid). “I am not speaking strictly of slavery here,” Graeber exclaims however, “but of that process that dislodges people from the webs of mutual commitment, shared history, and collective responsibility that make them what they are, so as to make them exchangeable—that is, to make it possible to make them subject to the logic of debt” (163). But, what does the “logic of debt” do to the individual subjectivity beyond a material exchange? One way to explore the link between “debt” and subjectivity is to explore the power of words.
In the example of Ezra, the carefully arranged words provide credibility by referencing the sources of past authorities in Jewish history (e.g. Juda, Benjamin, Israel) and the edict of the Persian kings (Ezra, 4:1-24 and 6:10-11). Terms such as “chosen people” or “Philistine” are constant reminders of how a patriarchy both unified and strengthened its own position through alterity. Lerner states: “The Israeli victory and the need for unity against the Philistines reinforced tendencies toward strong leadership among the twelve tribes.” This need for unity eventually brings about the rise to power of biblical kings (165).

With the formation of states and monarchy, the undisputed authority of patriarchy evolved from strictly a feature of the tribes to a characteristics of the clan in general. By 1050 BCE, which, according to Lerner, was when the period of state formation began in Israel, monotheism, monarchy and patriarchy had already melded. Such overlap was not unlike what already existed among “Israel’s Mesopotamian neighbors” (168). What the state formation entails is, on the one hand, curtailing the father’s unlimited power over his family’s life or death, and, on the other, the arrangement of property, in particular landholdings, which was a patrilineal responsibility. Lerner explains: “The effect of these landholding patterns was to strengthen clan allegiance and to give great stability to the patriarchal-tribal organizations from one generation to the next (169). The Jewish women, however, held less privileges than their Mesopotamian counterparts (171). Yet, Lerner underscores the role biblical women played in the transition of matrilocality to patrilocality, significant with regards to property (168). Her indirect hint at the link between the ‘teraphim,’ or the ‘house-gods’ and what legitimized one’s title to property/estate is an example of the main thesis in this study. This reference is not unlike when in the 9th century the monks at Conques stole the reliquary of Sainte Foy (St. Faith) from Agen, as they both point to the value bestowed by humans upon a physical and artistic representation
of what was deemed to be of spiritual importance and which signaled prestige and wealth. Thus, as was through words, the establishing and domination of one interpretation was achieved in imagery as well. In fact, the use of imagery never went away and has been an integral part of any established authoritative system. Here, it is necessary to address the significance of imagery and image-making in relation to patriarchy.

**Patriarchy’s Image and Imagination**

Being a product of imagination itself, patriarchy has relied on art and imagination for centuries, as attested to by art historical evidence. The associations between artistic productions and both religious and secular establishments recede far in time. Perhaps it can even be traced back, as discussed earlier, to the time when humans understood how to imagine projecting power to represent physically something intangible, and then link this process to some mystical and magical source. Nevertheless, what Foucault calls “pastoral power technique” (a synthesis between the rural beliefs and customs, and the established urban infrastructures) should be kept in view in the creative process and its utilization by patriarchy. Through what process has the power of imagination and by extension exaggeration played a key role in shaping individuals under patriarchal domination? The answer rests in the historical accounts of sacred images.

The power of imagination, as argued by anthropologists, may have even preceded the act of creating iconic objects, that is to say, objects resembling humans or animals. Edwyn Bevan, in *Holy Images* (1940) states:

[A] material object identified with a god need not resemble anything else . . . [I]t may be a shapeless stone or a tree […] Anthropologists have told us that image worship
was preceded by an earlier stage in which the material objects treated with religious regard by man were *aniconic*, rocks and trees, springs and rivers, not things shaped by man’s hands to resemble any living thing (13).

Clearly, as it appears from this passage, what the earlier humans achieved had more to do with their imagination tightly interwoven with their emotions (possibly dominated by the emotion of fear) and passions than just technical skill in shaping the material itself. The primeval human emotion of fear, then, has been preserved or protected within what his imagination could conjure and transferred from one generation to the next. Whereas the early humans’ fears were part of their necessary survival mechanism, the deeply buried fears find new ways of manifestation in later times, as “deferred action,” and remain a determining factor in subject formation.136

Edmund Burke, in *A Philosophical Enquiry* notes “[n]o passion so effectively robs the mind of all its powers of acting and reasoning as fear” (53). Friedrich Schiller, in *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* argues that “[m]an is superior to every terror of Nature so long as he knows how to give form to it, and to turn it into his object” (121). Both Schiller and Burke acknowledge the link between the emotions and art, but argue for regulating the passions under reason toward idealistic goals. However, the imagination that veils the primeval fear is not excavated deeply enough to expose this emotion. Perhaps Baudelaire expresses it most aptly:

*Countless layers of ideas, images, feelings have fallen successively on your brain as softly as light. It seems that each buries the preceding, but none has really perished.*137

The link between the products of imagination and the emotions can explain why art has been expected, for the most part, to be responded to by way of emotions. It further makes
clear how art has been an effective part of the patriarchal techniques of power. To investigate how such techniques work, one must look to a time when fear prompted human imagination to select objects for the spiritual appeasement of forces he has felt threatened by, yet did not have any control over.138

Believing a piece of wood or stone to have “power for good and evil” prompted certain treatment of it in order to attract the benevolent forces and to deflect the evil ones (Bevan 14). This treatment corresponds to the vulnerability humans experienced with regard to natural occurrences, for instance. Further, as gathered from the developed rituals surrounding objects of worship, simply making an image did not necessarily bring about the qualification of divine status (Bevan 31). The development of such rituals adds another layer of creative and imaginary work. Selecting a particular piece of stone or wood, or perhaps enhancing a found natural form to resemble a familiar object, such as a face, was then accompanied by some sort of justification to attenuate humans’ senses of uncertainty, insecurity, powerlessness and fear. Objects imbued with human-projected imagined powers eventually were adopted, classified and ranked into systems established by urban structures, thus being absorbed into organized, religious structures. The belief that somehow there was an unseen link between an object and a living being crystallized into rituals and practices such as “sympathetic magic” (Bevan 27). In the times of distress, such as invasions by foreign armies, as argued by Bevan, cries to an unreachable divine helper might have been redirected to the deity at hand in material form, for the relief sought as such was deemed more immediate (28).139 Lerner deems this ability to be what distinguishes humans from animals, for humans “make mental constructs to explain the meaning of their existence and their relationship to the supernatural” (199). Such connections were clearly not reason-based,
as explained by Bevan, but rather “understandable as the outcome of intense desire and passion” (27).

What this study is concerned with, however, following the establishing of the aforementioned connections, is how the products of imagination and their dominance have impacted the shaping of passive, subservient subjectivities. I will be focusing on the two key emotions Aristotle is concerned with in his *Poetics*: “fear” and “pity.” In the opening, I noted the seemingly paradoxical strategies upon which patriarchy has established itself: imagined grounds for unity and “othering,” which are in fact two sides of the same strategy. How has this strategy translated into works of art, for instance, the syncretic transferring of the power of one deity’s representation, when necessary, into another? And how did objects, or even ideas, imbued by imagined power become the center of artificial unities and instrumental in systematic othering, benefiting none other than patriarchal systems?

**Artificial Unities: From Antiquities to the Infusion of Neoplatonic Philosophy into Islamic Thoughts, Art, Mimesis, Purification and the State**

There is very little argument about the influential power of art and its ability to shape a culture, forge a civilization or even inform who we are today. What is often taken for granted, however, is how artistic products can operate beyond the level of consciousness, through emotions, when involving the collective, particularly in the hands of the state. After all, humans have been called “social animals,” but that is not by default. All social interactions are predicated on learning the skill, given the emotional traits they bring into the mix with them. I could have considered “pleasure” or “pain,” but as Corey Robin concurs with Locke (*Second Treatise of Government*, 84), and Burke (*An Enquiry*, 32), “without fear, we are passive; with it, we are roused to ‘the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of
feeling.” (Fear: The History, 4). Arendt also notes human action to be driven not by “pleasure but pain,” and “not desire, but fear are his true guides” (The Human Condition, 309). Therefore, the “rousing” factor has been the element of “fear.” Art has served as a “unifier” predicated on managing “fear” long before Aristotle wrote his Poetics. But, perhaps Aristotle’s Poetics is the first time such art is considered within a political context.

To be sure, it is not by accident that Aristotle pivots his idea on the two emotions, “fear” and “pity.” Both are grounded in movement or action for change. Robin, in Fear: The History of a Political Idea notes:

[F]ear alerts us to real danger or propels us to take action against it . . . [F]ear is supposed to arouse a heightened state of experience . . . It quickens our perception as no other emotion can, forcing us to see and to act in the world in new and more interesting ways, with greater moral discrimination and a more acute consciousness of our surroundings and ourselves (4).

The definition of “pity,” as indirectly elaborated on by Aristotle, is when the feeling of sadness takes over, when one understands the injustice in the unfolding of events, when the audience beholds one does not deserve what one gets (Poetics, xxi). Aristotle does not directly point to the link between “pity” and justice, nor does he state anything regarding the “othering” involved in the process of “catharsis.” This is because he is concerned with purging the undesirable and potentially dangerous, unpredictable emotions that could threaten the republic his teacher had crafted.

Thus, Aristotle sets out to channel and manage the emotions of fear and pity through tragedy, with its most important element, plot (Poetics, xxi). This formula has been a perfect
match for patriarchy’s two sided strategy: creating artificial unity and systematically promoting alterity.

Patriarchy’s Artificial Unities: from Antiquity to Modern Times Imagined through Art

It is necessary here to discuss and demonstrate how art has been an effective instrumental State Apparatus that has altered the ability of a society toward change by means of the Aristotelian formula. The use of “fear” to create a cause to bring about political unity is one objective still in use to this day; even though “modern writers and politicians oppose political fear as the enemy of liberty, reason, and other Enlightenment values, they often embrace it . . . as a source of political vitality.” This is evident in the “collective renewal of the fear” in the aftermath of events such as September 11 or, further back, Soviet despotism during the Cold War era (Robin, 4). But the “political fear,” which must be established on political events, according to Robin, cannot be effectively accomplished if the emotion of fear had not been capitalized on as it has been.

The glorious history of artistic and cultural development in the foundations of Western civilization is filled with examples of art aiming, on the one hand, to put fear in the hearts of people, make them feel insignificant and self-alienated and, on the other, to synthesize collective passive subjectivities, in other words, artificial unities. An early example that brought people together in a ritual-related location is the relatively recently discovered “Göbekli Tepe” in Turkey.

While the excavation is still ongoing in Göbekli Tepe, some information has come to light. A number of “walled enclosures” in circular form have been found on this site, dated to be approximately 7000 years older than Stonehenge, but share “an enigmatic sense of
unfathomed ritual significance." Upright carved stones, quarried in one piece, in T-shape forms, and have been decorated using shallow relief carvings of animals, foxes, cranes, boars, etc. Evidence tells us people came from near and far, and they gathered there possibly for religious purposes, because no remains of permanent settlements have been found for about a 50 mile radius (Spivy, 47). Nevertheless, according to the site’s excavator, Göbekli Tepe marks ‘the dawn of a new world, a world with powerful rulers and a complex, stratified, hierarchical society’ (Spivy, 48).

**Artistic Implications into the Present Time**

What have the implications of art serving patriarchy been? How have they shaped subjectivities? Where do the Abrahamic traditions fit in? The development and utilization of the visual arts within the Islamic cultures is a peculiar problem. At its strictest, in accordance with the same Commandment put forth by Moses, Islam forbids the depiction of living beings. Yet, there are numerous examples of figurative imagery found throughout Islamic lands. The compelling question here is why? What is the concern with imagery?

To be sure, the fear of returning to idol worshipping may be the first answer that comes to mind. However, as mentioned earlier, the issue should be considered in the broader scope of the human potentiality to imagine, to create, and to exaggerate. Just as we are able to make things out of wood or stone, we have the capability of projecting intangible meanings on to what we make: a sort of intellectual creation that parallels the physical fabrication. According to recent studies explicated earlier, when brought under certain circumstances, our brain, which is hardwired for such activity, can generate vivid images.
In the minds of prehistoric humans, experiencing such visions must have seemed like a supernatural event and attributed to contacting another world, hence blending into religious rituals and beliefs. As the early cities developed and religion became institutionalized, such activities were organized and utilized to serve the priest-kings and temples. Here rests the connection between religion, politics and image making, which enabled a few to claim access and exclude or control other members of the community’s access. This produced a privileged class protected and enforced by religious rules and rituals that implemented unfair policies and did not regard individual rights; additionally, such a class was divisive and in competition with rival religious groups that had their own hierarchies, and often led to constant warfare. But, the issue goes beyond the physical idols and idol worshiping; it is deeply rooted in the human tendency to believe in self-produced illusions of the Divine and illusory concepts of self-righteousness. What better way to distinguish oneself from one’s “other?”

There have been serious implications, as testified to by history, for societies with religious practices based on such illusions if we are concerned with values like human and civil rights. The focus here, however, is on recognizing the power of human creativity and distinguishing it from the Divinity or the Divine Himself. This is why image making was forbidden in monotheism, mostly evoked when speaking of the Islamic faith; yet, as with their Jewish and Christian predecessors, it did not inhibit Muslims from creating imagery, visually or intellectually. The reason may rest in the infusion of patriarchy with historic monotheism.145

It may be considered that often, following the domination of new ideologies in regions with established cultures, the pre-existing traditions, in resistance and response to or
out of reconciliation, prompt the philosophers and theoreticians as well as artists to lay out
different ways of explaining and interpreting the new ideas in order to create unity within a
culture and to prevent its complete disintegration.  

This has often taken place as a means to maintain a sort of consistency, albeit through
conflicts, and a political power’s domination. The ongoing violent events in the Middle East
are constant reminder of this and cases in point. Therefore, it is not implausible that these
integrated theories and philosophies have been utilized to construct image, prestige and
power through words and the visual arts, and this has proven a particularly significant and
effective strategy for an emerging culture, civilization, or even an ideology. But, creating
unity, which I will call “artificial unity,” is only half of the story. The other half is the
systematic “othering” that ensures conflict. Anywhere there is a patriarchal rule, one finds
both “artificial unity” and “alterity” as two strategies working alongside one another.

MONOTHEISM AND THE ISSUE OF THE “OTHER:” INNER VERSUS OUTER ALTERITY

Holding in view the first instance of “alterity” that “others” the woman for the man, it
seems necessary to begin here with a definition of the term. Emmanuel Levinas, in Totality
and Infinity defines alterity as “the radical heterogeneity of the other,” that which stands
radically different from the self representing the other (36). But the point of departure is
where the “I” stands, as the “I” is consistently reassessing its “identity,” for a great deal
happens to it as it moves through time. Levinas states:

A term can remain absolutely at the point of departure of relationship only as I.” […]

The I is not a being that always remains the same, but is the being whose existing
consists in identifying itself, in recovering its identity throughout all that happens to it. It is the primal identity, the primordial work of identification.\(^{149}\)

Thus, Levinas deems two states of alterity: all that stands distinct from the self and a state in which the self stands as its own “other.” Such relationships exist among people and cultures, and it has even permeated the written history of philosophy. Peter Park argues, for instance, that the exclusion of Europe’s “other,” namely Africa and Asia, was because the Europeans “deemed them too primitive and incapable of philosophy” (Park 2013, 2). Here, I have no intention of proposing why that is the case or whether we can do away with the issue of “othering.” What I am interested in is the idea that learning, the progression of thoughts and ideas, consciousness in short, have all taken place in moments when they have been projected through the cultural “other,” but we rarely hear about it. Perhaps this is because the monotheism that reaches us is a “historical” monotheism that has primarily been operating in a divisive manner, within or without its own boundaries.\(^{150}\)

A case in point is the development of the Continental Philosophy in Europe. The Hegelian dialectic discourse, which itself developed from the Cartesian “I” through Kant’s autonomous self, was decentralized and became dialogical once the discourse on the issue of subjectivity was moved to the “edges” or parerga, to use Derrida’s term, when transcended the German border, spilling back over into France. This “slippage” happened analogous to Lacan’s theory of the development of individual consciousness forming by reflecting off of others, as in the case of the philosophical consciousness between the German and French philosophers in their alterity.\(^{151}\) According to Lacan’s theory, this takes place through the art of language (Lacan in Keenan, 210). While the German philosophers insisted on the aesthetics as the interface facilitating the process of the development of consciousness and
subject formation, the “French” philosophers, or better said what evolved there from, directly or indirectly emphasized the art of language as key in this process. The German philosophers therefore, I suggest, projected the subject onto a narcissistic mirror that concealed the need for “other,” but the French called attention to and disseminated through language, voice and verbal communication apparent in the writings that reflect “several Hegels” that emerged subsequently. The resulting egocentrism in German philosophy could not get beyond the central axis of the self, around which the Idealists and the Romantics had gathered.

Analogously, subsequent to the “translation movement” in Andalusia and in the 10th century under the Abbasid Caliphate in the Middle East that was manifested through sciences, upon returning to Europe, became instrumental in the European Renaissance. However, this exchange had no reciprocations on the same scale whereby a dialogism could continue.

The Role of “Islamic Philosophy” in Helping to Shape European Renaissance

While there has recently been more attention paid to the role the Muslims played in Europe’s rebirth in science, there has been very little discussion about the underlying philosophy. While the West sees itself as the true heir to Greco-Roman achievements, it is not through Ancient Greece or Rome that the West accesses those achievements. To be sure, not all the translated texts were Greek in origin, and as Peter Adamson (2016) has argued, Muslims did more than just preserve the knowledge from the antiquity (8–9).

Hans Belting (2011) points to the “explosively controversial implication of such texts” that “did not become evident until the Renaissance, in the work of Copernicus, for
example, or, in the case of the camera obscura, in the work of Kepler and Descartes.”

Referencing the “visual,” Belting demonstrates the significance Western and the Middle Eastern cultures’ place on perspective and light. He sums up the Arab contribution: “[I]t may suffice to note that while Arab visual theory gave a predominant role to light, which is essentially aniconic, it relegated pictures to the realm of the mind exclusively.”

Viewed from another angle, Belting’s argument that the “invention of perspective and its essential tie to the gaze of an observer” rests at the root of the differences between the “West and the Arab world” (55) seems incomplete. He does note the combination of the two informs the “sharp contrast to the restrictive control placed on the gaze in many Islamic societies” (ibid). Nevertheless, the monolithic gaze offered through the already determined linear perspective of the artists (often representing the establishment) seems to escape Belting’s keen eye. Thus, there exists “control” over what is viewed collectively in both the “West and the Arab world.” However, as with Lacan’s mirror stage, necessary in the development of the child’s individuality, the control that takes place (mis)leads the individual to believe it is his/her own view in the West. This is due to the conflict, or “gap,” that ultimately materializes, which raises questions and the individual answers to such questions. Contrastingly, for instance, the decision to “plaster over” images, as in 1847 after uncovering of the murals in the Aya Sofya in Istanbul by Sultan Abdülmecid (ruled 1839-1861), speaks to how the manipulation of the “gaze” in imagery prevented the same experience from taking place among the Muslim population. The “gap” is therefore concealed from the Muslims view.

The question here still persists as to how such activities led toward individualism, more or less, in the West, but did not bring about the same results for the inhabitants of the
Middle East. I pose this question with the understanding that “individuality” is not the ultimate destination in the project of human freedom; it is rather a step toward that direction, just as in the child’s development of the self/individual (Lacan in AiT 620).

The Space between the Individual and the Collective

In the human freedom project, the individual’s relationship with respect to the collective (community/society) has, to a large extent, been the subject of numerous discussions among philosophers and other thinkers, virtually since the beginning of philosophy as we know it. Here, I am not aiming to review all that has been proposed on this matter, as that lies beyond the scope of this study. I intend to investigate nevertheless this relationship from the perspective of the “gap” that exists between two seemingly opposing entities, i.e., the individual and the collective in this case.

In The Truth in Painting Derrida raises, from a footnote in Kant, an argument that questions the “finality without end” in Kant’s Critique of Judgment. In other words, he detects a space-in-between, a “gap,” that blurs the edges in the judgment of taste as articulated by Kant. If we understand “gap” to appear where there is apparent conflict, then, I suggest, just as it did with Derrida, it can offer opportunities to arrive at the possibility of multiple answers to the question raised in this study, which is: why hasn’t individuality flourished in the Middle East?

Earlier, I established a connection between patriarchy’s “artificial unity” and “othering” strategies that manipulate subjectivities. Aristotle’s answer to Plato’s separation of the “pure” and “impure,” to use Kristeva’s terms, in his republic was his justification of mimesis and the experiencing of the “tragedy” for cathartic purposes in his Poetics. Put
differently, the “gap” between the “pure” and the “impure,” in Aristotle’s view, is transformed into a space in which the undesirable emotions of “fear” and “pity” can be purged and homogeneity can be maintained to protect the unity needed within the republic. Therefore, “gaps” are threatening for patriarchy’s desired uniformity; thus, they are either transformed, as in the case with Aristotle, or concealed through imagination, exaggeration and creative endeavors in the art sponsored by patriarchy in power, as with the Safavids in seventeenth century Iran.

During the Renaissance and upon the revival and reemergence of the works from antiquity, initially there was concern over the conflict—gap—between Christianity and pagan knowledge and art, as well as science/reason and religion/faith. This is evident in the works of artists of the period, such as Michelangelo (1475-1564) and Veronese (1528-1588). While both artists worked closely with the patriarchal establishment, they expressed a certain degree of individuality in their work that did not always meet with the authorities’ approval. In his book *The Cheese and the Worms* ([1980] 2013), Carlo Ginzburg’s research on the story of a sixteenth century miller, who was tried and executed by the inquisition tribunal, highlights another such moment of individuality. Among his accusations was that “he maintained that the world had its origin in putrefaction” (xi). Whereas his worldview had taken shape from a “peasant culture,” (using the analogy of how cheese is produced through the natural process and the worms to explain creation) that which came from lived-experience, it did not bode well with the church’s interpretation, which was predicated not on the real world, but idealistically and through imagination.

The art that concealed the “gap” sponsored by the Safavids, prevented in Persia the kinds of individual expressions that were taking place in contemporary Europe. The primary
purpose of the ideology and supporting art was to preserve the unity. To this end, the added “supplement outside the work,” which Derrida calls *parergon*, is “what comes to be added to *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone* without being a part of it and yet without being absolutely extrinsic to it” (1987, 55).

Furthermore, the question arises as to who claims and ultimately benefits from the added interest? In Europe, the artist initiates this process, and is even admonished for it; the surviving documents of the trials of the artists and scientists attest to the presence of the conflict. In Safavid Persia, the king’s divine claim is well established, and therefore art merely gives the claim its material form, and nearly without any traces of conflict.161 The development of the Safavids and their philosophical foundations are subjects of the next chapter.

In this chapter, I demonstrated that there is interest in the developmental process of creativity, patriarchy and subject formation. The phenomenological investigation reached back into the earliest known times of human artistic endeavors, in the caves. My argument draws attention to an alternative explanation for the creative endeavors that is predicated on the necessity (a lack or void in reason) and what matters the most sympathetically or culturally. I also discussed historic examples that explicate the development of patriarchy, underscoring the ever so important issue of debt that has shaped and continues to inform subjectivities.

Patriarchy’s strategy of “alterity,” brings up its first “other,” which is women. I have discussed the roots of misogyny from the Neolithic cultures to the antiquity and beyond. The emergence of the Monotheistic traditions, and their relationship with “word” and “image,” as well as the infusion of Neoplatonism in these traditions have also been addressed. This
chapter also demonstrated how learning through “alterity” has been fruitful for the Europeans, but in turn the same process did not occur in the Middle East.
CHAPTER THREE

THE EMERGENCE OF THE SAFAVIDS:

THE PHILOSOPHICAL AND ARTISTIC AFFIRMATIONS

Oh my beautiful Shah [Ali] my moon, the fulfillment of my desires, the beloved of my heart. Oh Thou, in whose beauty God manifests himself.¹⁶²

I am Faridun, Khusrow, Jamshid, and Zohak. I am Zal’s son (Rustam) and Alexander . . . I belong to the religion of the ‘Adherent of the Vali [Ali]’ and on the Shah’s path I am a guide to everyone who says: ‘I am a Muslim.’¹⁶³

— Shah Isma’il (Khata’i)

The nearly two and a quarter centuries of the Safavids’ rule (1501 - 1722) has been heralded debatably as the time during which the groundwork for modern Iran was laid through the resurrection of ancient ideas.¹⁶⁴ The story of the Safavids can therefore be thought of as a story of revival, of rebirth, however Persian in style as the founders identified with Persia’s splendid mytho-historical past. This revival was eventually implemented by a powerful central governing system inspired, at least in part, by the pre-Islamic idea of “king of kings.”¹⁶⁵ However, just as the ancient model of the “king of kings” (Shahanshah) implied the ascent of the Persian king above all kings, the Safavids “created” and promoted an ideology—from the infusion of Hellenistic thoughts, myths and preexisting beliefs with iterations of Islam—that allowed the Safavid king to view his position above the diverse groups that the Safavids subjugated in their rise to power. How the Safavids achieved this objective through artistic endeavors in practice is the subject of this chapter, which not only aims at offering a different perspective on the meaning and purpose of the creative arts they
espoused, but also seeks to open up the significance of the “creative arts” as a process that maps onto “patriarchy” so well that at times they seem imperceptible and inseparable from it.

The investigation of “creativity” as such is of particular concern in this study, insofar as it manipulates subjectivities at the expense of individualism.166 Hence, in this chapter, I am interested in how, through the creative process, the Safavids maneuvered to promote a unified, crafted discourse that shaped “Modern” Iran’s religion, culture, and identity, albeit from their diverse contemporary discourses. Moreover, I am concerned with how the Safavids successfully established the basis for alterity that strengthened and ensured the longevity of the newly founded dynasty. Both strategies have had long lasting imprints in the region, and their impact are still felt to this day. I intend to examine the link between these strategies and “imagination,” and its extension, “exaggeration.” On the basis of that link, I suggest, while the Safavid project may have brought political unification, to the country we know as Iran today, it left “individualism” reliant on the Safavid patriarchal ideology predicated on imagination and exaggeration, made tangible and claimable through artistic/creative activities. As a result, collective subjectivity grew stronger to the detriment of individual, diverse thinking. This is in contrast to the views of the German Idealists, whose vision, just as with the Safavids, coincidentally align with Neoplatonic philosophy, and who deemed art and creativity to represent a pathway to freedom.167 Consequently, contrary to the German Idealists’ understandings of the liberating powers of art, under the Safavids, creativity in general and its manifestations in various art forms in particular, contributed to the production of a collective cultural ego and a “herd instinct,”168 both instrumental in the longevity of Safavids’ religio-political ideology.
In the *Safavid Iran: Rebirth of a Persian Empire*, Andrew Newman notes the endurance of the Safavids in comparison to their European contemporaries, concluding that such survival was due to “[t]he distinctly heterogeneous ‘discourse’ of the shah” (8). Newman maintains the success of the Safavid story may rest in how they unified the various constituents. He states:

That discourse itself comprising both statements and actions — reflected and thereby legitimized the individual discourses of each of the polity’s constituent elements and facilitated both the recognition and incorporation of ‘new’ constituencies into the project . . . and [therefore] the transcendence and thus the subordination of each.¹⁶⁹

This chapter will therefore begin with the genesis of the Safavids and the contributory role of “imagination” and “exaggeration” in their rise to power as the new patriarchy. Further, concerning the sources of inspiration for the ideology espoused by the Safavids, the exemplary visions and influences of Ibn Arabi will be discussed. What follows next will include the examination of selected visual works, from the preceding conventions to the repertoire of the artists at the Safavids’ court, to underscore and expound two instrumental concepts, namely the “Unity of Existence” and the “Perfect Man.” Finally, a comparative look at the Neoplatonic connections between the Safavid art, as inspired by the philosophical thoughts of the period, and the German Idealist views on art will suggest why the artistic endeavors have not ushered in free-thinking individualism under and beyond the Safavids.
The “conventional wisdom” traces the lineage of the Safavids to a Sufi order, based in Ardabil, founded by Shaykh Safi-al Din (1252-1334) (Newman 2). However, as the founder of the Safavid dynasty, the complexity of Shah Isma’il’s formative years speaks directly to how the preludes to his unifying idea took shape. What makes the Safavids an appropriate case study here is that the elements facilitating the formation of the new patriarchy are, in one way or another, predicated on a sort of “creative” or invented discourse. These elements include, among others, a hybridized heritage, military loyalty and capacity, a climate of diverse discourses and constituents, and internal as well as external politico-economic tensions and opportunities.

There is very little dispute in how Shah Isma’il saw himself, as he put forth an encompassing and transcendental image of himself in his poetry, the examples of which open this chapter. Nevertheless, during his formative years, those who surrounded him, protected him and rescued him from being eliminated by rival forces may have had a hand in how this image was molded. While much of the history written about Shah Isma’il tends to create a mystical aura around his persona, in retrospect, perhaps in part prompted by the necessity of what was about to happen (i.e. the emergence of the new Safavid dynasty), historical evidence validates a long and trying process with extraordinary circumstances at work prior to his arriving at the helm of the new empire. Even so, ultimately his image in his poetry, which was to address his Qizilbash supporters (who became his devoted military forces), as an example, reveals the propaganda of how he shaped his supporters’ heart and
minds, and this played an instrumental part in his ascent to power. But the affiliation of the Qizilbash to the Safavi house had begun earlier. (See Appendix I)

The devotional ties of Qizilbash to the Safavi Order can be traced back to around 1447, when “owing to an influx of levies from a number of Turkish tribes, the order is said to have embraced a new militant, messianic religio-political discourse” (Newman 2). These devotional ties were predicated on ghuluww, or exaggeration, in viewing the leaders of the order as divine, which appears to have been part of Safavid propaganda. Savory deems this to be a kind of “extremism” which came about due to the Mongol invasion interrupting 600 years of caliphal orthodox rule. For the “religious tolerance . . . of the Mongol rulers deprived Sunni or ‘orthodox’ Islam of its dominant position” (23). A breathing space was thereby created for the development of other groups including the “extremist” Shi’i and the popular Sufi religions that flourished. Babayan differentiates between the terms ghuluww and “extremism” (xlvi) in that ghuluww manifests an identity closely linked with a particular belief in the cyclical nature of time and its continuity and rejects the emphasis on the “end-time” discourse (xvii). Referencing Ricoeur’s “pervasiveness of time,” she notes the relationship between the “temporal conceptions to the way we act,” and even to the way we create cultural products in particular (xix, xxiii).

How does the “temporal conception” link with “exaggeration? How do we explain the phenomenon of “exaggeration?” Is it associated with imagination? Is this exaggeration the remnants of what the prehistoric artists expressed in the statue of the Woman of Willendorf? In other words, is it an innate instinct that aggrandizes what is important to humans at a given moment in history? Or, is it the equivalent of what the Greeks in the Riaci statues willfully tweaked, as demanded by their culture, to create an overwhelming
transcendental effect through exaggeration (Spivy 81)? Does our view of time determine what we create? What is the role of culture in modifying how we perceive these creations?

Here it appears necessary to elaborate on the notion of “ghuluww,” or exaggeration with respect to imagination. Early on, in chapter two, I argued for the possibility of imagination, and particularly visualizing pictures, when there is light deprivation to the brain in the visual experience. Similarly, the brain, in the interest of self-preservation, creates its own links when it feels endangered. The brain fills the gap of the unknown when not enough information enters the active mind. Viewed differently, is it plausible then to ask: when the reality is too harsh to face, do humans tend to surpass or circumvent the reality by way of exaggeration? Do “fear and pity” play a role in the act of “exaggeration?” As the product of the mind, exaggeration is directly linked with our temporal conception. If we consider the link between the “temporal conception” and the exaggerations about the Safavids’ founder, and if Shah Isma’il’s crafted persona can be seen as a cultural product, predicated on the Qizilbash’s cyclical cosmology, as suggested by Babayan, Ricoeur’s theory holds that all cultural productions such as “literary . . . visual . . . and [the] symbolic” are subject to the influence of “the pervasiveness of time.”

*Ghuluww* or exaggeration means in Arabic, “to exceed the proper boundary” (Babayan xlvi), and while denoting transgression, it can also point to limitations or deficiencies. Alexander García Düttmann, in *Philosophy of Exaggeration* notes a link between “thought” and “exaggeration,” arguing that the latter not only signals a boundary, but that it exposes the thought itself (15). The question here is: what does constitute the boundary? Düttmann states:
Every inside and every outside that arise through a demarcation of a limit are in themselves open and cannot enclose this openness without in turn exposing themselves to it. What opens within them is the abyss of the unmanageable or the sublime, of pure exaggeration, which can no longer be contained by any given demarcation and transgression of a limit. 181

Can the boundary be the unbearable reality, as in what T.S. Elliot asserts in his *Four Quartets*: “humankind cannot bear much reality?” Exaggeration, therefore, can be seen as a way to get past the limitations of what may be challenging or nearly impossible to face or tolerate. This may bring further into focus why Babayan deems *ghuluww* to be a form of resistance; the syncretic synthesis of myths is a “creative way in which cultural production is negotiated” in opposition to dominant discourses (xviii, 135). I must clarify. I use the term *ghuluww* here not just in its particular capacity as applied to the devoted followers of the Safavids, but rather in its broader meaning that includes the creative act of exaggeration as a counter force and an opposition—with the idea of preservation behind it—to the dominant thoughts.

It can be argued that the “exaggeration” became institutionalized once the Safavid dynasty materialized. This took place through the “unified language of [Kor]anic truth,” according to Babayan, which eliminated the “very language with which they led a successful revolution in early Modern Iran” (xix). However, it was well replaced by other forms of cultural productions, encompassing literary works (e.g. history, poetry, epics), visual products (e.g. painting, architecture), and symbolic inventions (e.g. rituals, celebrations) that served the Safavids more effectively.
Creativity as an Ideological State Apparatus

Perhaps, Shah Isma’il’s own poetry is an appropriate place to commence addressing this topic. Both Newman and Babayan take note of Isma’il’s pen name, *Khata’i* (the culpable), but make no connection between it and his poems, as a mark of humility, in which he claims to be “the absolute truth” (Newman 13), and “of divine nature” (Babayan xxxi). Babayan does bring up the fact that as a Muslim ruler, Isma’il would have seen himself as the heir to the legacy of Abraham and other ancient prophets, beginning with Adam.

Nonetheless, considering the notion of the eternal nature of time in Isma’il’s perspective, he did not believe in a beginning or an end to the line of spiritual leadership (Babayan xxxi). Therefore, he sets claim to contradictory notions, as stated in a poem (quoted by Babayan): “know that *Khata’i* . . . is of divine nature, that he is related to M[o]hammad Mustafa. He is issued from Safi, he is the scion of Junayd and Haydar . . . he is related to Ali Murtaza.” Consequently, he creates a “fictitious” spiritual genealogy for himself (ibid). Newman assesses from his poems “rather a distinctly heterogeneous, multi-confessional messianic dimension . . . lying at the heart of his spiritual discourse” (Newman 13), despite contradictions therein.183

From the perspective of the visual arts production, the establishing of “the royal academy of painters, illuminators and calligraphers” by Shah Isma’il in Tabriz continued to be maintained by his successor and son, Shah Tahmasp (1514-1576).184 The idea of the “king of kings” found no better place of expression than in Firdowsi’s *Shahnameh* (Book of Kings), composed in the tenth century. Stuart Carey Welch, in his *A King Book of Kings*, noted *Shahnameh* “was practically a part of any Iranian ruler’s regalia – usually along with a
poem extolling the king himself” (15). However, the visual work could not have been imagined without the Neoplatonic ideas that assumed the elevated position for the king.

**NEOPLATONISM AND THE THEORIZATION FOR THE NEW-INCOMING POWER – IBN ARABI’S INFLUENCE ON THE SAFAVIDS**

With the birth of Islam in the early 7th century, the scattered people of the Arabian Peninsula, entangled in their tribal laws and feuds on the one hand and pressured by the Byzantine’s and Sasanian’s on-going conflicts on the other, found a unifying identity that ultimately brought them political prominence. By the mid eighth century the coalescing presence of Islam had reached the western border of China in the East and Southern Spain in the West. Through Islam, they found their independence, and in order to maintain their newly achieved identity and eminence, they resorted to politicizing Islam with the vehicle of “art” as their ally, just as their neighbors and predecessors had done with their own ancient religions in the past. Therefore, inasmuch as it was difficult to completely forget the old ways, they created an amalgam of old traditions and the new idea of Islam, justified and unified by a cohesive art, supported by—and in turn promoting—a strong and wealthy political system, constituting what we know as an Islamic culture riddled with paradoxical ideas today.

It is not by chance that the formation of “Islamic” art coincides with the formation of the first Islamic dynastic rule by the Umayyads (r. 661-750), who, disregarding the Prophet’s teachings, dictated the necessity of art, as a unifying element of power and prestige, emulating it from Persian and the Greco-Roman Byzantine empires, and consequently from every other culture they encountered. The construction of the Dome of the Rock in 691 as a political statement perhaps is just one of the earliest examples supporting this claim.
The political and cultural image of the Islamic rule is further enhanced when in the 9\textsuperscript{th} century the Abbasid Caliph, al Ma’mun (ruled 813-833), formed the *Dar al Hikma* (House of Knowledge or Wisdom), through which the translation movement commenced, and the knowledge from the antiquity became available to Muslim scholars, leading to its consequential disbursement through the translation movement throughout the known world.\footnote{190}

**Neoplatonism and Mysticism in Islamic Thoughts – Ibn Arabi and His Vision**

Among the achievements of the philosophers of antiquity, the Gnostic knowledge had already permeated Christianity through the wisdom of the Greeks and the political power of the Romans;\footnote{191} it finally found its way into the Islamic culture by the medieval times through the translations of the ancient texts under Muslims.\footnote{192} The Gnostic interpretation of Plato’s “Allegory of the Cave” perhaps is one of the more widely known mystic ideas from antiquity. When studying the theories of real versus illusion argued by Medieval Muslim mystics as discussed in the “positive symbol” and the “negative illusion,” we are reminded of Plato’s “Allegory of the Cave.”\footnote{193} The negative and the positive appear in Persian poetry, for instance, and referred to as the microcosmic (*alam-i-asghar*)—the profane man—versus the macrocosmic (*alam-i-akbar*)—the spiritual man.\footnote{194} Rumi points to this notion in his poem to awaken his own spiritual potential:

> Therefore in outer form thou art the microcosm,
> while in inward meaning thou art the macrocosm.

In the investigation of cultural integrations, one of the most influential figures whose impact is seen to this day is the Andalusian sage and mystic, Mohyiddin Mohammad Ibn
Arabi (1165-1240), who is a profound example in contributing to the synthesis of pre-Islamic cultures into Islamic thoughts and even artistic activities. Undoubtedly, not only was he familiar with such theories, but also incorporated them into his own. Hence, the notion of *Wahdat al Wujud* (Unity of Existence), synthesized by Ibn Arabi espousing Plato’s “Allegory of the Cave,” which is viewed as its origin, was the significant pivot that connected the western and eastern mysticism and earned Ibn Arabi the title “Ibn Aflatūn” (son of Plato); it fostered the formation of additional mystic traditions in various regions, including the Middle East and as far as Indonesia.

Ibn Arabi’s personal life story to a great degree informs his views and later scholarly works. He came from a city in the south eastern region of Spain known as Murcia in the mid twelfth century, during a time in which, despite the constant conflicts between Christians and Muslims, the field of literary and visual arts thrived in the multi-cultural atmosphere of Spain. His family moved to Seville for political reasons when he was about eight, during which time he began to learn the literary knowledge available to him. According to his own accounts, he became familiar with the mystic tradition when he was nearly twenty. He remained in Seville for another decade, but managed to travel around in Spain and to meet contemporary scholars and mystics, including a ninety-five year old woman in Seville, whom he mentioned in his *al Futuhat al Makkyya* (Mekkan Revelations). Ibn Arabi’s travels took him around many Islamic regions such as Alexandria, Mecca, Baghdad, Konya, all of which are considered major cultural and intellectual centers, finally bringing him to settle in Damascus; during his years in Damascus, he wrote prolifically until his death there in 1240.
Ibn Arabi is one of the few figures who has been revered and respected by Sunnis, Shi’ites and Sufis alike; further, Muslims take such pride in his writings and theory that his works are currently part of Islamic advanced education, not to mention recent non-Muslim interest reflected in conferences, societies and online communities created in order to learn about and share Ibn Arabi’s literary works. Yet, his work has never become the subject of an extensive critical study to point out his inconsistencies (gaps) with Islam itself. Very few scholars have raised concerns about the subject. Nasr Abu Zayd, for instance, when discussing Ibn Arabi and the modern conflicts in the Middle East, goes as far as proposing the solution of not elevating Ibn Arabi as a figure of authority in order to promote a sort of intellectual pluralism. However, he never mentions the existing discord between Ibn Arabi and Islam as one of the fundamental problems.

One of the most significant contributions of Ibn Arabi’s, manifested in the theory of “Unity of Existence,” has pervaded not just the Middle Eastern region’s cultures, but has reached the Islamic world from the African Continent to Southeast Asian territories and beyond. R.W.J. Austin, referencing Asin Palacios in the introductory remarks to his translation of the Bezels of Wisdom, Ibn Arabi’s magnum opus, even extends the Andalusian sage’s impact to Dante’s Divine Comedy and recognizes the conjured images by the author to have been inspired by Ibn Arabi’s mystic visions.

Ibn Arabi’s articulation of the theory of “Unity of Existence,” is founded on the idea that all creation is connected to an intellectual center. For the existence of every creation, it deems an aspect that is real and one which is an illusion, and to put it visually, places them on concentric circles connected through radii to the center. It is noteworthy that the visual
arts associated with esoteric Islam that mirror the ideal geometric or circular patterns are inspired by and in many cases correspond to this.\textsuperscript{203}

The theory of “Unity of Existence” argues for the manifestation of the macrocosm in the microcosm with an intrinsic connection to one another.\textsuperscript{204} Thus, it sees existence as one and interprets that unity as the Divine. This perspective promotes the belief that humans have the potential to unify with God, or to reach divine status, through the idea of \textit{al Insan al Kamil}, or the “Perfect Man,” just as Prophet Mohammad was believed to have done. The Ascension of the Prophet, as a subject of artistic productions, is a key example as interpreted by Sufis in that it represents the unification of humans with the Divine.\textsuperscript{205} This theory was first put forth by Plotinus who argues for the possibility of this unification through ecstatic or mystical vision.\textsuperscript{206} Ibn Arabi’s writings reflect appropriation of thoughts and ideas from Plato and Neoplatonists to Mutazilis and Ismailis, which tremendously influenced his thoughts and works, most prominent of which is the very theory of \textit{Wahdat al Wujud} argued for in his book \textit{Fusus al Hikam} (Bezels of Wisdom).\textsuperscript{207}

The \textit{Fusus al Hikam} from its inception is riddled with Ibn Arabi’s personal perspectives and experiences that cannot be confirmed on an individual or non-individual level, yet they occupy a place of privilege and authority within the Islamic cultures. His writings and thoughts are supported only by his “intellectual speculation” and “ecstatic visions,” and admittedly neither is compatible with reason.\textsuperscript{208} In the Preface of his book, he claims he received in a vision the prompt to write this manuscript.\textsuperscript{209} In each of the twenty seven chapters that follow, he discusses a selected prophet-figure, each as a facet of God’s wisdom, to validate his thesis. Titus Burckhardt draws a comparison between Ibn Arabi’s illustrations of these facets that include prophets from the Old Testament to the Gothic
sculptures that filled the portals of cathedrals, such as Chartres, with such figures; the only difference, Burckhardt notes, is the portal figures are all looking to the central figure, the Christ.  

The notion of “unity” is emphasized throughout the book in the love that binds God with all creations; this is how unity is achieved, and according to Ibn Arabi, “it cannot be arrived at by . . . means of any rational thought process . . . [but] only [revealed] by divine disclosure.” Therefore, Ibn Arabi deems a special place for ecstatic visions and the prophets that ornament his chapters, each prophet a sign of an aspect of God’s Knowledge symbolized in “word.” He explains that the essence of God is bestowed upon each of his prophets in order to refract and make Him known, for by being in “existence [they] would reveal to Him His own mystery.” The first chapter, for instance, begins with Adam as God’s manifestation on earth that justifies the beginning of the process: the creation of the “Perfect Man.” This notion is manifested thus through each chapter and appropriately in each example. No doubt, in the Introduction to his book, by sharing how he was compelled to write the Bezels, Ibn Arabi is revealing his own experience as a case in point and proclaiming his place among the other “universal men” (Bezels of Wisdom 45).

To be sure, Ibn Arabi is not the first mystic or scholar to discuss such matters; previously, others such as Avicenna, Sheikh Shahab al-Din Sohrevardi, Sheikh Farid al-Din Attar, Mansour Hallaj, Shams al-Din Tabrizi, and others commented and left their impressions regarding this subject. The significance of Ibn Arabi’s contribution in proposing the doctrine of Unity of Existence, however, is in his consolidation of the previous thoughts and works into a practical formula that became a main source of reference and authority, inciting creativity and emanating enough power and spirit to eventually attract the support of
great political powers, such as the Ottomans, who adopted his writings as major textbooks in their madrasas.\textsuperscript{213} Even the Ottoman’s rivals to their east, the Shi’ite Safavids, recognized the value of Ibn Arabi’s works as interpreted through works of Persian Scholars like Mullā Sadrā (c.1571-1640),\textsuperscript{214} his teacher Bahā’ al-Dīn Āmilī (c.1547-1625), and Mir Dāmād (d. 1631/32);\textsuperscript{215} these artists and scholars have been credited, however in a positive way, with philosophizing Islamic views that in turn inspired the creation of the visual and literary arts in 17\textsuperscript{th} century Persia. One example is the Safavid Mosque of Sheikh Lotfollah in Isfahan that constitutes one of the four pillars of the Safavid architectural expressions.\textsuperscript{216} Most importantly, I think the vivid language and visual quality in Ibn Arabi’s writings has inspired the inventive interpretations in the visual arts produced within the Islamic lands, particularly in seventeenth century Persia, which clearly contributed to the prestige and image of the Safavids.

It must also be noted Ibn Arabi had his critics as well; in fact the theory of \textit{Wahdat al Wujud} had very steadfast opponents, namely Ala Al Dawla Semnani (from the North Eastern region of Iran, during the post-Mongol invasion era).\textsuperscript{217} Although, such discourses never made it outside the ecclesiastical domain or were relevant enough to current affairs to create any sort of long lasting mark.\textsuperscript{218} Sheikh Ala’Oddolleh Semnani, a Sufi himself, in opposition to Ibn Arabi’s theory, warns against the outcome of such scheme by drawing parallels between what happened in Buddhism before and after the advent of visual imagery. Following the invasion of the Mongols, understandably, Semnani is concerned with such implications affecting the dominant Islamic culture.\textsuperscript{219}
Greek Temples and Flying Human-Headed Horses: Greek Elements in the Art Known as “Islamic,” Artistic Expressions of the Ideas of “Unity of Existence” and “The Perfect Man”

How do Greek temples connect with a seventeenth century painting from Persia called Mi’raj showing Prophet Mohammad’s Ascension to heaven on a human-headed horse? What does this connection reveal about subject formation and the visual arts in seventeenth century Persia, and by extension the region of the Middle East? Who benefited from such art works?

The Image of the Sufi-King in Visual, Literary, and Philosophical Works – Unity of Existence and the Universal Man

The analysis of examples pertaining to the image of the “Sufi-King” in visual, literary, and philosophical works and their Greek and patriarchal associations are the subject of investigation here. The influential power of Plato’s political and Plotinus’s metaphysical philosophies are acknowledged. But what may not be as widely known is that the similarities between these Western-based philosophies and the Middle Eastern thoughts are not coincidental, but rather a common, continuous narrative that signal the patriarchal agencies’ appropriation of Platonic and Neoplatonic philosophies as a (constructed) unifying narrative, a move that is not exclusive to the Middle East. This took place well before the advent of Islam, and it did so with detrimental consequences for the individual consciousness, in particular, in the Middle East.

I must note the use of terms such as West or Middle East, while binary and questionable, are unavoidable in this study for the time being. Equally problematic here is the
term “Islamic” as applied to an art reflecting contradictions on multiple levels. Likewise, one should not treat Platonism and Neoplatonism as mere theories that attempt to bridge the space between the physical and metaphysical worlds; but rather, one needs to understand them as phenomena that have concrete consequence in shaping the world. Therefore, they function as vehicles transmitting models of resemblance from antiquity to the present time, serving patriarchy by concealing the contradictions. And finally, the term patriarchy is the underlying phenomenon in the persistence of systems predicated on absolute power.

I describe patriarchy as a human-constructed presence that is artificially inflated and elevated (by humans over humans), but it diminishes all other presences and expressions, and strives to assimilate or conceal differences using artistic endeavors among other measures. This assimilation, exposed in the hybridized art produced through the royal and aristocratic patronages, has then been supplemented with words articulated by philosophies predicated on a transcendentalist idea, namely the “Universal” or “Perfect” man. This ideal then enabled patriarchal systems that appeared in different clothing at different times, such as the Medicis in the 15th-16th century Florence or the Safavids in the sixteenth through the eighteenth century Persia, to ensure the continuity and domination of the doctrine of absolute power. I understand there may be other perspectives on the subject, but there are two concepts that are of interest here with respect to the mechanism of continuity and domination: The “Unity of Existence” and the idea of the “Perfect Man.”

To establish the premise, I concentrate on one particular subject, the Mi’raj or Prophet’s Ascension, a fine example of which is a prominent 16th century painting from the Safavid period, in that it not only points to the Neoplatonic influences, but proposes that the interpretations stemming from these influences are a sort of parergon that served the interest
of the royal patrons, i.e. the agents of patriarchy. Considering the investigation of works of art from the region, collectively known by the term “Islamic,” has been mainly limited to formal analysis, not to mention the art is seen as a source of pride in the region (Fetvaci and Gruber 874), and taking into account the significance of such art as evidence of patriarchy’s culturo-aesthetic and religio-political apparatuses, in this case informed by Neoplatonic thoughts (that which links the Middle East and the West, as argued early on), the critical analysis of this painting seems timely and fitting here.

The issue of subjectivity with respect to the conflict toward the visual arts has only recently received some attention by some scholars; nevertheless, the “viewers’ . . . responses toward the painted images . . . remain largely uncharted terrain” (Gruber 2017). By employing critical theory in the analysis of this painting, it is my intention to commence a dynamic investigation with the purpose of developing a theoretical reasoning that would explicate, from a different perspective, the use and support of the art of this kind by patriarchal systems, namely the Safavid kings (r. 1501-1722).

In the Ascension example there is more information in the painting beyond the source of the story, the Koranic text. The added information, visualized in a painting, then conceals and discourages questioning the discrepancy (gap). The added information as “surplus value,” (Marx), I suggest, in the

Parergon was commoditized and exploited by the rulers to further solidify and justify their positions both as secular and religious figures in order to assure the continuity of their rule. I submit, therefore, that Neoplatonism and, by default, patriarchy are not just ideas from antiquity, but have been the active, fundamental ingredients in the models of assimilation serving absolute power and shaping collective subjectivities, while undermining individuality, particularly in the region of the Middle East. Thus, I propose, the artificial unity brought on by such systems—what Foucault calls the “culture of resemblance”—has been a major impediment toward respecting or even acknowledging individualism, a preliminary step toward democracy in the Middle East.

In this investigation the study of the image of the Prophet’s Ascension or Mi’raj is essential for a number of reasons: first: its Koranic source that connects it with “Islam,” second: as a subject made into a visual work – commonly understood as forbidden in Islam – but produced at royal workshops repeatedly, and third: as an example of art covering over the “gap” between the original text and the single, dominant interpretation, but at the same time, exposing Neoplatonic ideas infused with the Islamic ones.

The subject of Mi’raj is drawn from one of the most revered stories in Islamic religious literature regarding the Prophet’s night journey, in which Prophet Mohammad is said to have traveled from Mecca to Jerusalem with the guidance of Archangel Gabriel. Some trace back the embellished, narrated version of the story to Tarikh Tabari or Tabari History (from 10th century) that quotes Ibn Abbas, one of the Prophet’s uncles, as the narrator.

There are two types of journeys as explained by Christiane Gruber, a scholar in the field of Islamic book arts, who has recently written on the subject: one horizontal, as in the
journey from Mecca to Jerusalem, and the other vertical, which is to the various levels of heaven.  While the popularity of this story has engendered many renditions beginning as early as mid-eighth century, a number of key elements are present in all accounts; in later texts and paintings, the Prophet is described as riding on a human-headed horse, called *Buraq*, flying through the heavens, and surrounded by various angels. Historically this subject appears in three types of books: history, poetry and devotional manuscripts.

**Pre-Safavid and Safavid Images of the Sufi-King: A Philosophical Analysis**

One of the earliest examples comes from early 14th century. It is a page from *Jami al Tawarikh* (compendium of chronicles) from 1307. The image of the prophet appears on the left riding on a human-headed horse, and on the right there are two angelic figures just exiting the sky (heaven), in fact one is still on the threshold. The one closer to the center is offering the Prophet sustenance—reportedly a bowl of milk. The tail of the horse is peculiarly shaped into another figure similar to the horse’s head, but this figure is wielding a
sword and a shield. There are stylized clouds in the sky on the upper left, and the low horizon shows layers representing a shallow depth of space. An apparent appropriation of Chinese linear descriptive marks link the clouds to the folds in the garments and to the landscape, which is not surprising, knowing there were Chinese artists in Tabriz, North West of present day Iran, since late thirteenth century according the Basil Grey.226

In another example, which comes from a 15th century Mi’raj nameh, or a devotional book of Mi’raj, now in Biblioteque Nationale in Paris, the Prophet is shown scenes from paradise—he appears on the upper right hand corner and Gabriel on the upper left, and he is pointing to the tree and the birds at the center of the painting. Lower in the painting, a group of inhabitants of paradise are riding on camels and exchanging bouquets of flowers. In the lower left a couple appears – one holding the hand of the rider. There are three women and two men.

The next example comes from a book of poetry called Bustan e Sa’di from Bukhara or Herat, now at the Metropolitan Museum (done possibly in the style of Bihzad, the renowned
early Safavid artist). In this illustration, the Prophet appears in the center on Buraq surrounded by angels. Below, there are three figures, one of which is sleeping (the youngest), which may point to the fact that this event takes place at night, but the other two older figures seem to be vigilant. The viewer’s eyes follow the positions of the three figures to a Mihrab, or prayer niche, in the background out of which rays of light resembling flames project upward and take our eyes toward the focus of the image. Archangel Gabriel is the one with a crown. The poem is a praise for the high spiritual status of the Prophet and the inability of Gabriel to accompany him after a certain point.

In a page from history of the prophets called *Qisas al Anbiya* from the 16th century written by Ishaq ibn Ibrahim, known as al Nishapuri—which was copied in Shiraz and is now in the Berlin State Library—the standard features of a Mi’raj painting are present. The only difference here is that the prophet’s face is covered, which appears to have started a new convention.

Painted in 1539-43 for Shah Tahmasp (Shah Ismā’il’s son and successor) in opaque watercolor, gold and ink on paper, it is titled *Mi’raj* and is ascribed to the renowned later Safavid court painter, Sultan Muhammad. In this painting the Prophet appears with his face covered under a white cloth, at the center on a human-headed horse floating in mid-air, surrounded by stylized rays of light, resembling flames, and encircled by a number of gift-bearing angelic figures with various costumes signaling their status and
ranks amidst swirls of clouds. On the left, the slightly higher-placed figure of Gabriel identified by his crown leads the way by gesturing his arms forward; the upward movement of the flames, painted in gold, implies motion toward the seventh heaven (as told in the fourth of Nizami’s five tales), the edges of which appear where the blue of the star-filled night sky meets the swirling clouds that occupy the lower half of the picture.

If the Koranic accounts do not provide these details, what are we to make of the added information? Considering the Safavids came from a line of mystics, the story of Mi’raj as understood within Sufism may shed some light. The concept of Mi’raj is significant within Sufism as it exemplifies a sufi’s ultimate, unmitigated goal of experiencing God. Sufis believe Prophet Mohammad was a sufi par excellence, especially as depicted in the night journey during which he travels through the layers of heaven and reaches within the presence of God. Thus, the event becomes a source of inspiration and a critical moment for the sufis and a subject for artists.

One of the texts that contains the details of the night journey is the *al Futuhat al Makkyyya* by the already mentioned Andalusian sage and mystic, Ibn Arabi (1165-1240). In the section on the Prophet’s Mi’raj, Ibn Arabi describes the details, including the name (Buraq) and the appearance of the human-headed horse along with what the Prophet saw at each stage. The visual and mystical appeal of these details prompted the producers of other
devotional texts, such as *The Ilkhanid Mi’rajnama* of 1286, to incorporate them into their own versions of the story. While not illustrated itself, this Mi’rajnama virtually gives the same accounts, including the human-headed horse in the story told by Ibn Arabi.

Before tending to the possible source(s) of the added information, critical viewing of such addition, which I suggest to be a sort of Koranic parergon, seems appropriate here. In *The Truth in Painting*, Derrida defines parergon as what “comes against, beside, and in addition to the ergon, the work done [fait], fact [le fait], the work, but it does not fall to one side, it touches and cooperates within the operation, from a certain outside” (1987, 54). Aware of the necessity of connection between word and image, Derrida makes us conscious of the space in between the two, which he calls passé-partout (1987, 7). It is this “space in between” that yields the “interest” and, in this case, the added information and interpretation; as Derrida puts it:

With regards to the idiom of painting, of that to which this . . . locution [...] can . . . be understood in a multitude of ways. [...] But untranslatable it remains in its economic performance, in the ellipsis of its trait, the word by word, the word for word, or the trait for trait in which it contracts: as many words, signs, letters, the same quantity or the same expense for the same semantic content, with the same revenue of surplus value.228

But, the question with regard to the painting in question, to which I shall return, is: who benefited from the “interest?” The Koranic accounts of the story come from two chapters: 17 and 53.229 Chapter 17, *Isra* (The Children of Israel), verse 1 states:
Praise be to the One Who made His servant travel by night from the sacred place of worship to the furthest place of worship, whose precincts We have blessed in order that We may show him some of Our signs.

Little more information is provided in Chapter 53, *al-Najm* (The Star), verses 6 through 18:

So, he acquired poise and balance, and reached the highest pinnacle. Then he drew near and drew closer until a space of two arcs or even less remained, when He revealed to His servant what He revealed . . . He saw Him indeed another time by the Lote Tree of the Limit beyond which no one can pass, close to which is the Garden of Tranquility. . . . Indeed, he saw some of the greatest signs of His Lord.

As evident from these verses, there are no other details provided as to how this journey took place, and what the specifics of the Prophet’s personal experience were. However, in the literature produced later on the subject, there are no shortages of the particulars that vividly describe the experience; it is the particulars that supply the iconography in the images depicting this event, and in these details lay the clues to thoughts colored by Neoplatonism. The specific painting that is the focus of this paper comes from a book called *Khamsa Nizami* (five-tales [of poetry] by Nizami) commissioned by and produced in the Safavid royal court just a little over a decade after the death of Shah Isma’il, the founder of the Safavid Dynasty.

Analogous to Derrida’s theory, but reversing the order, i.e. text to painting in the case at hand, more information appears in the painting that solidifies a dominant position. Here, I consider a possible source of inspiration for the added information. The details depicted in
the Mi’raj painting are astonishingly reminiscent of Plotinus’s narrative of ascending toward the One.

Pertaining to the ascension and in order to “come to [the] vision of the inaccessible Beauty,” Plotinus in The Enneads refers to it as “fleeing to the beloved Fatherland” and points out this is not possible by foot. He states: “What then is our course, what the manner of our flight? This is not a journey for the feet; the feet bring us only from land to land . . .” Further, in III.8 Plotinus asserts that from nature all things are inspired to grow and produce through Contemplation that has Vision as its end. All conflicting powers are then unified toward this Vision.

The Charioteer (the Leading Principle of the Soul, in the Phaedrus Myth) gives the two horses (its two dissonant faculties) what he has seen and they, taking that gift, showed that they were hungry for what made that vision.

The resemblance of the details, whether in text or painting, suggests a connection between the iconography of the ascension in the Mi’raj painting and this passage. At some point, starting late 15th and early in 16th century, “an iconographical shift” took place where the white veil covering the face was added. Another version, which is in the style of the aforementioned Sultan Muhammad, is currently in the Rhode Island School of Design Museum. If we view the Koran as the main source for this subject, more relevant here is that the visual versions all include details that do not appear in the source text. Contrary to common belief, and as evident from cited earlier examples, the covering of the face of the Prophet did not always exist; it happened possibly due to more religious restrictions, but more likely for propaganda purposes through a newly defined identity, as argued by Gruber. Whatever the reason may have been, it does seem that covering the face, even
though it does not undermine the identity of the main character in the story, leaves the door open to speculate whether the faceless image could transcend representing just the person of the Prophet to include the ruler.

This speculation points to: who benefited from the “interest” yielded by the added information. Generally speaking, royal artists produce with the status of their patrons in mind; in other words, illustrations manufactured for royal patrons are almost always intended to create an image and to send a particular message. Therefore, as represented in the *Prophet’s Ascension*, there is more than just an illustration of the story. The details, similar to what Plotinus describes in ascending toward the One, in the *Mi’raj* painting, underscore the divine connection claimed by the Safavid Sufi-kings, who aimed to legitimize their roles as both king and spiritual leaders (in other words, their image as the Perfect Man), thus ensuring the continuity of patriarchy within their reigns.

A critical examination of the added details by way of Marx’s commodity theory may articulate how the agents of patriarchy accomplished this task. In his theory of commodity, Marx emphasizes value. He states: “. . . every commodity contains useful labor, i.e. productive activity of a different kind, carried on with a different aim” (Marx 133). To make something useful, according to Marx, labor has to be involved, and it is because of that labor that commodity, and consequently its profit-making attributes, exists. Marx notes how from the raw material a useful object is produced and becomes a commodity. He argues it is in the relationship between the “manifested social character of the products of the labor” that the magic of commodification takes place. He points out, “It is nothing but the definite social relation between men themselves which assumes here . . . the fantastic form of a relation between things.” Thus, Marx deems the value imposed in the process of commodifying, a
constructed, imagined, and arbitrary one. This theory lends itself well to explain how the 
parergon or the added value to the texts and images just discussed can be seen as a 
commodity; it is imagined and added, with help from the assimilating powers of 
Neoplatonism, to fuse the image of the ruler with the divine. Because of these surplus values, 
the rulers, at whose workshops these illustrations were made, were able to maintain their 
positions of absolute power, consistent with Neoplatonic ideas. A resemblance is not difficult 
to see between the human-headed horse carrying the figure of the Prophet and the Neo-
Classical architecture—in its assimilated form— that was borrowed in the West to project 
economic or political power.

Foucault, in the Order of Things, points to the history of resemblance and how “a 
culture experiences the propinquity of things, how it establishes the tabula of their 
relationships and the order by which they must be considered.” He expresses concerns “with 
a history of resemblance: on what conditions was Classical thought able to reflect relations of 
similarity or equivalence between things, relations that would provide a foundation and a 
justification for their words, their classifications, their systems of exchanges?”232 The 
conditions Foucault is referring to here are not unlike the relationships between things as 
defined through Platonic and Neoplatonic ideas. One of the examples is in the transformation 
of the figure of Alexander in Safavid illuminated manuscript.

The tradition of book illumination goes back to pre-Islamic times.233 One of the great 
literary works serving as an inspirational source for imagery is the work of Shahnama (book 
of kings) completed in the year 1000 by Firdowsi (940-1020); it is of the collected accounts 
of Persian history written in epic poetry. Many versions of this book were produced and 
illustrated, but the only remaining copies were produced after the Mongol invasion (Gray
One of the perplexing characters in *Shahnama* is Alexander, who has transcended the historic figure.

The transformation of the historic figure of Alexander, who arrived in the fourth century BCE on his campaign to form his own empire and conquered a great part of the Middle East, including ancient Persia, but is commemorated, and his heroism and piety celebrated in illuminated manuscripts deserves a closer look. Two sources are cited as examples: first one is from a series of paintings of a *Shahnama* known by its former owner’s name Demotte that survives only in dismantled folios, exemplary of the Ilkhanid courtly arts, titled *Battle of Iskandar (Alexander) with the Dragon* (Tabriz, 1330-1336), and the other is from *Khamsa Nizami* called *Iskandar Visiting a Hermit* (Herat, 1535-1540).

The notion of *al-Insan al Kamil*, (the Perfect Man), finds visual expression in manuscripts; one example is of the myth and the stories about Alexander (Iskandar) in the region. In a page from a 14th century Persian illuminated *Shahnama*, Alexander is shown riding on his white horse wielding his sword at the so called dragon – referred to in the title included at the top of the image as “rhinoceros” – but clearly a monstrous depiction of an imaginary animal associated with evil. Alexander is charging ahead fearlessly, while his troops, shown in a cluster of riders, follow behind him. A hint of landscape in the
background is indicated in overlapping hills and trees. The scene is so fraught with fear that even his horse turns its head away, rearing. The image underscores Alexander’s heroism, which should appear peculiar, since historically he is the one who overthrows the Persian Empire.235

In another page from the same *Shahnama*, shown in a painting titled *The Bier of the Great Iskandar*, a devastated crowd has gathered around his coffin and is mourning his death. (Gray 32) Each corner of his coffin is punctuated with a tall candleholder. One figure has its back to the viewer and has thrown himself (or herself?) on the cloth-covered coffin. Figures in the foreground have raised their arms over their heads in mourning gestures; some have even torn their robes off their bodies in their grief. Such expressions of sorrow seem implausible for the historic Alexander, but not for Alexander as the “Perfect Man.” More puzzling is when the historic Iskandar becomes mythical Iskandar in the literary works where he is transformed into a *Salik* (a pupil on the mystic path) who sets off toward the East in search of enlightenment. In this interpretation, the military campaign is completely substituted with a spiritual journey. In another painting attributed to the Persian 16th century painter Mir Mussavir, produced in the Safavid royal workshop in 1535-1540, Iskandar, young and handsome, dressed in a richly brocaded Persian coat, appears before a hermit; he is seated with legs folded underneath, in the manner the pupils traditionally sit in the presence of their master. The sage is depicted within the opening of a cave, outside of which
a tree stands. Iskandar’s horse is being tended to in the foreground, and a few other figures of attendants fill the composition. The picture frame seems open on two sides as the stones from the cave and the leaves from the tree spill over the edges. The story might have been inspired by the mystic story of a supposed meeting between Alexander and Diogenes.

As demonstrated in these examples, there are two distinct roles in which Alexander appears in text and image: one portrays him as a warrior and a hero, the other as a seeker of mystic knowledge, on a spiritual quest. In either role, no hostility is shown toward the man who was a conqueror of the region. Alexander reached as far as India in 326 BCE, before his death in Babylon in 323 BCE. Instead, assimilated well into the visual vocabulary, the cultural and ideal values are projected through him, and perhaps exploited by the rulers who identified with him and commissioned the works. The written text for both roles reveal a constructed image of Alexander, not as the historical figure, but as the manifestation of a constructed identity representing the “Perfect Man,” one who accomplished greatness militarily through his courage and prowess, and one who had connections to the Divine through his mystic quest; this is consistent with Ibn Arabi’s formula of al-Insan al Kamil.

If we view Alexander’s military campaign in the region in late 4th century BCE as a symbol of the arrival of Classical Greek culture, and realize that the philosophical and mystic influences from ancient Greece had already reached and been established in the region by the
time Islam was introduced (in 7th century) with such stories already part of the existing folklore, and following the translation movement and the dissemination of knowledge including Greek philosophy in the 9th century, Ibn Arabi’s theories must have seemed familiar during and after the Middle Ages in the Middle East. Nonetheless, as with the earlier example, in Alexander’s case we are once again confronted with a parergon and surplus value in comparison to the historic texts, as well as the Koranic text with regards to the Perfect Man. This necessitates further examination of the subject, since the notion of Perfect Man appears to be the hinge on which the patriarchal powers have claimed legitimacy and divine sanction.

The concept of Perfect Man is in direct conflict with Koranic text that not only makes no reference to such an idea, but contradicts it in many places. The statements, “... God is Greater... (29:45),” “He has no equal (112:4)” or “there is no divinity but God (2:163),” are a few examples among many that oppose the “Perfect Man” and clearly distinguish between the Creator and the created. To be sure, in citing these contradictions, I do not intend to carry out a sort of a purification or redemption of Islam. The raising of such discrepancies is aimed at drawing attention to the “gap” that exists, so that it may open up a space for individual responses. Furthermore, the elevation of humans to divine status is a concept that reaches well before the advent of Islam and to ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt and the time of Greek antiquity, in which the kings and heroes were declared gods or sons of gods. The Romans further continued this tradition by the process of apotheosis, declaring their favorite emperors as gods.

Just as the Greco-Roman visual vocabulary entered Christianity, the whole notion of humans becoming interchangeable with God permeated Christianity from antiquity as well
and integrated into Christian doctrine represented by the institutionalized religion, while quintessentially there is evidence pointing to a difference between the Creator and the created in all Abrahamic monotheist traditions. Therefore, Ibn Arabi’s thoughts are more in line with the exchangeability between the Creator and the created than with monotheism. In a poem he writes:

I am in love with no other than myself,
and my very separation is my union ...
I am my beloved and my lover;
I am my knight and my maiden.

The apparent conflict in the poem above has the potential to reveal a “gap” that should lead to individual responses. However, the assumed authority that dominates and the creativity involved lead to the concealment of that “gap.”


It may appear peculiar to speak of the Safavids and the German Idealists in the same breath. However, upon a closer look, one can recognize both sides’ affinity for the transcendental Neoplatonic ideas, itself predicated on Platonic philosophy. To unpack this statement it is necessary to begin with a brief analysis of the link between Platonism, Neoplatonism and their patriarchal association, followed by a brief analysis of German Idealism and Romanticism. The objective here is to expose the “gap” that exists between the “misrecognition” of the self, shown through the Neoplatonic mirror as “perfect,” “ideal,” and
“divine”, and the potential to advance the individual from this illusion, as suggested in human development by Lacan. Then, keeping the individuality intact, I intend to examine how this phenomenon unfolds in the European instance, or as the case is in the Middle East particularly with respect to the Safavids, how the individual remains dissolved in the collective (through an artificial unity) with its fate finalized.

**Platonism, Neoplatonism and the Lacanian “Mirror Phase”**

The power of imagination in Plotinus has had consequences in the development of Neoplatonism. Kevin Corrigan, in *Reading Plotinus* notes “Neoplatonism is sometimes thought to sublimate or bypass the individual or other person entirely” (2). Plotinus’s thoughts, presupposing the Pre-Socratics, are a sort of contemplation on, and at times creative interpretation of, works of philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, Stoics, Skeptics, and others. Thus, in his system, he is very much reliant on Plato, and Platonists, like Aristotle, and other “ancient philosophers.” According to a Neoplatonist expert, his major work, the *Enneads*, is “not so much a body of philosophical opinions as fifty-four philosophical meditations, many of which are quietly revolutionary in their scope and creativity” (Corrigan 23). Such assessment compels us to view the *Enneads* as a work of art, but nonetheless a highly pervasive one and easily adaptable to patriarchal values, hence a *parergon* itself.

The whole patriarchal synthesis hinges on the idea of guardianship of one over the rest. The reverberations of the soul in nature, as argued by Plotinus, may link to the Intellectual-Principle, however they are imperfect. “[F]or its perfection . . . [the soul] must look to that Divine Mind, which may be thought of as a father watching over the development of his child born imperfect in comparison with himself” (V.1.3). The Platonic
idea of the philosopher as the guardian provides specific instructions for such a guardian. According to Plato, the education of a young man groomed to be the guardian should include “arithmetic, geometry (plane and solid), astronomy and harmony,” not in a utilitarian capacity, but, as stated by Bertrand Russell, “in order to prepare his mind for the vision of eternal things.” (131)

Plotinus’s answer to the question posed by the early philosophers in bridging the gap between the physical and the metaphysical world is in his hypostases, that which is “real existence” and “underlie everything we experience” (Corrigan 23). His three principles, The One (or the Platonic Good), The Intellect (or Being that encompasses all beings and intellects), and the Soul (encompassing all souls, and all creations in the material world inspired by One through the Intellect), the unity (Plotinus considers “all beings are beings by virtue of unity”), of which is fundamental to grasping his answer to the above question and to understanding Neoplatonism (V.1.5, V.1 and 10, VI.9.1).

The Intellect (nous) “stands as the image of the One,” because “[the One] in its self-quest has a vision: this very seeing is the Intellectual-Principle” (V.1, 7). The One emanates the “Divine Mind.” Just as the Intellect determines its being from its origin, the One, the Soul has the Intellect as its underlying principle, but itself issues the material world and operates by reasoning. Therefore, it is possible to know the Divine Mind, which we forget through our self-will. Plotinus begins the Fifth Ennead by asking “What can it be that has brought the souls to forge the father, God, and, though members of the Divine and entirely of the world, to ignore at ones themselves and It?” (V.1.1). In knowing the Divine Mind, one can and must study one’s soul, at the point which is most like its true source. To that end, one must also purify that which has given shape to the body and the senses; that which remains is the
Divine. Therefore, the element of cognition is critical in understanding the relationship between the three that unfolds through a process of purification (V.1.10). By purification Plotinus does not mean negation or elimination, rather transcendence beyond the material world, however, through the material world.

It is in this state, according to Plotinus, that one can not only see *nous*, but also see the One, and therefore establish direct connection with the Divine (V.1.2). The problem with this theory is an existentialist one in that it does not distinguish between the seer and the seen, the creator and the created (V.3.7). This flaw then leaves the door open for patriarchy to substitute itself for the “One” and assume all its privileges. This view is predicated upon the conformity to the “One” who does not recognize the “other.” Thus, Plotinus, in contrast to Plato, does not equate nature or the senses to evil.\(^247\) By extension, the representation of nature or senses in art is not negated, for it is deemed the handy work of the Soul, from what it remembers of the One, through the *nous*. What connects the hierarchy of the One, Spirit (*nous*) and Soul, Plotinus argues, is love that is stimulated when things are remembered (I.6.2 and III.5.1).

There is determinism in this “love,” and free will is seen as an obstacle (Russell 296). There is a clear purpose for this artistic beauty as well. Therefore, he emphasizes the beauty perceived through the senses and considers it key to recognizing what lies beyond. This beauty of nature is then extended to configurations created by artists representing natural forms, which are also primarily reliant upon “seeing;” thus, visual art becomes an important player in Plotinus’s scheme of things.

Analogously, Plotinus holds up a mirror to humanity claiming what is reflected (whether in nature or in a work of art) in fact *signals* the perfection all must strive for;
however, this is nothing but an illusion. Since it looks toward the One, where “rest is unbroken” and “all is content,” there can be no change or movement (V.1.4). Plotinus’s mirror disregards that as humans we “see” things differently, are all dependent on one another in many ways, and have our experiences shaped through one another’s. As Anthony Kenny notes on Wittgenstein, “[e]ven the words that we use to frame our most secret and inward thoughts derive the only sense they have from their use in our common external discourse.” Plotinus’s philosophy, however, makes the individual dependent upon the “One” that historically has easily been replaced by patriarchal aristocracy or religious dogma, and has led all toward absolutism. This dependence is solidified in the power patriarchy acquires by making its own possession all that can reflect that perfection or ideal based on Neoplatonism, including art. In this, Plotinus provides what serves as the foundation of aristocratic, patriarchal rule.

It is then a small wonder that Plotinus’s notion of the “One” seems strikingly similar to Plato’s “Idea of the Good,” though it appears to have originally come from Parmenides. Kenny asserts “the dominant place in Plotinus’ system is occupied by ‘the One’: the notion is derived through Plato, from Parmenides, where Oneness is a key property of Being . . . [I]t is the basis of all being and the standard of all value, but it is itself beyond being and beyond goodness” (92). This may explain why Russell calls Plotinus a “melancholy optimist.” Plotinus, in the unstable and unhappy world in which he lived, was seeking happiness through “reflection upon things that are remote from the impressions of sense.” This, Plotinus achieved through the power of “thought and imagination” (Russell 286). In other words, he sought freedom from what he could not control or change, in thought and imagination, an idea which centuries later Kant relies upon to develop his theory of criticism,
or well beyond that, Deleuze and Guattari form their Schizophrenic excursions as means to a creative escape from the all-encompassing ties of capitalism.\textsuperscript{250}

In the Fourth Ennead, Plotinus explains how the soul, which has no independent reality, descends and enters a body suitable to it. It then “has the desire of elaborating order on the model of what it has seen in the Intellectual-Principle” (IV.7.13). However, joining a body separates the soul from its place of unity with other souls as essence, and is made to govern “what is lower than itself” (IV.8.2-3). Here is when we are confronted with an individual entering the natural world.

There are similarities between this individual in recognizing himself/herself as the one who descended from an essence connected to the Divine Intellect and the child who sees himself/herself in the mirror for the first time, according to Jacques Lacan. The child perceives a seemingly complete image of the self, and that forms the foundation of his/her ego; this is a necessary step, albeit an incomplete image of the child as a being who is very much dependent upon others to fulfill his/her needs. This is what Lacan calls méconnaissance, and it is experienced through “seeing.”\textsuperscript{251}

In order to explain human subjectivity and account of the individuated self, Lacan asserts in his ‘Mirror Phase Theory’ that such a development takes place based on an illusion. “This image is a fiction because it conceals, or freezes, the infant’s lack of motor coordination and the fragmentation of its drives. But it is salutary for the child, since it gives it the first sense of a coherent identity in which it can recognize itself” (Mitchell & Rose 30). The result in the self that is shown to the individuals through Neoplatonism is not dissimilar to this principle. It gives an inaccurate portrayal of the individual, albeit a coherent spiritual identity in theory; it turns one inward toward seeking and longing for the essence or
purification. The difference is the Lacanian child has the opportunity to move beyond this stage, while the Neoplatonian soul does not, because of the latter’s predetermined destination.

Interestingly, the metaphor of mirror is often used by Neoplatonists to encourage the individual to recall the connection with the Divine. To visualize this connection, Plotinus places the “Intellect” (Spirit) in between the “One” and the “Soul” and speaks of the beauty that exists there: “. . . all is transparent . . . so that everywhere there is all, and all is all . . . There, is all the stars; and every star, again, is all the stars and sun . . . while some manner of being is dominant in each all are mirrored in every other” (V.8.4).

Comparably, the same pattern is repeated even with the progression of thoughts in philosophy with regard to the shaping of the idea of the “I.” Philosophically speaking, Lacan’s theory can also apply to the Cartesian cogito in that it confirms the existence of the “I.” The moment Descartes draws this conclusion is the moment in which the philosophical “child” sees itself in the philosophical symbolic mirror and becomes aware of its philosophical ego, but there is no mention of the thoughts being shaped by any other being other than the “I;” therefore, it lacks the ability to identify the valuable connection with others. This ego becomes the center of the philosophical discussion from this point on upon which philosophers like Kant, for example, base their thoughts. Where there is a difference, nonetheless, is when the “seeing” shifts to “thinking” beginning with Descartes. None of these philosophers however, question the issue of the “point of origin” until Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975), who draws attention to “utterance” and dialogism. The distraction toward the self, whether in the psychological development of the biological child or the philosophical development of humanity, can be seen as the impediment in striving to connect
dialogically with others. In Plotinus, as stated by Russell, this is seen as a flaw, as he believes Plotinus’s philosophy discourages willing any change. In fact, being reliant on deterministic principles in Neoplatonism, the free will is viewed as a sin (Russell 296).

The shift from the “seeing” to “thinking” opened up the possibility for a deeper investigation of what is being “seen.” This brought forth the notion of the individual as a thinker, who, while still isolated, was beginning to claim an identity, based on reason, distinct from what it had experienced as a subject to a patriarchal system. However, the Neoplatonist influence endures because the individual remains dissolved in the collective (through an artificially imposed unity), and during the times of uncertainty, has no path other than moving inward. In the words of Kandinsky: “When religion, science, and morality are shaken . . . when the external supports threaten to collapse, then man’s gaze turns away from the external toward himself” (AiT 87).

Idealism in German Philosophy, Neoplatonism and Creative Expressions

In the course of the development of consciousness in Western philosophy, if we consider the Cartesian “I,” as the starting point of the journey toward subject formation, it is Kant who builds on what Andrew Bowie calls “the shared structures of our subjective consciousness which are the ‘condition of possibility’ of objective knowledge,” in order to lay the foundation for a subject formation independent from the Divine (2). Therefore, what Kant did (and his followers pursued along the same lines) was replace nature, as predicated upon the Divine, with a nature defined through aestheticism and beauty as responded to by the human mind (Bowie 3). This substitution gave some sense of empowerment to humans, albeit an “imaginary” one to use Lacan’s term in the case of the individual, or in a broader scope, to the new incoming bourgeois class, nevertheless.
The individuation of the child as a subject in “I,” according to Lacan, is reliant upon the theory of “mirror stage,” in which the child sees himself/herself in the mirror and realizes he/she is a separate being; however, this is in fact a misrecognition (méconnaissance) that comes at the cost of seeing the image misleadingly as perfect. This misrecognition, Lacan argues, contributes to the narcissistic formation of his/her “I,” and “the narcissistic image, which [comes] from the pleasure derived from meeting himself in the mirror, becomes when confronting his fellow man an outlet for his most intimate aggressivity” (qtd in Keenan 218). Similarly, the “I” becomes pivotal to the development of Western philosophy in the process of subject formation as it unfolds through the works of German philosophers.

In Bowie’s attempt to reposition subjectivity within Kant’s aesthetic theory in response to recent postmodern theories, he argues both Idealism and early Romanticism to be “immediate consequences” of Kant’s philosophy striving to define subjectivity, while both place the “I” at the center. I submit, there is a correlation between the notions of perfection and the autonomy of the “I,” and the Idealism or even Romanticism that emerged out of Kant. Idealism and Romanticism are predicated on a predetermined unity with the natural world in which consciousness can take place in the case of the former, or can never occur in the case of the latter (Bowie 98); both consequences were influential in the development of proceeding philosophical theories in Germany. These theories are significant, as justified by Bowie, for “they regard the experience of natural and artistic beauty and the fact of aesthetic production as vital to the understanding of self-consciousness” (Bowie 2).

An example of Idealists’ thought would be in the philosophy of Fichte. Upon Kant’s emphasis on the subject as being where the object can be recognized, Fichte took it as far as stating that it is the “I” that produces the world, and that “the absolute . . . is the action of the
I” (Bowie 70, 75). Consciousness, Fichte argues, happens in what he calls “reflexive splitting,” in which the “I” both splits and is unified spontaneously. More importantly for Fichte, this is not a chain of events, one leading to another, but rather he turns the “I” toward itself in apperception. He states: “the activity . . . does not . . . lead endlessly to other effects, but can instead . . . ‘go back into itself,’ and thus has a ‘being for itself’: I and activity which returns into itself are completely identical concepts” (Bowie 73).

The early Romantics, however, were unconvinced of the “spontaneous splitting and unity” in reaching consciousness while remaining “absolute” at the same time, and believed that the “imagination” played an important role in the formation of subjectivity. Novalis rejects the ‘view from nowhere,’ responding to Fichte’s “eye” in the conscious self’s ability to “‘see’ itself seeing” (Bowie 75) and argues that the consciousness process “is not transparent to itself,” but rather it has to be represented to itself (Bowie 89). Novalis argues: “consciousness itself is a ‘being outside being in being.’ This means it is an ‘image’, ‘an image of being in being’” (Bowie 90). However an image of the “I” is not the same as the “I” itself; this, Novalis resolves by maintaining “the very sense of its absence points to its undeniable existence” (Bowie 91). This “negative recognition” that informs “. . . Novalis’s Romantic notion of art” arises from “the necessary failure to represent an absolute ground, in this case the I . . .” (Bowie 95). Novalis states:

Self-consciousness in the greater sense is a task – an ideal – it would be that state within which there was no movement in time . . . In real self-consciousness we would just change – but without going any further . . . we are not I by inferences and indirectly – but immediately . . . All our memories and events link to a mystical unity which we call I (ibid).
The Idealism in Hegel is in his collapse of the subject into object. For Hegel, the ultimate objective is “Absolute Truth,” to be arrived at through the mind’s mediation of empirical knowledge (phenomena), awarding it new meaning and situating it within its rightful place in time; this is guided by Geist (i.e. essence, spirit, mind), and it continues until self-consciousness is achieved; it implies change of human spirit across time, but suggests a path toward a destination for art and for history. Therefore, the more we acquire knowledge, the more we unite with it, and the closer we get to “Absolute Truth.” To avoid Kant’s binary problem of acquiring knowledge from the “outside” world and uniting it with our faculties on the “inside,” Hegel, as with the other Idealists, shows “how thought and being are inseparable” (Bowie 141).

The further criticism of Kant’s binary division of the world into phenomena and noumena brings in other philosophers, such as Schopenhauer, who argues the “world’s most inner essence” to be the “Will.” Never appearing on its own, the Will manifests itself through the desires of body; therefore, “the phenomenal world is grounded in the Will, which objectifies itself in different ways in all of nature” (Bowie 262). The link Schopenhauer establishes between the Will and subjectivity is then picked up by Nietzsche in the “will to power” which eliminates “a metaphysically grounded notion of history” (Bowie 275); Nietzsche rejects any “higher collective historical goal,” as in Hegelian “philosophy’s continuous self undermining […] as constituting a progression that incorporates the refuted views of the world into a higher synthesis” (Bowie 275). Similar to Schopenhauer, Nietzsche believed in the intuitive accessibility of the ‘one truly existing subject’ (i.e. Nature, Life, Will, etc.) rather than rationalism, and saw the point of art as “the pleasure for the ‘true creator’.” Nietzsche sees “our highest dignity in the significance of works of art – for only aesthetic phenomenon is existence and the world eternally justified” (Bowie 280). However,
those who create culture in Nietzsche’s view are not from the masses. While Nietzsche sees the “essence of modernity” in its “lack of center” and in the diversity of cultures, he does not have a favorable view of it. His proposed solution to “the de-centered state of culture [is] in terms of a ‘re-birth of German myth,’” which is the creation of “superior beings” and not consequence of “education, cultural opportunity, and democratic debates” (Bowie 281).

In The Origin of the Work of Art, Heidegger returns to the issue of “essence” and of “Being” (Heidegger 143). He asks: “[I]n defining the essence of the thing, what is the use of a feeling, however certain, if thought alone has the right to speak here?” (Heidegger 151). To answer, he “interprets” feeling as “more intelligently perceptive . . . more open to Being than all reason” (ibid). Here is where he notes a rift: “[T]he current thing-concept always fits each thing. Nevertheless, it does not lay hold of the thing as it is in its own being, but makes an assault upon it” (ibid). As a solution, Heidegger proposes a “free field” in which the thing can “display its thingly character directly” (ibid). This is the field of aesthetic (aistheton). To be sure, Heidegger is looking to Kant here when he defines aistheton as “perceptible by sensation in the senses belonging to sensibility.” He further notes: “Hence the concept later becomes a commonplace according to which a thing is nothing but the unity of manifold of what is given in the senses” (ibid).

Heidegger’s investigation into the “thingness” of things and tracing the words back to their origin also is suspiciously reminiscent of Freud’s method, but he never opens it enough to move beyond the central discourse of the essence. Heidegger notes that, the reason everyone thinks is in understanding of a meaning of a word, is due to its “core.” However, there is a “leap” between the underlying experiences (as also later pointed to by Foucault) and its origin that will not carry over in translation (Heidegger 149). In a different time
period, this will leave us not with the presence of the same core, but rather with layers of interpretation and re-interpretation of the word. He then concludes: “No wonder that the current attitude toward things – our way of addressing ourselves to things and speaking about them – has adapted itself to this common view of the thing” (ibid). This is not unlike what Foucault is interested in: the “history of resemblance” (Foucault xxiv).

**Safavid Idealism through Creative Reverberations: Mūla Sadrā**

What defines “Idealism” among the Safavid kings is not a consistent idea and is intimately interwoven with the patriarchy’s objectives that reveals it was continuously facing a paradox: constancy and unsustainability. Whereas Shah Isma’il’s military campaigns necessitated a divine leader (one that could liberate – a messiah), we witness him claiming such a position. However, once the control of the land had been achieved and such a position could no longer be sustained, and when his successor, Tahmasp, is confronted with a different set of challenges in order to manage, he is forced to claim to be, not the divine, but a representative of someone like Prophet Mohammad, who received revelations (Babayan 92). This image is expressed well in the exemplary subject of Mi’raj discussed earlier. In his memoirs, Tahmasp projects himself as a “Muslim king and friend of God (vali)” (Babayan 99).

Thus, once the fragmented region was consolidated under the Safavid founder, it became necessary to establish a rule of law (shari’a), which had to come from the Shi’a school of thought due to converting the country into Shi’ism. There had been no precursor to such authority to administer or pass down the law from a Shi’a position of power. This problem was remedied through the migration by invitation of the Shi’a ulama (religious authorities) from Jabal Amil located in the mountainous region of Southern Lebanon.
(Babayan 2002, 407). This move eventually set in opposition the shari’a-minded theologians against the combination of the “alchemical, mystical, and philosophical spheres” that had resurfaced “in the early modern period” in Iran, and resulted in the fragmentation of the mainly Greco-Roman, pre-Islamic beliefs and practices. It was crucial nevertheless, for the Safavids to maintain their domination over all despite such opposition.

Perhaps nowhere more appropriate than in the transition that paved the way for the reign of Shah Abbas I (r. 1588-1629) is the location we witness another creative aftershock. At this time, a sweeping motion replaced the ghullāt worldview that had initially brought the Safavids to power, thus giving way to the rise of the “philosopher king” (Shadow of God on Earth), as defined by a reconciliation between Shi’ite and Sufi (itself with Platonic and Neoplatonic) views. Hence, a balance was called for between the two that was achieved in the works of contemporary philosophers such as Mullā Sadrā, to whom I shall return. As was necessary, therefore, the Safavid patriarchy modified and morphed, forged a new ideology, and even eliminated its own ideological progenitors to remain in power.

By the time of Shah Abbas I, the messianic phase that had established the Safavid Imperial rule dwindled due to not only the need for law and order to manage and administer the affairs of the empire, but also a desire to forge a new encompassing image of the king. This diminishing, however, by no means eliminated the various Alid perspectives and sentiments as testified to by Shah Abbas’ precursors’ change of position. Babayan explains:

Unlike his father [Isma’il], who claimed to be messiah/God, Tahmasp positions himself within that comfortable distance of dreams that had become a recognized mystical medium of communicating with the divine, an accepted distance between the holy and the human.
Further, there is the issue of creativity to consider that speaks to the existing understanding of how different styles of piety were viewed as possessing the knowledge of the unseen (ghayb), sometimes labeled as “magic” or “alchemy.” This was, to be sure, of great interest to the king and other regional or local authorities, who believed “mystical circles and spiritual guides . . . [to be] the repository of temporal authority” (Babayan 94). Babayan further notes the “creative act” as significant to Medieval Muslims, whether it be in “fashioning the universe, a beautiful poem, a painting or a song,” as it was deemed emulation of the act of creation, for it “stimulated sensual responses” (Babayan 95). She states:

Artists were believed to be endowed with a special power and ability to perform miracles in the way that they could mirror the magnificence of creation. The ability to capture that splendor was deemed to be magic, through words strung together in poetry that aroused emotions or colored images that constructed realities.²⁶⁸

Also noteworthy here is the understanding of “nature” among the “philosophers (hukamā) and the alchemists,” which was predicated on the knowledge from antiquity. Such views can be traced back to the time after Alexander’s arrival to the region, when the Greek and the Babylonian ideas were exchanged.²⁶⁹ These ideas were established on the balance between the four elements (air, fire, water, earth) and the view of the interchangeability of the elements and their potential toward purity. What was deemed significant and sought after was an equilibrium. “[T]he purest compound was analogous to the perfect individual” (Babayan 97). The other notion came from the idea of the heavenly bodies’ influence on people’s lives and events. Peter Adamson explicates how by the second century AD there is an “intimate connection” between astronomy and astrology, evident in a work called Almagest by Claudius Ptolemy that found its way “even into Arab tradition” (196-7). What is
of particular interest here is how “[m]agic could be explained using ideas from Stoic and Platonist physics, in particular the idea that the whole cosmos is like a single organism.” Adamson states:

The parts of the universe relate like parts of a body, so that they are capable of being ‘jointly affected’—in Greek sumpatheia, [a] word that lives on in English as ‘sympathy.’

The task of the sciences then was to reveal the underlying patterns of the cosmos, so they can rationalize the creation of a parallel symmetry in the material world. Babayan exemplifies: “[T]he circular motions of heavenly objects and the fourfold nature of elements were used as frameworks through which harmony could be created on earth” (97). Therefore, the cosmic patterns, mathematical principles and rules of proportion translated into models and motifs and were manifested in various art forms, from poetry to painting and architecture. However, for Shah Abbas I, this was only part of the plan.

Shah Abbas I faced many challenges upon arriving at the Safavid throne in 1587 in Qazvin, both internally (with the supporters of other Safavid potential rivals) and externally from the Ottomans to the west, who had captured Tabriz in 1585, and the Uzbekhs to the East, who had seized Herat and were moving toward Mashhad. Aside from his politico-military challenges, Abbas I also had to resolve the challenges posed to his spiritual leadership (as pir) by various Sufi elements, who openly questioned his authority (Newman 51). Shah Abbas’s court chronicler, Eskandar Beg Munshi, according to Newman, deems his military successes and victories over his rivals to be due to “Abbas’ divinely inspired creation of the ghulam or qullar corps—small forces composed mainly of non-Qizilbash Arab and Persian tribal volunteers” (52).
The term *ghulam*, meaning “slave,” already existed during the reign of Abbas’ precursor, Shah Tahmasp. However, it proved to be a most effective system during Shah Abbas’s reign to “preserve the vitality of the Safavid household.” The master-disciple relationship that existed through the Sufi hierarchy was easily transitioned into a master-slave structure, through which much of the same expectations (total devotion and loyalty) applied. In the meantime, Shah Abbas moved his capital to Isfahan in 1590 to proclaim the dawning of his new era. “Isfahan served as a new physical and cultural environment from which the ruler and his slave household extended their power throughout the empire.”

However, Newman speaks of a “spiritual disquiet on the urban scene” (68). The spreading out of the urban life had contributed to the rise of “urban ‘popular’ classes . . . [that] encouraged the expansion of links between urban artisans and craftsmen and urban-based messianic Sufi discourse,” with those trades congregating in and patronizing “some of the capital’s coffee houses” in which “oppositional discourse [was] on offer” (Newman 68-69). Out of his concern for such congregations, Shah Abbas “delegated clerical associates of the court to monitor the activities of these venues.” The objective of the clerics was to “influence ‘popular’ spiritual discourse in the period” and align it with the Twelver Shi’ism (Newman 69).

Earlier, the socio-religious influence of the messianic ideas, as argued by Babayan, had kept the criticism by the “*shari’a*-minded *ulama*” at a minimum. However, the migration of the Shi’a jurisprudence from south of Lebanon brought on a shift. Still, among the “Jabal Amil intellectuals” were those renowned individuals, like Mir Damād and Shaykh Bahai, who found the “*shari’at*-minded quest for God insufficient.” For this reason, “[t]o their studies on religious sciences (*fiqh* and *hadith*) they added philosophy (*hikmat*) and mysticism (*irfan*) (Babayan 407). Their student, Sadr al Din Mohammad Shirazi, known as
Mullā Sadrā (1571/2-1640), followed the style of his teachers in synthesizing, as stated by Babayan, “philosophy or sufism with purely rational quest for God” (ibid). Newman points out Ibn Arabi’s influence, among “other prominent Muslim thinkers from the twelfth to the sixteenth century,” on Mullā Sadrā’s “reconciliation of philosophy with gnosis (irfan),” predicated on the Andalusian mystic’s gnostic formulations, however “grounded . . . in the revelation of the Twelver Shi’ism” (Newman 70). But how did he actually accomplish this?

Mullā Sadrā’s influential contribution rests on the question of “being,” in other words, on what later becomes “a leitmotif in . . . the eastern tradition: existence” (Adamson 2016, 388). He drew from two opposing views. One view is predicated on the “primacy of essence,” as had been argued by Suhrevardi, and the other is the “primacy of existence,” a belief closer to the Neoplatonists and mystics, particularly the Andalusian mystic, Ibn Arabi (ibid). The philosophers in the former group “hold that there are real things outside the mind, but no existence that would belong to those things,” for “existence is a judgment of the mind.” The second group believes, on the other hand, that “existence or ‘being’ does have reality outside the mind,” and in Mullā Sadrā’s view this existence is light. Adamson explains, according to Mullā Sadrā:

God is pure existence or pure light, whereas other things are always limited in their existence or illumination. Like Suhrevardi, then, Sadrā describes created things as suffering from darkness. Like the Sufis, he says that such things are compromised by non-being and privation, lacking the perfect existence that belongs to God alone. And like Avicenna, he says that this is because created things are contingent, whereas God is necessary.
By stating “there is nothing real apart from existence,” Mullā Sadrā is clearly following the same Neoplatonic formula of “Unity of Existence,” and equals it to God. He further distinguishes the perfection of the Divine—because God is pure existence—from other things created, for in the latter there exists “lack or limitation” (Adamson 2016, 389). Adamson argues that Mullā Sadrā solves the Platonic problem of real versus illusion by thinking “not only that all existence is marked by continuous variation in intensity, but also that all existence is in constant motion, even in respect of substance” (Adamson 2016, 392).

Mullā Sadrā explains this motion in his “philosophical masterpiece,” *The Four Journeys*. The phrase had already been applied by Ibn Arabi, when expounding the centrality of “God as the guide for those who travel ‘from Him, to Him, in Him, and through Him’.” Closer to Mullā Sadrā’s time, the metaphor had been used again by a precursor of Mullā Sadrā’s. Therefore, it is not by accident that Mullā Sadrā chooses this as the title of his book. The journeys, according to Mullā Sadrā, take place “along a two-way street” (Adamson 2016, 388). First the creations “come forth from God like rays from a shining light.” The role of light is key, for it will serve as the “path back to the divine” (ibid). The journey back requires one to change, admits Mullā Sadrā. He argues, existence does go through changes, although so slowly and gradually that we tend to overlook it. Adamson notes here that the idea of “transformation . . . by soul as it inclines towards the body,” had already been expressed by the later Neoplatonists (395). Sadrā’s contribution, however, is in the way in which he illuminates how “all existing things strive to return to God.” Most important in this process, in Sadrā’s view, are the humans and required for this change is “knowledge” (ibid). But, knowledge is not merely something to acquire through senses. Rather, “[r]eal knowledge” requires becoming one with it (Adamson 2016, 396). The process of “knowing” here maps onto what Fichte explains in the consciousness of the “I”
The separation of the creation, and the returning, by unifying the mind with knowledge, mirror the “splitting” of the “I” in order to arrive at consciousness. It is Mullā Sadrā, however, in the case of Iran in particular, that remains the bridge linking the antiquity’s philosophy to later philosophical, political, and Islamic thoughts.

As rightly pointed out by Adamson, there is little doubt about Mullā Sadrā’s long lasting impressions, which reach well into the Modern times, as his philosophy remains a religiously and socially relevant subject of study among the religious scholars in Iran today (Adamson 2016, 441), and to which I shall return in the final chapter of this study. However, before examining the contemporary links, it is necessary to travel through the events leading to the period called Modernism, not just as it impacts Iran, but affecting two other important powers in the region, namely Egypt and the Ottoman Turkey, particularly following the rude awakening brought on by Napoleon’s Egyptian military campaign.

In summary, this chapter focused on a number of critical points. First, by bringing in the case study of the Safavids, it made concrete in an historical situation, the thesis in this study. After a brief overview of the emergence of the Safavid dynasty in Iran, I focused on how the Safavids, in rising to political power, despite their roots in mystic-Sunni Islam, employed creativity, both in literary and in visual forms. I further identified the Neoplatonism in Islamic thought, by highlighting one of the most revered mystics, Ibn Arabi. As Ibn Arabi’s work was highly visual, and served as inspiration for further creative endeavors, I analyzed several examples that reveal the two principles of his philosophy: The Unity of Existence, and The Universal (Perfect) Man, as projected through the court sponsored arts.
It was also necessary in this chapter to identify the shared Neoplatonic ideas within both the German Idealist works, and the Safavid-supported philosophy and art that show traces of Neoplatonic and idealistic concepts. I concluded this chapter by drawing attention to the most influential figure in philosophy during the Safavid reign, Mūla Sadrā, whose impact, as I will demonstrate in the final two chapters, still continues to this day.
CHAPTER FOUR

MIDDLE EAST BEYOND THE SAFAVIDS:

THE PRE AND EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY: MODERNISM, NATIONALISM, AND

THE ARTISTIC ENDEAVOR

When this process which we can call ‘modern’ began, the greater part of the Middle East was ruled by the two great empires, those of the Ottomans and Safavids […] they were the product of the whole process of Islamic civilization to which they were the heirs […] they were societies dominated by cities, and by the relations between city populations and those who ruled them.\(^{283}\)

— Albert Hourani

There have been many perspectives through which “modernity” can be defined, explained or critically investigated. The conventional consensus on the term “modern” however, often draws on what is measured in scientific, technological or even cultural achievements encompassing city life,\(^ {284}\) while the history of the development of thought in Europe demonstrates a necessary undercurrent to the scientific or hegemonic cultural progress.\(^ {285}\) This undercurrent is the development of the consciousness of the “I” or the subject-hood, which has also been influential in the advent of modernism. I am aware of the problem of the subject that objectifies. As Horkheimer and Adorno point out in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, “Man’s domination over himself, which grounds his selfhood, is almost always the destruction of the subject, in whose subject it is undertaken” (54). Thus, consciousness of the “I” alone is not as important as how the “I” then becomes aware of its “other” and connect to it via language as noted by Mikhail Bakhtin. However getting through this stage is a pre-requisite to reach the next stage, at least in learning from the Western
experience. Here, I won’t get into the role of subject-hood in the opening a new social space/class in a society as it took place in Europe. One might argue, there is bound to be a clash of the “I’s” due all sides becoming self-centered, at some point, as it happened during the world wars within the western civilizations. But all can learn from that experience.

Hourani’s statement above, therefore, may be considered with the discernment that his use of the term “modern” does not necessarily reflect the process of the development of new ideas that were taking shape in eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe focusing on the individual, but rather the fruits of the advancements of that understanding through technology, primarily as linked with military purposes. The view that exposes the issue of subjectivity and subject formation (or lack thereof) with respect to the concept of “modernity” has been continuously overlooked when it comes to studying the Middle Eastern regions, specifically Persia, or as known by its “modern” name, Iran. I propose, the absence of the question of subjectivity and subject formation as an inevitable part of the discourse on modernism in the Middle East in general, and Iran in particular, has been due to the overlooking and bypassing of the portion of the philosophical investigation of the “I,” from Descartes to Kant (or an equivalent to such thoughts). The comparison of such discourses within the recorded history of philosophy has been argued against by Peter K. J. Park in *Africa, Asia and the History of Philosophy: Racism in the Formation of the Philosophical Canon 1780-1830*. Park notes that Africa and Asia were not without philosophy, but they were intentionally excluded from the history of philosophy by Western philosophical minds. Park, however, does not present any evidence that points to the slightest attention paid to the individual as a subject to itself within African or Asian philosophies. Indeed, the exclusion itself attests to what I aim to demonstrate here.
In this chapter, I will continue pulling on the thread of the ever-present Neoplatonism that blurred the space between the individual and the collective, the universal and the particular, i.e. subject and object. I aim to demonstrate, while the bulk of modern scientific achievements in the nineteenth century were initially dedicated to military purposes, some of the technological advancements that trickled into the production of the arts began to pave the way for hybridized and diverse cultural productions that can be considered the early steps toward individuality that hint at a diverse subject formation in the Middle East. Stated differently, the democratization of the modern way in which cultural products could be created (i.e. photography, graphic arts, theater, and mass publications) offered opportunities to capture early occurrences of different viewpoints—on many occasions opposing the dominant positions of power—critical to modernity in the region of the Middle East. Nevertheless, because the discourses, philosophy, and theories on issues such as the “self” or “alterity” were absent in that instance, those artistic and cultural achievements found no validation or acknowledgement and were reduced to fragments of recorded history, whether viewed favorably or negatively, without a chance for anyone to critically study them. This view is not unlike what Daryush Shayegan refers to as “false consciousness” (Shayegan 1997 ix). Therefore, the cultural achievements of modernism were often capitalized on by the dominant patriarchal powers, particularly in creating a modern image of themselves to the outside world. Here, I aim to discuss in detail the Europeans’ arrival at the self and individual experience due to the works of Muslim scholars, and in particular, the theory of vision. However, I maintain it was this important theory that was overlooked by Muslims, for the implications of the theory of vision did not find a place to flourish in the pragmatic political structure in the Middle East at the time, yet it was explored fully by the Europeans, as attested to by the Renaissance artists’ works. Therefore, as exemplified in photography,
bypassing the individual experience has been one of the consequences of this disregard. Another corollary has been due to the West’s possession of key archeological information, but historically, not sharing equally and fairly the finds with the people of the Middle East. The inequity in information distribution is another subject that shall remain beyond the boundaries of this study, and it must be postponed to future opportunities.

The view of the self in the Middle East is so distorted and problematic that the dilemma has even permeated the works of the Middle Eastern scholars in Diaspora. In discourses on modernism in the Middle East, by taking an originary approach, some researchers appear to get caught in a competitive (a kind of my-culture-is-superior-to-your-culture) approach; they race toward uncovering the proof of which culture has had the most advancements before anyone else did in history. For instance, some argue the ancient Persian civilization preceded the West in modernism, in their cultural and technological advancements, and even praise the wisdom of the divinely sanctioned ruler (according to the Bible), Cyrus the Great, embracer of diversity and human rights. Abbas Milani in *Lost Wisdom: Rethinking Modernity in Iran*, argues that contrary to the belief that modernity began in the west, there were many waves of modernism in Persia since the ancient times, waves that in turn influenced other civilizations, namely the European art and culture. Milani downplays the fact that Persia itself received these influences from Egypt, Babylon, Assyria, and other nations it came to conquer. Instead, he highlights a global high esteem for the king as: “[T]his . . . praise was partially in recognition of . . . the fact that the vast Persian Empire of the time was a paragon of religious and cultural tolerance (12). The issue of tolerance has specifically become a subject of interest ever since concerns have been raised over the increase of intolerance in recent decades, following the establishing of the revolutionary government in Iran. Nonetheless, without a clear view of the consequences of
such broad statements, one is not able to critically investigate the causes of such intolerances in recent years. These broad, sweeping views undermine the question of individuality and subject formation, for tolerance in the modern sense requires respect and acknowledgement of alterity and the individual rights.

The issue of modernity in the Middle East is a massive subject, and for this reason, I will limit this study to the three Middle Eastern regions of Egypt, Persia, and Ottoman Turkey in the nineteenth and twentieth century, post Napoleonic invasion of Egypt in 1798. To further clarify boundaries, this study chiefly focuses on the intersection of certain historical events with specific, selected examples of artistic endeavors represented in theater, visual arts (painting, sculpture, architecture and photography), as well as journalism, all of particular interest here due to their link to modernization programs. This is not just to reveal a similar pattern of Western influences that impacted the waves of modernity in these countries, as manifested in the technology, cultural, and artistic products, but also to locate and investigate the early instances of individual, critical, and diverse thinking in these three influential regions. These instances have rarely been considered beyond historical interests because the experiential process of individual awareness and subjecthood has repeatedly been disrupted by the dominance of patriarchy.296 Patriarchy, infused with and drawing legitimacy from the ever present Neoplatonic sentiments, continuously has returned to artificially unifying against the basis of differences and alterity, even under the guise of modernization, in order to maintain its own status of power.297

It must be further noted that this study is within the premise that the written history about the Middle East has either been recorded by those from outside the cultures, or when recorded from within, it has gone through periods of erasures and manipulations, therefore,
suffering from a lack of reliable and verifiable continuity. Consequently, the historical evidence alone is not adequate and must be investigated as it intersects with the artistic products and carefully examined through a philosophical lens. Since the advent of modernist movements, no thorough, independent, and self-critical investigation of the available recorded history, as crossed with the relevant creative cultural products has taken place,\textsuperscript{298} it is the aim of this study to open up a space necessary to begin with the question of the self/individual-awareness, albeit an initially self-centered one, like those found among Napoleon’s soldiers in his Egyptian campaign (Cole 2007, 11).\textsuperscript{299}

**THE PRESSURES OF THE WAVE OF MODERNISM AND THE SUBSEQUENT REACTIONS**

At the turn of the nineteenth century, military competition appeared widespread with Europe enjoying a hegemonic position over the Middle East. This era had as one of its significant markers, the Napoleonic invasion of Egypt that had occurred only a couple of years earlier. Its impact, however, was not just restricted to Egypt. Napoleon’s campaign was based on what historians have viewed as a way to establish France’s political status and domination as a world colonialist power, in competition with the British. (See Appendix II.A).

**Egypt and Modernism: Napoleon’s Invasion of 1798**

Egypt in the second half of the eighteenth century was not in a suitable socio-economic condition. In a brief paragraph, Cole sums up Egypt’s situation in the decades leading up to the Napoleonic invasion:
The eighteenth century was not kind to Egypt. Between 1740 and 1798, Egyptian society went into a tailspin, its economy generally bad; droughts were prolonged, the Nile floods low, and outbreaks of plague and other diseases frequent. The slave-soldier houses fought fierce and constant battles with one another, and consequently raised urban taxes to levels that produced misery. Now a new catastrophe had struck, in the form of Bonaparte’s plans to bestow liberty on Egypt.300

Indeed, Napoleon had underlined his Egyptian campaign as one that was going to “liberate” the “unfortunate inhabitants of the Nile,” who had been tyrannized by the slave soldiers, the Mamluks. In his address to his soldiers, as he prepared to invade Egypt, keeping his arch enemy the Great Britain in view, he capitalized on Egypt’s poor socio-economic status and the autocratic leadership in phrases emphasizing the tyranny and exploitation of the people by the slave soldiers, who were serving the Ottomans. In one of his proclamations that was written aboard the Orient he states: “[s]oldiers . . . you are about to undertake a conquest, the effects of which on the civilization and commerce of the world are immeasurable. You shall inflict on England the surest and most palpable blow, while awaiting the opportunity to administer the coup de grace.”301 Overall the image was being created for the French army, who envisioned their campaigns as comparable to those led by likes of Augustus and Alexander.302 Napoleon, as the master of propaganda, also had plans in place to communicate his mission as clearly as possible to the Egyptians. But, there was the problem of language.

Worse than “ungrammaticality and awkward wording,” Cole argues, was the content of Napoleon’s proclamations that “sought to express concepts for which there were no Arabic words,” so they were met with confusion and were difficult to understand (Cole 2007,
30). It is in the examination of such instances that one realizes not just the cultural
disconnections, but how much Neoplatonic philosophy is deeply rooted in the region. One
significant term in these proclamations is the term “republic.” In quoting from Abd al-
Rahman al Jabarti, the Cairene cleric and historian, Cole notes, al Jabarti’s explanation of the
term that appears “less like a democracy and more like a rule of philosophers similar to that
proposed by Socrates in Plato’s Republic . . . is no accident[,] [for h]e was a Muslim
Neoplatonist” (Cole 2007, 33). 303

Another significant issue was the incompatibility between the Egyptian and French
military. The Egyptian military forces were far behind the French, both in number and in
technology. 304 The French army was more orderly and disciplined to the point that the
Mamluks had noticed and were quoted as having said “[t]he French army, which marches in
tight squares . . . are linked with one another, and . . . they march like the pyramids” (Cole
2007, 69). The acknowledgement of this incompatibility meant taking actions to promote
improvement. Roger Owen in Egypt and Europe: from French Expedition to British
Occupation notes in early nineteenth century the predominantly agricultural economy of
Egypt experienced two sets of forces exerting pressure toward reforms: a number of
reformist rulers, and Europe’s expansionist economy (114). The former prompted programs
by rulers such as Muhammad Ali (r. 1805-49), Said (r. 1845-62), and Ismail Pasha (1863-
79), and the latter brought forth increasing trade, first in European export and then in their
investments (ibid). (See Appendix II.A).

During the nineteenth century, the issue of debt plays an important role in shaping
Egypt’s path toward modernism, meanwhile producing subjectivities suited for colonialism.
Owen submits that this is perhaps the first time in the history of Great Britain that it attempts
to colonize without the use of military power, at least initially; he further deems the subsequent invasion of Egypt “occupies a central role in the genesis of theories of capitalist imperialism (111-112). Europe’s commercial and financial expansion, therefore, initiated new methods of colonialism in the Middle East at this time that were mainly guided by the “financial community” but has had long lasting impressions on the colonized. In the words of Maurizio Lazzarato: “The ‘modern notion of economy’ covers both economic production and the production of subjectivity” (Lazzarato 11).

The modernization campaign, backed by European finances, included building projects, and perhaps the most significant one, the construction of the Suez Canal, which opened in 1869. Artistic productions that aimed to project a modern view of Egypt played an important role in this very international event. Concurrent with inaugurating the Suez Canal, Ismai’l Pasha, (also known as Khedive Isma’il), had planned to celebrate the opening of the first Opera House in Cairo by employing European architects’ services. Designed by the Italian architect, Pietro Avoscani (1816-1890), the tripartite structure with an arched portico closely resembled La Scala Opera House in Milan which had opened in 1778. While Avoscani used wood instead of stone in this royal opera house, he maintained the clarity and rationalism of neoclassical design in the use of architectural elements such as pediment and

12 & 13. Pietro Avoscani and Rossi (architects of Cairo Opera House, left), opened in 1869. Comparable to La Scala in Milan (right, opened in 1778).
decorative columns. The theater structure was accentuated at the entrance, with two neoclassical and allegorical sculpture groups, personifying the visual arts. The Khedivial Opera House burned down in 1971.

Perhaps no evidence more directly than the guest list can speak to the fact that the Khedive wanted to showcase Egypt as a modern state, however, in appearances. The names on the guest list included heads of state, dignitaries, and artists; for the opening ceremony of the Suez Canal, Khedive Isma’il welcomed the wife of Napoleon, Empress Eugenie, Emperor of Austria, Emile Zola, Henrik Ibsen, and Eugene Fromentin among others. The Opera House, also known as Khedival Opera House, made its debut during the celebrations “with a cantata in honor of Isma’il and a performance of Verdi’s Rigoletto” (Hourani 2013).

Similar to his grandfather’s modernization campaign, Khedive Ismai’l was trying to carry out an objective that proved to hold contradicting consequences: borrow money from Europe to modernize, and at the same time, maintain Egypt’s independence from Europe and the Ottomans (Owen 116). From the side of the Europeans, this was an opportunity to expand economic interests and political influences. Marx explains this phenomenon in Capital from the point of view of expansionist, capitalist Europe, in that “[w]hatever the social form of the production process, it has to be continuous [;] it must periodically repeat the same phases” (715). This means the same formula of debt spills over into non-European regions, by way of the export of capital, when necessary. Nevertheless, the conflict within Khedive’s goals

offered opportunities for criticism. The moments of contradiction (gaps) always make for an ideal opportunity to engender different perspectives, whenever possible. For Slavoj Žižek (2012), it is such conflicts that signal importance. In addressing the space in which power and resistance interact, he paraphrases Foucault stating that “power itself generates resistance to itself.” By resisting, one becomes the subject of that power (Žižek, 106). On this basis, the resistance to the power of patriarchy in the form of reaction through the arts deserves a closer examination in nineteenth century Egypt.

The Egyptian National debt did not escape the keen eyes of the political satirist, James (Yaqub) Sanua (1839-1912), who captured it in his publication, Abou Naddara Zarqa (man with blue spectacles) in the issue dated November 25, 1878, which shows Khedive Ismai’l as a street musician with a tambourine, singing to collect money in order to pay off Egypt’s debt. 306


A modernist himself, Sanua had been active as a playwright, before the publication of Abou Naddara. 307 Sanua’s activities in the realm of performing arts brought in mixed results
from the Khedive. Upon requesting and receiving funding from Khedive Isma’il to form a theater company, as he had learned it was done in Europe, Sanua was able to produce three of his plays, and subsequently perform at the Khedive’s Qasr al-Nīl. Two of his plays, *Anisa ala Muda* (The Fashionable Young Lady), and *Ghandur Misr* (The Egyptian Dandy) were met with such enthusiasm and encouragement from the Khedive that, following one of the performances, he came up to Sanua on the stage and exclaimed: “You are truly the founder of our national theater, you are our Egyptian Molière.” 308 Even so, not all was accepted during the modernization movement in Egypt, which underscores the superficiality of modernism in the region. A single example here can suffice. When Sanua’s play, *al Durratān* (The Two Co-Wives), which was a harsh criticism of polygamy, went on the stage, the Khedive was said to have been “furious and told Sanua that if he were not man enough to satisfy two wives, he should at least leave the ones who were able to do so alone.” 309 Thus, there appears to persist a continuity in the traditional, patriarchal manner of thinking, even from those who were seemingly striving to modernize. This demonstrates how steps taken toward modernism in the region did not go beyond the surface, as criticism of established conventions was not looked upon favorably. In Persia, the tradition of patriarchy persisted, however, mainly through the domination of the religious authority of the Shi’ite doctrine in the decades leading up to the eighteenth and subsequently, nineteenth century.

**Qajar’s Persia: Modernism and Patriarchy**

While early in the nineteenth century steps had already been taken toward modernizing Persia (Lambton 151-154), the relationship between the internal entities, whether they were religious or secular, with the external influences, such as British, French, or even American, was a complex one. To better understand the advent of modernity in
Persia, Ann K. S. Lambton suggests one must consider both the “Shi’ite doctrine towards the holders of political power and . . . the intrusion of the Great powers into Persia” (145). Therefore, due to the conflict of interest between the former and the latter, any attempt toward implementing reforms remained superficial.

Clearly, the modernization had its compulsory beginnings in the military realm. While the reforms were, not surprisingly, for military purposes initially, they were bound to bring about changes politically and socially. Lambton confirms: “The first impulse for change almost certainly came from contact with the alien civilization of Europe in the military and the diplomatic fields. [...] Indirectly, however, the military missions encouraged political and social change.”

Insofar as Shah Abbas had successfully manipulated and integrated the two strands of religious thoughts—Shi’ite and Sufi—into one cohesive political system with the king as the highest position of authority, by the late seventeenth century the monarch’s political status failed to uphold its balance of influence. In the fourth quarter of the seventeenth century, one man became the dominant influence behind the last Safavid king, Shah Sultan Hussein (r. 1694-1722). Muhammad Baqir Majlisi (1627-1699 or 1700), “a leading theologian,” was the “power behind the throne.” Majlisi’s writings became the principle authority on matters of government under the banner of specific iteration of Shi’ism (Afary & Anderson 42). He pursued a severe suppression of “all Sufi and philosophical tendencies within Shi’ite Islam and sanctioned the relentless persecution of Sunnis” (Afary & Anderson 43). He further reinstated the power of spiritual “mediators and intercessors for man with God.” The “new interpretations” in Majlisi’s writings, “aimed to transfer the public’s devotion from the Sufi mystics to the twelve Shi’ite imams,” which placed shariat authority above all other sources
of power (Afary and Anderson 43). However, it was no more than a creative and imaginary theory to eliminate competition, to dominate and move toward strategies to artificially unify non-conforming factions.\(^{314}\)

As this, in some respects Islamic, or better said, Shi’ite oriented “counter reformation,” was sweeping against the harmony and balance established earlier by Shah Abbas between the various sources of religious authorities, the literature on two key concepts was articulating further the required active life of piety. These concepts are none other than *jihad* and *shahadat* that both found reflections in the specific interpretations (among the Shi’ites, of course) of the *Karbala* narrative as “the themes of martyrdom and unjust usurpation of power by earthly rulers,” between the Prophet’s grandson Hussein, and the Umayyad rulers respectively (Afary and Anderson 43). These narratives manifest themselves in various commemorative gatherings and ritual performances that seem to have had solidified the specific iteration of Shi’ite doctrine, but also acted as a sort of Aristotelian catharsis through performance of tragedy.\(^{315}\) This is not surprising since there are historical and cultural links. One such ritual performance is known as *Ta’ziyeh*, which according to scholars like William Beeman, has pre-Islamic connections. Beeman argues mourning rituals in *Ta’ziyeh* resemble those events performed in ancient Greece for the death of Dionysus, or in ancient Egypt for Osiris that signify “cosmic renewal and rebirth” (Afary and Anderson

17. Royal Theater (Tekiyeh Dowlat). Painting by Kamal al Mulk, late nineteenth century. Round architecture, amphitheater style, where Ta’ziyeh (passion plays) were held.
Others have also pointed to the ancient Persian roots of such ritual performances, such as the death of Siavash, son of the Persian mythical king, Keykāwus. Regardless of the origins, the cathartic influence of such rituals is hard to overlook. “The spectators freely show their anger and hatred toward the antagonists by shouting at them and cursing them, and they show sympathy for the protagonists.” The cathartic effect plays well into patriarchy’s greater program of artificial unification, while alienating the “other” and further shaping a sort of a collective subjectivity that suited patriarchy. This and other mourning rituals engaged the participants emotionally and physically to a degree that it etched the message of *Karbala* tragedy in their “hearts and minds . . . helping to shape their world view.” Furthermore, some scholars have noticed the similarities between the Shi’ite and Christian passion plays. Afary and Anderson find “troubling appropriations of Shi’ite and Christian passion plays,” a noteworthy aspect missing from the contemporary studies about the ritual performances about *Karbala* in the month of Muharram. They state:

The medieval passion plays of Europe contrast the purity, decency, and love of Jesus with the fiendish, mischievous actions of the Jews, who were blamed for his death. Likewise in the Iranian Shi’ite passion plays, the saintly qualities of the Shi’ite leaders are contrasted to the unethical and vile conduct of the early Sunni leaders, who supposedly snatched the mantle of leadership unjustly, taking it away from Hussein and showing no mercy toward his family, including infants.

*Ta’ziyeh*, a derivative of the term *azzā*, meaning mourning or “to express sympathy with, to console” and to mourn, has become a term referring to passion plays in Iran that dates back to the sixteenth century (Afary and Anderson 45). As a demonstrative part of the Shi’ite sympathetic sentiments toward the Prophet’s lineage, through his daughter Fatima and
son-in law Ali, the tragedy of *Karbala* that took place on the 10th day of the month of Muharram, 61 AH (October 10, 680 CE) and concluded in the massacre of the Prophet’s grandson, Hussein and 72 male members of his family, initially served as a commemorative event through the ritual of mourning. “By the middle of the eighteenth century, the mourning rituals had developed into a new form of theatrical performance. In the nineteenth century, numerous guilds of players and performers were organized with the support of the royal court and the elite” (Chelkowski 1991, 214). The significance and success of such passion plays have been measured by the large number of audiences they attracted, as noted by European diplomats and compared with European theater that only “attracted a small elite group” at this time (Manafzadeh 1991, 317). Therefore, in the nineteenth century, in the Iranian capital of Tehran, it became necessary to build a theater to accommodate such a crowd.

One of the most famous theaters in Iran was commissioned by Nasser al-Din Shah Qajar (1831-1896), who was reportedly very fond of *Ta’ziyeh*, and ordered the construction of the Royal Theater (*Tekiyeh Dowlat*) built in ca. 1873. Willem Floor in *The History of Theater in Iran* (2005) suggests the Shah was influenced by his trip to Europe in ordering the building of a modern theater. However, being concerned with the religious leaders’ reaction, he designated the Royal Theater for religious performances, and the European plays were instructed to be performed at the hall of the *Dar al-Fonun*, the first modern polytechnic institute of higher education, which had been established in 1873.
established in 1851 (215).

The round structure of the Royal Theater, included three tiered archways wrapping around a central court, holding a raised round stage in masonry with the diameter of 58 feet, in addition to another 20 feet around it, which served as seating area for women and accommodated “thousands on thousands.” The circumference of this area consisted of four steps, providing the seating place for men. The three-tiered arcade that rose to 78 feet high consisted of balcony seats reserved for the aristocratic and wealthy families. The structure was supposed to have a dome, but after the construction efforts failed, wooden ribs were used to hold a tent like cover in place to provide shade during summer afternoon performances. At night, the space was illuminated by a large number of glass lamps in various colors “concentrated against the wall in immense glittering clusters.” Tekiyeh Dowlat survives only in nineteenth century photographs and in a famous painting by Mohammad Ghaffari (Kamal al Mulk – 1847-1940), for it was dismantled in 1947 and replaced by a bank.

Contrary to common belief, Kamal al-Mulk was not self-taught and had attended Dar al-Fonun, shortly after he arrived in Tehran at the age of twelve. He was discovered by Nasser al-Din Shah during one of his end-of-the-year-visits to the school, when the king saw a portrait the young artist had painted of a deceased courtier. Kamal al-Mulk’s teacher at this time was Mirza Ali Akabr Khan Muzayyan al-Dawlih, who had studied at the École des Beaux Arts with Ingres.
Kamal al-Mulk himself got an opportunity to go to Europe in 1896 to study; upon his return, he brought back to Iran what is considered European Academic style, however viewed as “modern” style in Iran. During his travels in Europe, he visited and studied in museums by copying from the old masters (Diba 2013, 95). By this time, the Academic style in Europe was seen as rigid and associated with the establishment, and new styles such as Impressionism had already made a space for itself through exhibitions and reviews by the critics. Nonetheless, it is the Rembrandt’s, the Titian’s as well as William Bouguereau’s paintings that Kamal al-Mulk was copying to study at the museums of Europe. When compared with the Persian established styles, such as those developed by Bihzad, or idealistically executed by Sultan Mohammad (mentioned in chapter three of this study), regardless of its European connections, it was deemed modern. One of his celebrated paintings, *The Hall of Mirrors* that he completed before 1896, the year of the assassination of the king, has been viewed as an example of his photographic style (Diba 2013, 95).

Layla S. Diba, in her article “M[o]hammad Ghaffari: The Painter of Modern Life,” explains that before *Dar al-Fonun*, there was no distinction between arts or crafts. Artists learned and produced through the old apprentice system, but a hierarchy of the arts was observed, with calligraphy holding a more elevated place than easel painting (Diba 2012, 646). According to Diba, “[t]he year 1862 marked a turning point in the history of Persian painting and its relationship to modernity,” because the status of painting was changed from court sponsored workshops and being considered as “crafts,” to a distinct “academic discipline” (ibid).

Persia, early on during the reign of Nasser al-Din Shah Qajar, the last of the Qajar kings who “exercised true power” from 1848 until his assassination in 1896, had already
begun to experience a wave of modernization. His teacher, and later Prime Minister, Mirza Taghi Khan (Amir Kabir, or Amir Nizam, 1807-1852), during his brief time in office, had undertaken great modernization campaigns, one of which was the founding of the school *Dar al-Fonun* and engaging Europeans in teaching there. However, his dismissal and assassination, on the order of the king himself in 1852 nearly brought modernization progress to a halt, as his successor, Agha Khan Nūri did not support the school (Lambton 154).

Modernism in nineteenth century Persia was seen as “novelty,” argues Diba. Some of the earliest groups of students sent abroad, included those who were sent to learn painting and printing. 

One of the most prominent court painters of the Nasiri court was Abu’l Hasan Ghaffari, Sani’ al-Mulk, who was sent to Italy in 1861, and upon his return was assigned to teach the two aforementioned subjects to the students at *Dar al-Fonun* in 1862. Diba notes the printing press was used to produce a courtly “illustrated newspaper” that was aimed to exhibit a carefully constructed modern view of the Persian court (647). Lambton notes “the introduction of the printing press in the first half of the nineteenth century and the foundation of the official gazette in 1851 were also factors making for modernization” (157). However, once the printing tool was made available, it was difficult to restrict it to court propaganda. Diba informs, during the final five years that Abu’l Hasan was at the height of his activities, “the images he produced for the court newspaper revealed its evolution from a propaganda tool to a record of urban life and social issues dangerously close to social critique.” 

Lambton, nonetheless, deems the publication of the “Persian press abroad” to be more influential “in stimulating political change” toward the end of the century, than “encouraging social change” (Lambton 157). Among these publications, was the “newspaper
 Akhtar which had been published by Iranians in Istanbul since the 1870’s” and “Qānūn published in England by Malkum Khan, a European educated son of an Armenian convert to Islam.” These publications encouraged criticism of the government “from a more modern, reforming, and nationalist viewpoint” (Keddie 1972, 336).

Despite these efforts, Nasser al-Din Shah remained in favor of the art for state propaganda in order to maintain his image and visibility through the modern technology. He was well aware of the connection between the academic styles of art in France and such art’s link to the state. Nasser al-Din Shah also modeled state sponsored exhibitions, similar to Paris Salons, which he himself would attend. Noteworthy is the change in the format of painting from album to canvas and frame (Diba 2012, 650), which transformed the viewing experience from individual and private of a few elite to a shared and communal event. Just as with Europe, the advent of photography which had already been introduced in Persia by mid nineteenth century, proved influential in the art of painting as it “provided Persian Painters with a shortcut to illusionistic and naturalistic paintings.” Diba argues “[t]he interaction between photography and painting illustrates Iran’s original response to modernity and creative reuse of European technology” (Diba 2012, 651).

Of great significance here is that photography that began as a personal hobby of the monarch, as with printing, quickly spread beyond the court, and within a short period of time not only spread to provinces but also began to cater to the new bourgeois class and branched out into “commercial photography studios.” Like many contemporary scholars of Iran, Diba views the role of the new technology instrumental in transitioning toward modernity; however, she stops short of further developing the issue of subjectivity. She
states: “Most importantly, the new medium responded to Iranian aspiration toward modernity and new definitions of identity” (Diba 2013, 91).

It is worth mentioning an incident involving a contemporary Neoplatonic philosopher’s encounter with photography, for the philosophical implication of this anecdote supports the principle thesis in this study. On one of his trips to Sabzevar, Nasser al-Din Shah visited a prominent Muslim philosopher, Hajj Mullā Hādi Sabzevāri in 1869-70. The king was so thrilled by this visit that he ordered his Court Photographer (akkasbashi), Āghā Ridā to take a picture of the philosopher. Iraj Afshar cites two versions of the story, in both of which he confirms that Mullā Hādi had never before seen or heard about photographs.

Hajj Mullā Hādi was a pupil of the school of Mullā Sadra (discussed in chapter three) who believed, in accordance with Neoplatonism, that only the soul was capable of producing images, “and this faculty was beyond the scope of any man-made machine.” Therefore, when the process of imprinting his image on the silver plate was explained to him, Hajj Mullā Hādi thought it impossible (Afshar 264).

By the end of the nineteenth century, photography in Iran was enjoying a commercial life. The Tehran-born Armenian Antoine Sevruguin, who was known as “Anton Khan,” is one of the names associated with commercial photography. He has been heralded as “the most prominent and prolific commercial photographer in Iran at the end of the nineteenth century” (Stein 119). In addition to numerous photographs he took, he has been credited as having authored “a
treatise on photography for Muzafar al-Din Shah in 1878 when he was in Tabriz” (Stein 120). Sevruguin traveled extensively and photographed people, historical locations, and architecture along the way “with equal facility.” Sevruguin was conscious of the aesthetic possibilities of his subjects and their surroundings in front of the camera, as demonstrated in his staging, backdrops and angles. However, the diversity in his subject matter, from images of ordinary people, women in the traditional chador (all-over cover), young and old dervishes, to public executions, attest to how he used this new technology to capture not just royal subjects (which he also did, given his prominent court position), but also to offer a close account of different facets of life.351

The contacts with Europe that had been established earlier continued during Nasser al-Din Shah’s reign with the increasing availability of Western cultural exemplary products, such as published literary or visual material as well as fashion (Stein 125). However, the “shah was still padishah-i Islam and Persia the mamalik-i Islam” (Lambton 150). Therefore, the role of the king as the protector of the Islamic land was still a status accepted by the religious leaders (ulama) at this time. While there was uneasiness concerning the new technology supported by the monarch, there seems not to have been much organized objection from the ulama. This uneasiness fueled the continued resistance to modernization despite efforts by contemporary theoreticians and intellectuals such as Malkum Khan, who had tried to “clothe modernization in an Islamic garb” (ibid).352 Similarly, but earlier in the eighteenth century, the Ottoman rulers, too, faced the concerns regarding the reaction of the ulama on their attempts toward modernization. The difference was that the arising occasions of conflict did not prompt the Qajar rulers to initiate “a program of reform as happened in the Ottoman Empire or Egypt.”353
Despite the importation of technology and cultural exchanges on different levels on the one hand, and “a melding of elites—upper ‘ul‘al‘ma, large-scale merchants, court bureaucrats, tribal leaders, and large landowners—through intermarriage and shared interests” on the other, a deep gap remained between classes. As Lambton surmises, “the fundamental issue in social change, which concerns the relationship of man to man and the purpose of society, received little consideration and it was, perhaps because of this that social change still remained very limited” (Lambton 166).

**Ottoman Turkey at the Threshold of Modernity**

In the early decades of the eighteenth century, the earlier military successes of the Ottomans, were giving way to a series of defeats and shrinking borders. This turn called for a change in policy and attitude toward Europe, from an adversary to be “crushed” to an “indispensable element of the Empire’s policies, through establishing embassies and expanding the responsibilities of their diplomats.” However, as with the Egypt and Persia, Ottoman Turkey seems to have commenced reforms in the military sphere first.

Similar to Egypt, although at a different pace, the pressures of modernity on the Ottoman Empire coincided with the weakening of the political hold, due to economic dependence on Europe. Regardless of the dependency problem, nevertheless, the interruption brought on by World War I provided “new opportunities for freedom of action; the capitulations were abolished and . . . ‘the Turks were finally masters of their house’.” This led to socio-political and economic changes, including the encouragement of women to join the work force, all elements needed to transform the country into a modern state. While I will offer a more analytical examination on the role of the religious leaders, a major difference between Qajar Persia and Ottoman Turkey or Egypt with regards to reforms, there
remains in the Shi`ite philosophy of distrust in the temporal government; hence, the ālamā did not effectively participate in the official programs aiming at reforms in Persia (Lambton 146). The Sunni philosophy (in Ottoman Empire and Egypt), on the other hand, did not prevent the religious leaders from participating; they were already involved in institutional judiciary and educational institutions in the Empire (Heyd 29). 358

Perhaps the willingness of some of the ālamā 359 to participate in the reforms undertaken by the Ottoman Empire can be seen in their support of the new technology of printmaking, introduced as early as 1727, of which the şeyhül-islām had demonstrated his support through issuing official religious permission (fetva). 360 (See Appendix II.B).

The role of religion in reforms merits a deeper investigation, more than what a historical review may reveal. The resentment of the members of the religious class toward the European reforms and the mediating role of the ālamā reviewed from Nietzschean perspective can be rewarding. In *Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche introduces the figure of the “ascetic priest,” (Nietzsche 2006, 86) who gives meaning to resentment risen from suffering, thus shaping subjectivities. 361 While he has Christianity in view, his argument maps onto establishment-oriented Islam and the undermining of individuality as well. Of great interest here is the “ascetic priest’s method,” which according to Nietzsche aligns with “herd-organization” and the “awakening of the communal consciousness of power to such a pitch that the individual’s disgust with himself becomes eclipsed by his delight in the thriving of the community” (Nietzsche 2006, 103). He further notes: “[H]e has obtained the mastery, corrupted the health of the soul” (Nietzsche 2006, 109). But how does the “ascetic priest” accomplish this task?
Nietzsche calls it a “change in attitude, [...] an artist veering round into his own opposite” (Nietzsche 2006, 68). Nietzsche explains further: “[A]n ascetic life is a self-contradiction: here rules resentment without parallel [;] . . . here is an attempt made to utilize power to dam the sources of power” (Nietzsche 2006, 86). He also notes “at every single period the ascetic priest puts in his appearance: he belongs to no particular race; he thrives everywhere; he grows out of all classes” (ibid). If we view this “change of attitude” in the ʿulamā from Nietzsche’s perspective, the significance of the role these religious leaders in mediating the reforms, while justifying their ruling to the population, becomes evident. Heyd suggests that the ʿulamā were fearful “of the Sultan, particularly of Mahmud II.” He makes it clear that “the Sultan made use of the ʿulamā’s spiritual influence on the people to obtain religious sanctions and secure popular respect for his innovations” (Heyd 39). In a master-slave relationship, in which the master demands complete submission of all his subjects (as did in Mahmud II), the role the ʿulamā played was not just administering to religious permissibles and non-permissibles, but also to craft just the right language to manage the resentment of the oppressed. Nietzsche states:

When he has to tackle sufferers of the lower orders, slaves, or prisoners (or women, who for the most part are a compound of labor-slave and prisoner), all he has to do is to juggle a little with the names, and to rechristen, so as to make them see henceforth a benefit, a comparative happiness, in objects which they hated—the slave’s discontent with his lot was at any rate not invented by the priests.363

Heyd seems to be critical of the Sultans’ decisions regarding including the ʿulamā in the government, nevertheless disregarding the long-standing position of the Sunni justification of temporal power. While the integration had brought unity within the Ottoman
Empire that prevented a conflict between the religious and secular entities within the government, “it hampered the free spiritual development of Islam during the decisive period of its confrontation with Western civilization” (Heyd 54). Even so, a centralized government with a “new ruling class” of bureaucrats called “memurs” emerged out of the reforms (Tanzimat). The reforms also engendered a group of young Turks, who received modern education because of the reforms and were sent abroad to complete their studies; they brought about intellectual consciousness to a certain degree, which manifested itself in cultural productions.

Stanford J. Shaw in the *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey* notes the “emergence” of the middle class and “intelligentsia” following the decline of the religious leaders’ role in Ottoman Turkey, which were potentially posing concern for the ruling class. Shaw states:

The emergence of an Ottoman middle class in turn produced an intellectual awakening and was paralleled by the development of a new Ottoman intelligentsia, which displaced the ʿulā/mā in their traditional role of cultural leadership in the Muslim community. Ottoman intellectual reorientation manifested itself in many different ways. Its most general characteristic was the displacement of both forms and themes of traditional Ottoman literature, produced largely by and for the Ruling Class, and the substitution of different ones imported from the West – plays, novels, operas, short stories, essays, and political tracts, treating not merely themes of love and passion and the lives and interests of the rulers but also presenting great political, economic, social, and religious problems and ideas that were of concern to everyone in the empire.
Thus, the vehicles of disbursing new ideas, which were consequences of modernization, began to make a space among the population and to help circulate and mingle ideas throughout different population groups. One important group to note is the “Young Ottomans” (Yeni Osmanlilar), who were active during the decade of 1865-75. They took on the responsibility of being “the self-appointed critics of the system and . . . began to create public opinion while introducing concepts such as parliamentarianism, nationalism, and patriotism into the Ottoman political consciousness” (Shaw 130). Their preferred medium was the press, which had been the earliest form of mass communication.

Of course, the printing press had facilitated the disbursement of information and knowledge since 1835 (Shaw 128). In addition to the publishing of books, it is “the newspapers and other periodicals” that were published and took away the monopoly of the government publication, Takvim-I Vekayi (Calendar of Events), which was first published on July 25, 1831, following in the footsteps of Egypt’s Muhammad ‘Ali, who published Vekai-i Misriyye (Events of Egypt) in 1829. One such publication was Çeride-i Havadis (Chronicles of Events), published in 1840-60, interestingly founded by a British journalist, William Churchill. Shaw lists the names of nearly half a dozen periodicals that were published during the period of reformation (Tanzimat) until the later decades of the nineteenth century to demonstrate how widespread this medium was (Shaw 129). The explosive publishing wave of newspapers and periodicals was accompanied by the new literary wave led by the “Young Turks” (Shaw 130).

Spear headed by Ibrahim Şinasi (1824-1871), the new movement benefited from his experience and studies with the French. In 1861-1870 Şinasi published his own paper, Tasvir Efkār (Description of Ideas), “which soon became the leading forum for the
expression of new literary forms and political ideas.” In his *Selection of Works*, he failed to praise the sultan and had enough problematic ideas, such as “no taxation without representation” to cost him his post at the Council of Education at the time (Shaw 131). The *Tanzimat* government, despite its reformatory intentions, saw the potential threat in the free expression of ideas in publications such as *Tasvir Efkār* and began to suppress the movement. As a result, many members of the movement escaped to Europe in order to continue their writing and distributing freely, by way of the “foreign post offices,” which by Capitulation terms, “were beyond the control of the Ottoman government” (Shaw 131).\(^\text{369}\)

The spreading of the ideas was not limited to published media. Here is where the role of theaters should be examined.

The earliest recorded theatrical performances in Ottoman Turkey go back to the time of the French Revolution, and took place at the embassies and mainly for the foreigners, although they were sometimes attended by the Sultan and the Crown Prince (Shaw 129). However, by the time of the reform (*Tanzimat*) campaigns in 1839, three theaters had been built, and served as venues to Italian plays, even though still mainly for foreign audiences (ibid). The development of theater briefly can be traced from the first Ottoman theater, called French Theater (1840), which was built by an Italian by the name Giustiniani, co-funded by the Ottoman and foreign European resources, to the first Turkish-language theater (1867) called Ottoman Theater (*Tiyatro-i Osmani*), founded and managed by an Armenian company in old Istanbul, to a small popular theater (*Tuluat Tiyatrosu*) opened in “the Muslim quarters of Istanbul.” In 1855 the first royal theater was built in neoclassical style as part of a palace complex called *Dolmabahçe Palace*, built in an eclectic European classical style, to which I shall return under architecture.\(^\text{370}\) The theater appears to be a medium at which, not just translated European plays (to avoid censorship) were produced and performed, but also
controversial, patriotic, multi-lingual, and even subjects from everyday life would be produced and brought to the stage (Shaw 129). Regardless of its focus on modernization, the *Tanzimat* government, however, remained uneasy about the activities of the new class of intelligentsia that was basically moving toward limiting the powers of the monarch, and advocating a representational type of government. This put the official modernization campaigns at odds with the democratic movements in the nineteenth century; it indicated conflicting objectives that seemed to curb democratic moves at every turn by the *Tanzimat* government, to ensure the stability of the monarch’s rule. To maintain a modern image of the ruler, one of the areas of concern was the modernization of the sultan’s place of residence, as an expression of his power, particularly when receiving European envoys. However, for the Ottomans, the expression of power through architecture in the context of modernism began earlier.

Shirin Hamadeh argues it was following the Ottoman defeat of 1683 in Vienna and the acknowledgement of Europe’s military supremacy over the Ottomans that the importance

21. Ottoman Dolmabahce Palace one of the last ostentatious Ottoman buildings. Cost $1.8 b. The style of the palace itself is a fusion of Neoclassical and Baroque (1843-1856).
of architecture in a modernization process was understood (Hamadeh 2004, 4). This understanding manifested in the emulation of great European Neoclassical, Baroque and Rococo styles, which “gradually permeated the architecture of Istanbul, especially from the 1750s on.” By the end of the century, it was accepted, common practice for aristocracy to hire European architects to design and build their places of residence (ibid).

Palace complexes have been built for centuries; it seems logical for all offices of administration and power, as well as the royal private religious structures, to be not just in close proximity to the residence of the ruler, but also an expression of wealth and power. The Ottoman sultans were no different. Thus, amidst all reform programs, modernization had to be implemented where it concerned the palace complex as well. Shaw argues, a new sense of admiration and appreciation for the West were fostered during Mahmud II’s rule. It was the sultan’s understanding that the survival of the empire depended upon its modernization according to the European standards, and that he had to act accordingly if the empire was to “hold its own against a technologically advanced Europe” (49)

The arrogant way in which the Ottomans had viewed the Europeans, was now giving way to active, systematic reforms in order to seek their approval/acceptance, and to be seen as their equals. This new perspective influenced so many aspects of administration, military, and basically life from change in fashion, to ideas, and even “entertainment” (Shaw ibid). It
began with Mahmud II moving out of the Ottoman sultans’ historic and traditional dwelling in 1815 (i.e. from the Topkapi Palace) to a “modern palace built along the Bosporus at *Dolmabahçe*” (ibid).\(^{373}\) Built in 1857-1859, the palace complex includes the detached royal theater that was designed in neoclassical style, “with two . . . pediments on the façade (Yazici 35). Unlike the Khedival Theater in Cairo, the theater in *Dolmabahçe* was finished in stone, but similarly had three visible tiers, with rectangular and arched windows occupying the second and third tiers in the case of the latter. The interior was lavishly decorated, with velvet and gilt decorations, attributed to the designer of Paris Opera House, Sèchan (Yazici 36). It is clear that the theater was a place of not just putting on theatrical performances, but a space in which the sultan’s European and other foreign guests could be entertained.\(^{374}\)

The palace complex was designed and built in such a way that from the Bosporus, it projected an image of highest European, classical, and historical standards. The palace structure itself was an eclectic collection of elements from various European historical periods, including Baroque, Rococo and Neoclassical. But at the same time, the decorations of Ottoman emblems, such as *Tugra*, or official seal was integrated into the decorative elements of the building. But these highly significant and symbolic buildings were the products of reforms and a synthesis of European architectural elements infused with the Ottoman taste that aimed to surpass the European achievements. This itself is worthy of a separate study.\(^{375}\) However, to demonstrate the case
in point, as evident from the visual examination of some of the features incorporated in the Dolmabahçe Palace, the Baccarat crystal balustrade in the administrative quarters of the palace that shows this synthesis, is a prime example. In approving the designs of their palaces like Dolmabahçe, the Ottoman aristocratic, ruling families were aiming to create such a cohesive visual language from this synthesis that would wash over any mimetic and illusionistic attempts on their part of the reforms that may have pointed to the gap existing between the illusion of reforms and a real one. However, it is in another medium that some of the aforementioned gap can potentially be viewed.

The arrival of the technology of capturing images in the Ottoman Empire, not surprisingly, was closely associated with military, just as painting was initially taught for military ends, for the practical purpose of this technology was recognized by the Ottoman sultan and other reformers. This pragmatism has been discussed by Wendy Shaw in her article, “Ottoman Photography of the Late Nineteenth Century: An ‘Innocent’ Modernism?” in the examination of a royal portrait. She notices the portrait of Sultan Abdulaziz (r. 1861-1876), photographed in 1863, in comparison with portraits of other European leaders from around the same time period, appears awkward with a lack of balance between light and shade, which captures an unflattering impression of the sultan. He appears to take up much of the space, with almost no breathing room around him (Shaw 2009, 84). Such early portraits exemplify more of a straightforward documentation task, rather than project a specific idea or angle to the subject presented. However, this soon changed and the intrinsic power of mechanically reproduced images began to offer opportunities to create a positive image of the Ottoman Empire with regards to the reformation movement.
In 1893, Sultan Abdülhamid II presented to the British Library a set of albums that contained 1,800 photographs (albumen prints) that represented “the Sultan, the sovereign of a still considerable territory with a great history as a reforming and enlightened ruler.” This may seem in conflict with what Wendy Shaw argues, that photography for the Ottomans “provided . . . an innocent eye, coupling the technology of photography with the nineteenth century positivist drive for information” (Shaw 2009, 80). Shaw bases her argument on a comparison between the development of photography in Europe vis-à-vis the advent of this technology in Ottoman Turkey. Whereas, the advent of photography in Ottoman Turkey was concurrent with the art of painting and lithography, therefore initially, unlike Europe, it did not have a previous referential source from which to draw; thus, it was free to operate in an independent way (ibid). Nonetheless, the medium’s use and application was transforming contemporaneous to the reformation movement.

Some twentieth century scholars have analyzed the nineteenth century photographs with a postcolonial perspective. However, the stereotyping and using blanket statements have been challenged by other scholars recently. Michelle L. Woodward rejects such broad labeling and states, after the mid and toward the late nineteenth century, the increasing number of the commercial photographers and their independent photographs tell a different story. She argues:

The photographic visual conventions of late-nineteenth century representations of the Middle East were, contrary to the emphasis of much scholarship, not monolithic or hegemonic, but rather reflect a complex range of perspectives—from fictional Orientalist clichés such as erotic harem scenes to the documentary images of
modernization found in the Ottoman Sultan Abdul Hamid II’s photographic albums.\textsuperscript{380}

There is no doubt that commissioning photographs by wealthy European travelers and prearranged and staged images correspond to some of the photographic works produced in the second half of the nineteenth century; these photographs and images were meant to satisfy the Europeans’ curiosity about cultural aspects of the life under the Ottoman that were out of reach for foreigners. But, as suggested by Woodward, there are plenty of examples that demonstrate the independence of the photographers in capturing subjects that were interesting to them. Woodward’s study shows, even though she focuses on the “people in public” as subject, there are enough examples that not only reflect diversity in the sitters, individuals who may have been marginal or seen as alterity in the Ottoman society,\textsuperscript{381} but also examples that, contrary to stereotypical “Oriental” works that projected a negative light on the Ottoman culture by way of inclusiveness, create a harmonic synthesis between the authentically local as well as consciously modern. From a comparative assessment between an Istanbul-based studio, that of the Sèbah family and a French family studio in Beirut, owned by the Bonfils, Woodward proposes:

The focus . . . is on how these two studios chose to photograph people in public places such as markets, streets, mosques, and baths in the period 1870-1900. Looking closely at this portion of their work, it appears that the Bonfils work was generally unable to transcend popular European notions of the ‘Orient’, while the Sèbah family developed a mode of representation that combined a detailed view of local Ottoman society with visual signs of a new modern order. In particular, the Sèbah family created a unique style of photographing groups of people in public spaces—what I
call ‘community portraits’. This style reveals a negotiation between tourist desires for exotic images and local Ottoman self-conceptions as modern citizens, in the process subverting common European notions of static and backward Middle East.\(^{382}\)

Here citing one set of examples from Woodward’s article suffices to demonstrate the two different approaches to capturing the images of people in public places. Bonfils’ photo shows a carpet merchant’s store front, with the owners and two of his employees (identified by their clothing and seating arrangements) in a pose that anticipates a potential buyer, or in fact offers the vantage point for the European spectator. Sèbah’s photograph, on the other hand, shows a diagonal angle from which the camera is looking out toward a larger group of the community members with diverse appearances and ages (Woodward 366, 369).

Woodward’s analysis demonstrates the Oriental approach in Bonfils, as opposed to Sèbah’s style is more in tune with showing the diversity under the Ottomans. However, in these and other similar examples, both photographers are responding to a kind of a market for
such photographs, which demanded to see what the ordinary people did and how they lived. Granted, these images also show conscious attempt on the part of the photographer to provide a specific angle (according to Woodward); however, in the process, they both manage to capture not just diversity in their subjects, but also different choices in photographic approaches.

Further noted by Wendy Shaw is the intriguing point that he Ottoman experience of photography is different from that of the Europeans, truly a modernist advent. She sees “the bypassing” of the photography experience from the long standing tradition of painting (as was the case for the Europeans) for the Ottomans itself “a modernist success” (81). In other words, aside from the “exotic” subject matter, the Europeans must have seen a fresh perspective unlike what their eyes were familiar with. Nonetheless, in the process of modernism, “photography experience” is not the only experience that was circumvented. When it comes to the development of the “I,” in the philosophical thoughts, whether it has been done consciously or inadvertently, bypassing the individual experience has had grave consequences, not just for the Ottoman Turkey, but for the Middle East as a whole. Here, one must ask: where does this circumvention come from?

In this chapter, my objective was to demonstrate how pressures of modernism—mainly felt initially in the imbalance experienced militarily—impacted other non-military aspects of life in the Middle East. I argued that the reforms begin by upgrading technology in the military and continued in creating a modern appearance. I examined three regions, namely Egypt, Iran and Ottoman Turkey, that show exemplary attempts at reforms, but all proved unprepared (due to the persisting traditional power structures) to adjust and accept the consequences of modernism (freedom of expression, and press) in an enduring manner. I
specifically selected a number of artistic endeavors that potentially could have served to foster a polyphonic society, and led to the recognition of the subject, and passing through it, in these regions. I argued the arts (visual and performing) as well as attempts at free and critical journalism, which are essential in a modern society, began by imitation, followed by creative transformation, which was dangerously moving toward criticism of the government. Therefore, very quickly they were subjected to censorship and the wrath of the central powers, and could not progress through the challenges between traditional versus the modern tendencies. As a result, they became apparatuses for propaganda serving the patriarchal powers.
It is certain that mechanisms of subjection cannot be studied outside their relation to the mechanisms of exploitations and domination. But they do not merely constitute the “terminal” of more fundamental mechanisms. They entertain complex and circular relations with other forms.\(^{383}\)

— Michel Foucault

In the nineteenth century Middle East, the sidestepping of the discourse on subjectivity and individual experience in the Middle East was followed by a gravitation toward and merging with the Hegelian romantic and idealistic philosophy\(^{384}\) that saw no distinction between the object and the subject,\(^{385}\) and was already embedded in the local cultures through the Neoplatonic views.\(^{386}\) One of the artistic endeavors that consistently uses Neoplatonic symbolic language is poetry, particularly in Persia.\(^{387}\) Hegel was familiar with Persian poetry through Goethe and others.\(^{388}\) Ian Almond (2010) tells us of Hegel’s partiality toward the Persians, particularly in terms of their poetry. He states:

Hegel talks about Persians like he talks about no other Muslims. Bearing in mind his wholesale dismissal of Turks and ambiguous portrayal of Arabs, it is difficult not to be impressed by the way he weaves poets such as Rumi, Nisami [sic] and Firdusi [sic] in and out of analyses filled with a whole variety of reference to European literature.\(^{389}\)
Hegel’s affinity for Rumi’s and Nizami’s poetry may be explained in their shared Neoplatonic roots. It is the Neoplatonic undercurrent in the arts that we return to here to pinpoint the domination of the idea that, despite the proponents of mysticism’s claim that it encourages individuality, there is no subjectivity other than what is based upon “theomorphic ontological foundations” (Vahdat 126). This dependent relationship between the individual and the finalized destination, I submit, is not without its downside that actually undermines the “I” through statements relying on imaginative finds that have become authoritative. The consequence has been the reinforcement of the dissolved individual subject into factions, may they be political, ethnic, or religious. It has further ensured the perpetual subjugation to and identification of the population with the external sources of authority and power (i.e. ideology), in other words, leaving no time or space to cultivate a way to become subjects to themselves. Moreover, this created an uneven playing field that facilitated the Europeans’ colonialization of their recognized “other,” the Middle Easterners (that which has been called Orientalism by Edward Said); after all, alterity is the other side of recognizing the “I.” This was due to the advantage of the already developed sense of self, the “I” that served as a Eurocentric measure, through which the Europeans could safely arrive at their position of power and domination in the Middle East region throughout the modern era. In this formulation, I am aware that Eurocentricism can be argued a collective subjectivity, but I submit it is a collective subjectivity that has passed through the question of the Cartesian idea of the thinking subject, albeit a self-centered one, and it has been a work in progress itself. In that phase, while the subject still recalls its subjectivity, I suggest, it is taken over by patriarchy (source of power/authority) under different banners, such as nationalism or cultural superiority, even preservation of religious beliefs, rendered into a collective, and turned against its alterity for the patriarchy’s dual purpose of artificial unity and inciting
conflict to better strengthen its own position of power. Thus, the Dionysian energy is channeled against the other.

I will discuss this in detail through Nietzsche, who reveals the unraveling of much of the subject in the West by way of what he calls “killing God,” whether by the church or the philosophers.\(^{393}\)


It is my intention in this segment, in the context of modernism, to trace back the roots of a disregard for the individual experience to an earlier time in a specific locale—that fostered the stimulation of the arts and sciences by none other than Muslim scholars—that is in Medieval Baghdad.\(^{394}\) This is also the time when Islam as an ideology, which had been shaped earlier (through the formation of the first dynastic rule – the Umayyads), was firmly established due to the requirements of a new empire. The positions of authority among the Umayyads’ successors—the Abbasid caliphs—were keen to attract the knowledge from the antiquity; however, not all scientific threads were pursued to maximize full potential, specifically with regards to the idea of the individual. Therefore, from that point, one must follow the progress of arts and science to the European Renaissance, and specifically to the development of spatial perspective. I assert that, even though many of the scientific finds were achieved by the medieval Muslims (Belting 2011), starting in the beginning of the thirteenth century, there is a shift in focus from critical, empirical, and scientific to the metaphysical, which became dominant in the philosophical subjects studied by Muslims.\(^{395}\) Around the same time in Europe, the opposite took place. As a result, the findings of scholars and scientists such as Alhazen (*Ibn al-Haytham*) (965-1040) and his experiment-based work
on optics, for instance, were not further pursued by the communities of later Muslim scholars that served and were mainly supported by the centralized political power. Unlike the aristocrats and merchants of the Renaissance, perhaps the Muslim religio-political rulers did not find a practical purpose for Alhazen’s work on optics as they did in the application of other works, for instance the writings of the Arabic Plotinus that chiefly adapted the Neoplatonic philosophy to an Islamic one (Adamson 2002).

Accordingly, the constructed and hybridized Muslim position of patriarchal authority/power, whether in Persia, or Ottoman Turkey that had drawn its inspiration from a Neoplatonic iteration of Islam, the likes of which we have seen in the example of the Safavids, indeed garnered the lasting impressions of an ideological Islam, which can be traced back to the infusion of Islamic thoughts with Greek philosophical works during the translation movement. Keeping this pattern in view, I suggest that, during the modernist and nationalistic movements of the nineteenth century (detailed discussion of which is forthcoming in the final chapter), the patriarchal agents of power gravitated toward and followed a Hegelian philosophical alignment that encompassed both a transcendental and political philosophy, rather than a Kantian one, which could have been more subject-oriented. The short explanation may possibly be because it suited securing the position of established power theoretically and ideologically better, for it clearly projected an image of the dominator and the dominated (within the master-slave frame) that the rulers could easily plug into. At the same time, that which could break the dichotomy of the master-slave formula economically was missing; there appears to be no substantial middle class (bourgeois class) or its equivalent that, in their rise to prominence, could identify with what Kant had proposed, as it did in Europe. The socio-economic structure in the Middle East, and particularly Persia seems more complex; however, as Lambton notes, despite the
advent of modernist reforms in the nineteenth century Persia, what defined the one-on-one relationship and the individual’s relationship to and its place in the society as a subject did not receive much attention.  

Consequently, when the technological advancements were brought over to modernize, the pieces that could ignite an aspiration for individual experience that would be specific to Muslims were not identified. Instead, as exemplified in photography by Wendy Shaw, the technology carried the European experience of individuality. Viewed from a mimetic perspective therefore, the reformers in the Middle East strove to superficially emulate, and for those in the religious ranks, the technology’s endeavors were deemed as competitive alterity. Subsequently, the traditional camp felt threatened by them, hence resisted or rejected them where they could.

**Modernism and the Disregard for Individuality in the Middle East**

The tackling of the rise of new patriarchy against the backdrop of modernism in the Middle East and the link to a nationalism movement in the nineteenth and the twentieth century demands that we keep the issue of subjecthood and its history in view. The journey of the seeing subject can be argued, to enter a materialized stage during the Renaissance, which is the time of rediscovering individualism and reason. In fact, this is the time of not just rediscovery, but also acquiring the position of learning from the antiquity through Christian Europe’s “other,” the medieval Muslims. One of the most influential theories that reaches the Europeans at this time is the theory of vision, which has been credited to Alhazen and is most critical to the development of the subject.
There is a correlation between the vanishing point in linear perspective—the viewer’s position and vantage point—and the using of zero. This connection, which may seem surprising at first, was initially noticed by Brian Rotman in 1987. Once one realizes the fact that both are signs that can alter “the meaning of all other signs,” it becomes convincing (Belting 9). Rotman “regards the introduction of zero to Arabic numerals and the invention of the vanishing point as parallel occurrences.” Hans Belting explains Rotman’s argument:

The vanishing point is ‘unoccupiable’ by a person or indeed any physical object, but it gives a viewer ‘the possibility of objectifying himself, the means of perceiving himself, from the outside, as a unitary seeing subject, since each image makes deictic declaration; this is how I see . . . from this particular spot at this particular instant in time.’

This finding had practical application during Renaissance, when artists began implementing it as a technique and became increasingly engaged with it. But, why were the Renaissance artists so preoccupied with this technique? The question of why there was such an interest in the “accurate” depiction of space during Renaissance, aside from the interest in science and reason, maybe answered as, because it was a kind of assertion of their individual point of view, which was empowering. The key term here is “accurate,” which basically connotes how the individual’s eye experiences what is in one’s field of vision, not what is reality to everyone the same way and at the same time. This was one way the individualism found a way to express itself during Renaissance, but it did not end there.

These artists were chiefly supported by the class of merchants and bankers. Not surprisingly, then it is the “mercantile capitalism” in fourteenth century Italy that acquires the use of both (linear perspective and zero) for “trade and technology purposes” (Belting 10).
Therefore, what the artists created was what the patron wanted everyone to see; in a way, the artists quickly relinquished their position for the benefit of their patron. Yet, the significance of Alhazen’s theory and the “geometry of the visual field” in creating the illusion of space, while made the translation of the three-dimensional world into a two-dimensional picture possible in the West (Belting 11), did not go very far for the Middle Easterners. If we believe the Lacanian “Mirror Phase” theory to be true, the act of seeing is then an individual experience, by way of which the symbolic child (subject) experiences autonomy, albeit as an illusion, just as in the linear perspective. It is this experience that prompts statements like, “The way I see it . . .” that underscore an individual’s point of view. This is also true on the part of those whose perspectives (of political or religious power) were being given visual forms, namely the members of the aristocratic groups or the church, specifically for propaganda purposes. However, such an experience remained as part of the “unlived” experience, to use Agamben’s term, even during the modernization, for the Middle Easterners, who as subjects without a memory of the self being a subject to itself, often saw through the eyes of their rulers, or in terms of spiritual guides, through the filter of religious interpretations of their religious scholars. Additionally, the visual arts (that which requires individual visual response) were not in place to the same extent, as they were in Europe, to play a significant role before the advent of photography — for the obvious reason of the long standing prohibition of imagery. Therefore, the issue of “misrecognition” of the self never comes up in the visual realm, let alone recognition of the self-hood, because it is a given that the individual place and objective within the universal is predetermined (Morewedge 51). What did come up, however, was the misrecognition through the idea of the “perfect man” as I have addressed earlier, which was defined through the Neoplatonic lens and has essentially gone without criticism to this day. Comparatively, the subject’s
vantage point in Europe finds its way toward the Cartesian *cogito*, whereas the one who is deterministically dissolved in the universal ideals, unaware of its subjecthood becomes the collective subjectivity that can be easily persuaded by dominant powers for or against something, in an artificial unity. The subject, whether individual or collective, however, is not immune to objectifying the “other,” as I will explain shortly.

Through the translation movement, from the mid-eighth to the end of the tenth century, numerous texts from antiquity were translated, from Greek to Syriac, then to Arabic, thus preserved in Arabic, until their translation into Latin after 1198 (Adamson 2016, 182; Gutas 1). The content of these texts then became the driving force behind the Renaissance movement, as it has now become evident and argued by Belting and others. The Renaissance becomes an instance in which the discourse on humanity touches on the rights and dignity of man that can be traced to the translation movement in Baghdad. From there, to continue the journey of the subject, one can follow a straight path to Roger Bacon (1214-1292), who “tried to apply his knowledge of optics to theological questions;” to Johannes Kepler (1571-1630), who “was the first to describe [the eye] as an optical instrument;” to his friend Galileo (1564-1642), who developed the telescope; to Rene Descartes (1595-1650) and his *cogito*, “separating image and perception.” As he put it: “it is the mind that sees, not the eye” (Belting 125). The gap left in Descartes on vision is subsequently filled by Kant. The *subject* becomes once again the topic of concern in Kant, whose freedom project frees the subject from the established aristocracy and the church, and liberates to one’s own judgment under the universal unification of nature and the faculties.

It must be noted, however, it isn’t until Nietzsche that even in Europe, the more realistic picture of the self is revealed. Even then, it has taken another century for his views
on subjectivity to find their deserved position. He is critical of the “modern” philosophy and holds both the religious authorities as well as the philosophers responsible for “killing God.” Nietzsche in *Beyond Good and Evil* argues:

> So what is really going on with the whole of modern philosophy? Since Descartes . . . all the philosophers have been out to assassinate the old concept of the soul, under the guise of critiquing the concepts of subject and predicate. […] People used to believe in “the soul” as they believed in grammar and the grammatical subject: people said that “I” was a condition and “think” was a predicate and conditioned – thinking is an activity, and a subject must be thought of as its cause. Now, with admirable tenacity and cunning, people are wondering whether they can get out of this net – wondering whether the reverse might be true: that “think” is the condition and “I” is conditioned, in which case “I” would be a synthesis that only gets produced through thought itself.

For Nietzsche, the subject, after Descartes and Kant, becomes a construction and contingent of “thinking,” thus interpreted as such, and by extension, a product of imagination and creation. The implication is that it places thinking/imagination as superior to the subject. This eliminates the opportunity to ask the question of why someone does something. Instead, a “being” is identified and defined by its “thinking” faculties to be human, and deserving of certain “rights.” This conceals the causal gap, that which encourages the inquiry leading to consciousness of the subject. It is this subject (the one who does the defining) that upon arriving at its subjecthood, as noted by Horkheimer and Adorno in ([1944] 1989), turns to objectifying others, even itself. Thus, as understood by Nietzsche’s criticism, it can be surmised that it is Hegel who puts the subject in place of the “predicate” within the collective
consciousness, and formulates an ideology on this basis that creates a perfect, continuous prescription for a perpetual concealment of the causal gap, that is to say, the contradiction that exists between the subject and the object, or the particular and the universal, undermining the possibility of raising questions that is so critical to the progression of the individual/subject and its consciousness. At the same time, it ensures the duality of the dialectic; if the subject is the one who defines the object (i.e. the other), then the unequal relationship between the master and the slave thusly continues in a never-ending loop. The Hegelian dialectic seems to have found an impression in the modern Middle East, but its sympathetic seeds were planted long before the nineteenth century.424

Modernism and the Birth of “Islamic” Ideology: Why Hegel but Not Kant

The widely documented period from approximately mid eighth century to the end of the tenth century pinpoints the “transformative” epoch, during which much of what was written and available in Greek “throughout the Eastern Byzantine Empire and the Near East [was] translated into Arabic” (Gutas1). Some have even argued the ninth century to be when philosophy began in the Islamic world (Nasr [1968]1992). Therefore, in tracing back the “Graeco-Arabic scholarship,” one must examine the “translation movement” and its roots. What brought on such a movement that lasted a century and a half with such influential implications?

The critical necessity to establish Bayt al-Hikma (House of Wisdom) in Baghdad, in translating and preserving the texts from the antiquity in medieval Baghdad, has been thoroughly investigated by Dimitri Gutas (1998). Gutas makes a very convincing case regarding the coinciding of the translation movement with the establishing of the new “Abbasid dynasty as the manager of a world empire,” and as it pertains to “the special needs
of the society in Baghdad” (Gutas 7). Adamson concurs that the translation movement began almost at the point of the founding of the new dynasty during the rule of al-Mansūr (r. 750-770), and continued during the time of al-Mansūr’s grandson and successor, al-Ma’mūn (r. 813-833) (Adamson 2016, 20). It is through the translation movement that the “Hellenizing through the Islamic world” took place (ibid).

Adamson, in his extensive study, points to an influential figure who dominated the translation movement and under whose supervision many scholars and translators were busy poring through the ancient texts, namely al-Kīndī (801-873). Al- Kīndī’s credit as the first Arab philosopher was “defined in large part by his engagement with the Greek tradition that preceded him” (Adamson 2007, 3). Adamson draws attention to one of the most important texts influencing the later Islamic philosophers; it is authored by the one named “The Arabic Plotinus,” whose writings, known erroneously as Theology of Aristotle, are comprised of translated parts of the Enneads, with commentaries, and even include “new philosophical positions of its own” (Adamson 2002, 1). This clearly demonstrates from where the Neoplatonic influences entered Islamic thought. But, why did the Greek philosophy so preoccupy and dominate the translation movement?

It is important to remember, not unlike Christianity at its start, Islam began as a humble religion of the poor and an advocate of social justice and equality. There were no instructions within the teachings of the Prophet or the Koranic text on how to operate an Empire, as the turn of events proved necessary. But, there were living examples (the Byzantine and Persian Empires) not too far from Muslim borders. Although the narrations from the Prophet’s accounts (Hadith) have been cited as a model, much of what has become part of the administrative structure, court rituals, and even the political philosophy,
has been developed based on the absorption of the cultures encountered, and essentially, how a reconciliation can be reached between Islamic principles and other cultures that Muslims encountered.\textsuperscript{428} To grasp the reasons and motivations behind such massive undertaking, therefore, it is imperative to turn to what informed the “imperial ideology” of the Abbasids, who were preparing to absorb one of the largest civilizations at the time (i.e. Persian), and aimed to strengthen their own ideological positions against the Christian Byzantine. Gutas recognizes that, “the Zoroastrian Sasanian elements” were effectively influential “in the formation of this ideology” (Gutas 28). He names two astrologers in the service of the caliph al-Mansūr as evidence to his claim. The caliph, according to Gutas as quoted from the historian al-Ahbari, “had in his retinue the astrologer Nawbaht the Zoroastrian, who converted to Islam upon his instigation . . . [a]lso, . . . Ibrahim al-Fazārī, the author of an ode to the stars and other astrological and astronomical works, and the astrologer ‘Ali ibn-Īsā the Astrolabist” (30). Gutas, through citing passages from three versions of a text that hold the “formulation,” demonstrates that the “Zoroastrian Imperial ideology of the Sasaninas” was focused on the consistent and continuous campaign of the successive Sasanian emperors, who actively documented their legacy by contributing to the collection. He notes: “This treasure-house of Zoroastrianism and Persian civilization also contained an account of the transmission of learning and the sciences in Persia, from the earliest times until the reign of Chosroes I” (35).

Clearly, the appropriation of the ancient Persian ideology of the “king of kings” in this context became necessary for the Abbasids. It was not sufficient to just satisfy the “demands of both Sunni and Shi’it Muslims,” by the Abbasids claiming they were descendants of the Prophet;\textsuperscript{429} it was also crucial for the Abbasids to demonstrate that they were true successors “of the ancient imperial dynasties in Iraq and Iran, from the
Babylonians through the Sasanians” (Gutas 29). In order to fully absorb the heart and soul of the Persian Empire, so to speak, as consistent with the history of other in-coming patriarchal dynasties, it was necessary for the Abbasids to justify their rule over everyone, including the Persians with an intellectual structure, i.e. philosophy. Gutas confirms: “In this way they were able to incorporate Sasanian culture, which was still the dominant culture of large masses of the population east of Iraq, into mainstream ‘Abbasid culture (ibid). This necessitated the possession of the contemporary knowledge, an encompassing philosophy, and ideology that could satisfy the requirements of their ambition. This formula would be applied again by the Safavids, who were pursuing a similar goal, as discussed in the previous chapter. Gutas demonstrates that the undertaking of the translation movement following the founding of the round city of Baghdad was to support the Abbasid’s multifaceted political aims of rivalry with the Byzantine on the one hand, and supplanting the Persian hegemonic culture on the other.

Therefore, the translation movement did not just foster the preservation and translations of the texts from the antiquity, but it gave rise to the flourishing of nuances in philosophical thoughts and theories that aimed to unify under the new imperial rule. Adamson names al-Fārābi (c. 872-950/51) as “[t]he first Muslim philosopher to offer . . . [a] holistic original system” (Adamson 2016, 63). Significantly, this system included political philosophy, among other subjects. His philosophy argues for the interconnectedness of everything, which he applies to socio-political aspirations in his two books: Principles of the Opinions of the Inhabitants of the Virtuous City and The Political Regime (Adamson 2016, 67). He blends together the “emanationist scheme of Neoplatonism with ideas from Aristotle.” This fusion would cause a sort of a split among the medieval Muslim philosophers, in that some, while maintaining Islam as their religion, followed the reason
branch of his theory and became Aristotelian philosophers, like Avicenna (980-1037) and Averroes (1126-1198), although, as Nasr points out, rejected Aristotle’s “question of motion” (Nasr 1992, 126). Others would take the Neoplatonist branch, as in al-Ghazāli (1058-1111), and move toward the East to eventually dominate the scene of Islamic philosophy. But, how did this divide unfold?

With the great translation movement came the development of schools or movements that began actively discussing and arguing the important and sometimes controversial issues of the day such as “determination and free will, the nature of the divine attributes,” and what is determined as eternal or as created. One of such issues was whether, for example, the Koran was eternal or God’s creation. This was clearly an important argument for a governing system that identified itself as Islamic, because it was seen as a principle source of authority, whose intellectual possession had to be justified. There are two schools that flourished from these intellectual fermentations which were divided, interestingly, on the issue of the human free will versus the absolute Divine power (Adamson 2016, 10, 13, 106, 109). The subscribers to the former, the Mu’tazilites, argued on the basis of two principle predicates: first, God is one (as in one with his power, knowledge, attributes), and second, God is just. Thus, they argued humans were responsible for their own actions, not God, because “no one can be morally responsible for actions that are not in their own power” (Adamson 2016, 13). This implicates their assumption “that there are moral laws that we can discover using our own reason, and by which even God is bound” (Adamson 2016, 107). However, this was met with the objection of the second group, the Ash’arites, who are considered the instigators of a “Sunni revival” during the Middle Ages (Adamson 2016, 105) and argued for the “Divine command theory of morality,” which was intended to maintain the absoluteness of the Divine will and power (ibid). S. H. Nasr argues that the Ash’arites
were theologians, and therefore, did not concern themselves with all philosophical questions, rather only “religious matters’ (1992, 305). Nonetheless, Adamson presents an argument by the Ash’arites that can explain the Sunni position of siding with the dominant and often tyrannical political power.437

The Ash’arites’ “Divine command theory of morality” implies an entirely different set of logic practiced by God that can often be counterintuitive to human logic, such as to “torment innocent children,” or “punish believers, . . . [f]or justice means nothing more nor less than agreement with God’s will” (Adamson 2016, 108). Actions receive their moral context from God; thus, for example, in the determination of whether or not the act of murder is justified, the Ash’arites argue that “inevitably depends on . . . [the] context . . . provided ultimately by God’s law” (ibid). Naturally, the Ash’arites deem the responsibility of interpreting “God’s law” to be under the authority of the judges and scholars of Islam. More revealing is how, according to the above argument, justice or injustice becomes linked to actions. These actions are then elaborated on by the Ash’arites, who are in agreement with the Mu’tazilites with respect to the “physical theory,” and the “created things as atomic bodies, which have properties or ‘accidents’ that belong to them only for one moment at a time.” The atoms exist by way of these “accidents,” that have a “fleeting existence;” therefore, they are not eternal and must have been created, which obviously means, they were created by God. Therefore, “[i]t is He who creates every atom and every one of its attributes, giving them existence at each moment they exist” (ibid). The Ash’arites thus underscore the transitory and reliant characteristics of the “accidents” that directly fit in with what is created. Consequently, as an example, the actions of an autocratic caliph or a victorious party in a conflict can easily be viewed as what God has willed. In the eastern regions initially, despite
the “spread of Ash’arite theology,” the development of thought and engagement with the Greeks had taken a different turn.

As still is true both today and in the Middle Ages, no respected philosopher could produce work without dealing with the works of the Greek philosophers. Both Adamson and Nasr name the aforementioned al-Kīndī as the first Arab scholar, who was a critical contributor to the process of incorporating Greek philosophy into Islamic thoughts. (Adamson 2007, Nasr 1992). About al- Kīndī and his influence, Nasr states:

It was he who initiated the process of formulating a technical philosophical vocabulary in Arabic, and of rethinking Greek philosophy in terms of Islamic doctrines. In both these respects, he was followed by al-Fārābi, through whom the basis for Peripatetic philosophy became well established in Islam. The philosophers of this school were familiar with the Alexandrian and Athenian Neoplatonists and commentators on Aristotle, and viewed the philosophy of Aristotle through Neoplatonic eyes.  

Al- Fārābi then in turn was most influential on Avicenna, as admitted to in his autobiography (Adamson 2016, 116). As the “greatest Islamic exponent” of the Peripatetic school, Avicenna incorporated the rational aspect of the school, reworked the Aristotelian thoughts into original philosophy, and even designated a new name, “Oriental philosophy,” to differentiate it from that which was practiced in the West (Adamson 2016, 116). It appears the feeling was mutual from the Western corner. The Aristotelian influence reached its height in Averroes, “who became the most purely Aristotelian of the Muslim Peripatetics, and rejected, as an explicit aspect of philosophy, those Neoplatonic and Muslim elements that entered into the world view of the Eastern Peripatetics, such as Avicenna” (Nasr 1992,
Therefore, one of the points of departure seems to be Neoplatonism that marks the separation of the Islamic Western and Eastern philosophies. This is certainly not to say the Western Islamic thinkers did not demonstrate Neoplatonic flavors in their works, as the later example of Ibn Arabi (1165-1240) can demonstrate. It is rather in the varied combination of Neoplatonism with other philosophical or religious thoughts and interpretations that we see the differences, for instance, as it is seen in its infusion with Ash’arism in the East while denouncing philosophy at the same time.

Nasr deems the domination of the Ash’arite theology as a major suppressor of the rationalism “with the help of Sufism,” and in short, a major blow in the “destruction of” philosophy in Islam (Nasr 1992, 307). Adamson concurs and also points out that even though the Ash’arites’ arguments were reason-based, they did not consider themselves philosophers (Adamson 2016, 112), therefore seeking reasoning only to protect their faith (Nasr 1992, 305). It is Algazel (al-Ghazālī), the prominent Ash’arite figure, who accomplishes the task of the criticism of the philosophers. However, as Nasr puts it, it is al-Ghazālī who “establish[es] a harmony between the exoteric and esoteric elements of Islam” (ibid). Nevertheless, as Adamson quickly brings to our attention, al-Ghazālī’s refutation of the philosophers was more aimed at the Islamic Aristotelians (i.e. Avicenna), than Aristotle or Plato (Adamson 2016, 112).

Before tending to the essence of the intertextual conversations of al-Ghazālī (1058-1111) and Avicenna (980-1037) on some controversial issues, certain political, social, and intellectual context seems necessary in order to understand the importance of the domination of the Ash’arite over Aristotelian thinking in the East. While the intellectual discussions were ongoing between various groups/schools of thought, up until mid-eleventh century, they were
mainly court-patronized, or funded by aristocratic families, as was the case of al-Kīndī in the former, and Avicenna in the latter. Following the rise to power of the Turkish Seljūqs in 1038, and their employment of a powerful pro-Ash’arite vizier, Nīzām al-Mūlk (1018-1092), the status of sponsorship for such intellectual exchanges changed. Nīzām al-Mūlk established a series of state-sponsored madrasas, or institutions of higher education that were named *Nīzāmiyya* after him, and were designed to institutionalize the teaching of philosophy for the first time in the Islamic lands (Adamson 2016, 142). These schools were located in places such as Baghdad, Nishapūr, Herat, and other medieval intellectual centers in the Middle East and Central Asia. The schools’ curriculum included “parts of philosophy, especially logic . . . that educated legal scholars and theologians . . . around this time” (Adamson 2016, 142). The main objective of the school was to advocate and actively promote the revival of Sunni Islam following the demise of the rule of the Shi’ite Būyids (Adamson 2016, 142).

It is in the Nishapūr *Nizamiyya* that al-Ghazālī studied and trained in Ash’arism under his teacher *al-Jūwaynī*, whose teaching curriculum included Avicenna’s philosophical work that had already permeated *kalām* (rational theology). Al-Ghazālī developed such close ties to Nīzām al-Mūlk that as a young professor, he was appointed by Nīzām al-Mūlk to teach at the Baghdad *Nizamiyya*. However, al- Ghazālī’s assessment of the state of scholarly work was increasingly making him anxious and skeptical. Adamson notes a “serious breakdown in the summer of 1095 [when] . . . religious reflection on the meaninglessness of his daily occupation as a teacher caused him to stop eating, and even rendered him unable to speak” (140). It is worth noting this is the year he abandoned his prestigious post in Baghdad (the same year the first Crusades were launched to capture Jerusalem) and traveled in the Middle East between Damascus, Jerusalem, and then headed toward the east in 1099 (Moosa 6). It is clear in his writings that he believed that the spiritual guidance should come from the
“learned” and that they were the true “heirs of the Prophet;” however, he laments they are lacking in numbers in his time (Moosa 8). While al-Ghazālī held a low opinion of taqlīd, or “the uncritical acceptance of authority,”444 and encouraged “careful personal reflection,” he saw the “independent judgment” as a way that “can wind up giving us a reason to depend on authority. In such a case, our acceptance of that authority no longer falls under the heading of taqlīd, since it is not uncritical or slavish” (Adamson 2016, 143).

Most significantly in his personal crisis, it is the question of “skepticism,” which plays an important role in al-Ghazālī’s own transformative experience.445 The skepticism that came over al-Ghazālī, as argued by Adamson, was not the same skepticism that preoccupied Descartes. Al-Ghazālī had learned that the sensory perception had to be corrected by the power of the mind.446 However, the doubt had set in: what if the mind is in error? What then was to deliver the mind from being misguided?447 Therefore, he reaches for the highest authority. Adamson explains:

Like Descartes, al-Ghazālī sees skepticism as a challenge to be overcome . . . But al-Ghazālī does not point to anything like the Cartesian cogito to get himself out of his skeptical fix. Instead, he tells us that it was God who released him: a light was unexpectedly cast into his bosom . . . It is through this light that we must seek the “unveiling” (kashf) of truth, and it is given only by divine generosity.448

Therefore, al-Ghazālī incorporates into the Ash’arite and partial philosophical doctrines the mystic experience. His attitude toward philosophy remains “ambivalent,” for the reasoning and “rational theology” in al-Ghazālī’s view had a practical purpose in “defending a virtuous religion against its detractors,” while he remained unsatisfied with the proofs presented by the philosophers (Adamson 2016, 144).449 This, Adamson believes to be
so, because of “Avicenna’s rigorous and influential studies in logic and epistemology” that enriched the theological studies with establishing a “more self-conscious” study method (ibid). Consequently, al-Ghazālī differentiates in the works of philosophers, where it is “concerning natural philosophy,” which he finds more or less acceptable, and where it involves “ethics and politics [which he thinks] are simply plagiarized from earlier prophetic traditions” (Adamson 2016, 145).

Al-Ghazālī’s engagement with Avicenna had some interestingly ironic consequences. It is true that not only Europe came to know Avicenna through the translations of al-Ghazālī’s work,⁴⁵⁰ which he had written to refute Avicenna, but that also al-Ghazālī played an instrumental role in the survival of philosophy in the East. Adamson remarks that this was because, “[h]e made the tacit, but crucial, assumption that explaining and then criticizing Avicenna is the same as explaining and criticizing philosophy itself.” This consequence secured Avicenna’s place, rather than Aristotle’s, “as the main point of reference.”⁴⁵¹

As a result, in his book Tahāfūt al-Falāsīfā (translated as Incoherence of the Philosophers), al-Ghazālī lays out his criticism of the “philosophers,” which as Adamson has noted, was aimed mainly at Avicenna, by first summarizing and then critiquing Avicenna’s work (147). There are three principle areas of dispute that al-Ghazālī outlines, all of which fulfill his grounds for “heresy,” as in what qualifies one as not being a proper Muslim (even to the degree of being subject to punishment). According to Adamson, al-Ghazālī believes Avicenna to possess all three.⁴⁵² These are: “claims that the universe is eternal rather than created; that God has no knowledge of particular things, but only of universals; and that only the soul lives on after death, with no possibility of bodily resurrection.”⁴⁵³
Given al-Ghazālī’s criteria of religious orthodoxy, one can raise the question: how is al-Ghazālī refuting Avicenna’s philosophical argument that, for instance, the world is eternal? The answer is that al-Ghazālī used a dialectic method of first summarizing the opponent’s arguments and doctrines, then evaluating them as “false or simply inadequate” (Adamson 2016, 149). Avicenna had argued that “a temporally limited effect cannot come from an eternal cause. God is eternal, so His will should likewise be eternal. And if He has an eternal will to produce the universe, then surely the universe too will be eternal.”

Al-Ghazālī refutes Avicenna’s argument on the basis of “the faculty of estimation” (wahm), which “is . . . responsible for misleading impressions that we find almost impossible to resist.” Further, al-Ghazālī complains that the arguments of the “philosophers” in question do not meet his requirement of being adequately “demonstrative” (Adamson 2016, 150). What al-Ghazālī calls “wahm” may refer to Avicenna’s “thought experiment” that assisted Avicenna in making a “distinction between strict impossibility and inconceivability.”

Adamson states “thought experiment” was nothing new, and even philosophers from antiquity employed it. He further explains: “intuitions are crucial in philosophical reflection, often providing its starting points, or objections to what seemed to be a promising theory” (Adamson 2016, 133). However, al-Ghazālī himself argues for the “direct contact with the divine,” which is “beyond demonstration;” nevertheless, he names it “dhawq,” translated as “taste,” pertaining to “the immediate perception of divine truth afforded the true mystic” (Adamson 2016, 145). On al-Ghazālī’s favoring mysticism as a method, Ebrahim Moosa notes:

Of all the methods he experimented with, Ghazālī found the method of the mystics to be the most attractive and conducive for his purposes. Thus, his ethics was, in a sense,
traditional jurisprudence mediated by mysticism. What I think Ghazālī found persuasive about mysticism was the kind of imagination it cultivates within an individual.\textsuperscript{455}

To be sure, both Avicenna and al-Ghazālī drew from Neoplatonic ideas\textsuperscript{456} and imagination in shaping their philosophical works. The difference is by attributing the source to the divine, the latter obtained an authoritative position ensuring the credibility of his views. It is one thing to have a mystical experience; it is, however, another to hold it as a point of reference and judgment to formulate instructions on its basis. While the former seems individual, the latter transcends individual experience and falls within the domain of what shapes collective subjectivities. Adamson addresses this point. As if asking al-Ghazālī, [w]hat about the rest of us, who are not so fortunate . . . and have not tasted the sweetness of God, or seen His radiance? [Then he replies according to al-Ghazālī that,] [w]ell, we should demonstrate whatever we can, following the philosophers as far as they can take us—which is not nearly as far as they claim. But we must also trust in the guidance of true prophets, who should be assessed and verified through careful reflection on their works and deeds.\textsuperscript{457}

Therefore, al-Ghazālī asks that we believe in the “possibility of prophecy,” and at the same time, “lays claim to a mystical insight that is beyond the reach of their [the philosophers’] arguments” (ibid). Further, in al-Ghazālī’s view (as an Ash’arite), he limits the issue of “agency to causes which act out of well-informed choices.” In other words, only God is “really the sole efficient cause of the universe and everything in it” (Adamson 2016, 151). Therefore, there is no subject or free will other than what God has already determined freely. In the notion of “agency,” al-Ghazālī differs from Avicenna, who considers (as a
parallel to Plotinus’ Soul) an “Agent Intellect” to be responsible to give form to what is created (Adamson 2016, 139).

Adamson states there are places in Avicenna that one is tempted to compare him with Descartes. He refers to Avicenna’s “flying man,” which is a thought experiment regarding Avicenna’s presenting his case on the man who has been just created, suspended in mid air, and not even having limbs touching his body, with “total sensory deprivation.” Avicenna claims that such a man is “self-aware,” however, as Adamson swiftly reminds us, not as a thinking subject, or even in a material body, but as “essence . . . an incorporeal soul” (135). In proving the separation between the soul and the body, too, Avicenna thinks differently from Descartes, in that the former deems the “intellectual part of the soul—what he calls the ‘rational soul’—to be separate from the body in its activity” (Adamson 2016, 136).

Nasr argues philosophy was received differently by Sunni versus Shi’ite Muslims. Whereas the Sunnis accepted only certain aspects of philosophy, namely logic and some “methods of argumentation” that proved useful in their debates with their non-Muslim rivals, in the Shi’a sphere there has been continuity in the teachings of “the philosophy of both the Peripatetic and Illuminationist school . . . as a living tradition through the centuries in the religious schools.” He further notes the fact that philosophers such as Mūllā Sadrā appear nearly five hundred years after al-Ghazālī is an indication of this consistency (Nasr 1992, 294).

What is of great interest here is the notion that how the already influential Neoplatonic philosophy was still firmly in place during modernity and continues to distort the content of the individual subject to this day. There seems to be a confusion on mystic subjective experience that quickly transforms into collective subjectivity and the subjecthood
in the “grammatical” sense as meant by Nietzsche. This dilemma even extends to scholars. Farzin Vahdat (2003) in response to Bassam Tibi, “one of the most erudite scholars of Islam and modernity,” opposes the idea that human subjectivity is contrary to monotheistic religions (126). Even so, he leans on Neoplatonic ideas first and foremost to make his argument. What Vahdat draws upon in his argument is the “Islamic mystical tradition and philosophy” that come directly from the idea of the “Perfect Human,” and Ibn Arabi as “one of the founders of . . . Neoplatonic tradition in the Islamic world” (ibid). However, there is nothing on the importance of individual’s lived-experience as a subject to oneself. He comes closest to the idea of subjecthood, when he notes in Islam, “the emphasis on the responsibility of the individual.” This responsibility, however, as he cites Armando Salvatore (1997), is assessed with respect to “salvation” through submission to the Divine authority (Vahdat 127). But, this Divine authority is often eclipsed under the various interpretations of the clerics, and those who claim to be the mediators even argue for the “human as God’s vice regent on earth (Koranic khâlifat o’llah fi al-arz),” which “explicitly informed the discourses of the architects of the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1960s and the 1970s” (ibid). The class of clergy thusly created a position of power within the social structure that was interwoven with a political system that can be traced from the medieval to the present time. Although most influential, by the time we reach the nineteenth century, the religious class was not the only member of the socio-political structure. (See Appendix III).

The social division of classes at this time in Persia, reveals a close interdependency between all except one group: the ʻulamā, who had sources of revenue in charitable taxes and endowments (awqāf). They also had the most “influence among the laborers and peasants, and in the incitement of mobs.” Therefore, those among the ʻulamā that were not affiliated with the court, were seen in as “the potential leaders of popular discontent” (Lambton 164).
that lacked the “relationship of man to man” (Lambton 166). The individual experience, therefore, remains a part of the “unlived” life for the Middle Easterners, and in the case at hand, the Iranians. One may argue the individual experience in the West that quickly gave its place to a collective consciousness after the Renaissance has been problematic in Europeans’ engagement with colonialism and exploitation of the “other” (Mignolo 1995). While this is true, just as with the fact that humans have never forgotten how to make images, once the individual consciousness is experienced and present as “being,” it is always there, even though from time to time it will need to be brought to presence (Nancy 1993). This experience is long overdue for the Middle Eastern subjects.

Considering this, just as the experience with photography lacked the background process of individual vantage point for the Middle Easterners, modern reforms made Romantic Movement and Hegelian aesthetics more appealing in the Middle East during the nineteenth century, as received by a collective consciousness. The appeal perhaps was because it seemed familiar in how “artistic plan was ascribed to the creator of the universe, as had already been done by Plotinus” (Hauser 108).461

However, the problem of inverting the subject and the predicate persists in Hegel. As the thinking, European philosopher who is defining discriminately who is a “being” and, who is not, Hegel’s dialectic appears to only be applicable to his fellow European citizens. Hegelian philosophy of “the manifold contingencies and particularities of world history into one gradual universal direction (essentially that of German Protestant Idealism), has . . . become a synonym for the archetypal Eurocentric thinker” (Almond 109). It is of little wonder then that the accounts of places like Africa, or religions like Islam are absent in his “unfolding World-Spirit,” even though he was very well read on the “orient.”462 Susan Buck-
Morss (2009) argues this very point. She notes, despite knowing about the Haitian Revolution, Hegel was silent about it (17). She finds a sort of hypocrisy in his philosophy of the dialectic toward freedom. She argues: “Because of his own insistence on the necessary interconnection between history and truth, Hegel’s philosophy cannot be divorced from the repression through which the referent that we call Hegel has come to be historically known” (Buck-Morss 16). This brings up the subjectivity under the domination of the subject aware of itself, but poised to objectify its “other.” This is a discourse that paves the way for colonialism. Some of the most significant intellectuals in the nineteenth century Middle East were also among the influential figures in opposing colonialism. However, despite their familiarity with Western modernist theories, they built their counter arguments by maintaining the same patriarchal paradigms such as striving for an artificial unity i.e. Pan-Islamism. One of the most influential and recognizable names whose inspiration transcended geographical borders in the Middle East and reached well into the twentieth century, and even to this day, is Sayyid Jamāl ad-Dīn Asadabadi (al-Afghānī).

**Modern Intellectuals of the Middle East: Sayyid Jamāl ad-Dīn Asadābādī (al-Afghānī)**

There have been many debates on the origin of Sayyid Jamāl ad-Dīn (1838/39-1897); scholars have been intrigued by the aura of mystery surrounding his biographical accounts for years. In *Sayyid Jamāl ad-Dīn al-Afghānī: A Political Biography*, one of the most comprehensive studies on Jamāl ad-Dīn, Nikki Keddie explains that due to his great ideas to unify all Muslims in the Middle East against the European colonialists, Jamāl ad-Dīn, when “in Sunni surroundings, maintained he was born and raised in Afghanistan, yet it can now be shown that he was in fact born in the village of Asadabad near the town of Hamedan in western Iran” (Keddie 1972a, 3). Keddie names Jamāl ad-Dīn “as a precursor of various later
trends in the Islamic world,” and “one of the first important leaders to try to reinterpret traditional Islamic ideas so as to meet the agonizing problems brought on by the increasing incursions by the West into the Middle East” (Keddie 1972, 1). Keddie states, al-Afghāni’s mode of reinterpreting the Islamic past in modern and nationalist terms displayed an approach that was to become increasingly popular in the Middle East. That Afghāni has been chosen as hero by so many modern Muslims gives his activities and writings an importance that withstands all evidence that his influence during his lifetime was sometimes small. His example of devotion to the cause of liberating Muslims from their Western conquerors has added to his appeal in the contemporary Middle East.

The idea of “an evolutionary history of civilization” and what its implications were was “one of the seminal ideas of nineteenth century Europe.” This idea, argues Stephen Vernoit, “was disseminated in the Muslim world largely in the ideas of al-Afghāni, who was inspired by the lectures of the French statesman and historian François Guizot (1787-1874) on the history of civilization in Europe” (Vernoit 30). While al-Afghāni initiated the translation of Guizot’s book into Arabic in 1877, it did not prevent him from criticizing the Eurocentrism in Guizot’s theory, by insisting “that Muslims could also advance and contribute to civilization’s future” (ibid). Additionally, in his exchange with Ernest Renan in 1883, one can see al-Afghāni’s Hegelian tendencies toward an evolutionary history. Rejecting Renan’s “racial argument,” Jamāl ad-Dīn asserted that the modern evolutionary idea was also applicable to Muslims, but attributed “the superiority of the modern Western intellectual climate . . . to the fact that Christianity had an evolutionary head start on Islam” (Keddie 1972a, 191).
Jamāl ad-Dīn’s education included “the traditional Islamic disciplines,” but he received a “considerable knowledge of the Islamic philosophers,” such as Avicenna who played an instrumental role in shaping his later views (Keddie 1972a, 18). Despite the earlier suppression of Greek influence and harsh criticism of Aristotelian philosophers like Avicenna, Keddie argues in the nineteenth century there was actually “a living philosophical tradition” in Iran that was taught in madrasas or religious schools (Keddie 1972a, 19). Therefore, it seems plausible to deduce that Jamāl ad-Dīn aimed to reestablish a reason-based argument in support of an anti-colonial movement against the Europeans.

Another influential factor forming Jamāl ad-Dīn’s thoughts was the development of unorthodox movements during his youth. Keddie points to Jamāl ad-Dīn’s exposure to traditions such as Shaikhism (a school of Twelver Shi’ism, founded in the late eighteenth century by Sheikh Ahmad Ahsā’ī) and Bābism (a movement initiated in 1844 by Ali Mohammad Shirazi); being a witness to both, these shaped Jamāl ad-Dīn’s thoughts and writings (Keddie 1972, 19-21).

The Shaikhi movement was a branch of Shi’a that “stressed both the philosophical and mystical aspects of Shi’ism, developing theories found in earlier philosophers and mystics about the coexistence of the real and spiritual worlds—worlds that the Shaikhis further defined and subdivided.” Keddie’s research demonstrates that a treatise written by a leader of the Shaikhis, namely Hajj Mohammad Karim Khan Qajar Kirmani (1809-1870), who led the group between 1840’s and 1860’s, was copied by Jamāl ad-Dīn in the 1860s; these writings, which left an impression on Jamāl ad-Dīn, reveal there could be many different levels of meaning to the Koran as well as allusion to the ever-present opportunities for guidance for Muslims. She explains:
The idea of the Koran as mystically encompassing an infinity of varied meanings is one that was used later by Jamāl ad-Dīn to attribute new meanings to this Holy Book. Another Shaikhi idea later echoed by Jamal ad-Dīn was their key difference from other Shi’is—what the Shaikhis called the “Fourth Pillar” of religion—the idea that there is always in the world a perfect Shi’i who can guide men in right ideas and action during the absence of the Twelfth Imam.\(^\text{469}\)

In his stay in Egypt (1871-79, during which time he visited Istanbul), his ideas gathered followings. One of his most notable students is Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905), who “was soon to become . . . political activist and journalist . . . [and follow] the path of his master and closest confidant,” Jamāl ad-Dīn (Keddie 1972a, 90). At the same time, Jamāl ad-Dīn angered the “religious conservatives,” whether in al-Azhar University in Cairo, or as in the time when he lectured in Istanbul on crafts. Keddie notes: “he referred to prophecy as a craft on almost the same level as philosophy, and drew comparisons between philosophers and prophets,” which caused his expulsion from Istanbul in 1871. Vernoit also notes Jamāl ad-Dīn’s comments on the importance of the arts in education for “the advancement of arts, crafts, and industry . . . were interpreted as placing the arts on an equal footing with divine inspiration,” and caused the closure of the university in Istanbul in the same year (Vernoit 24).

Perhaps one of the most critical points in Jamāl ad-Dīn’s political life was his understanding of the importance of mass media (Keddie 1972b, 46). He sought in his arguments to “mobilize the masses so that they would defend their country’s independence against the . . . encroaching West” (Keddie 1972b, 45). His anti-colonial and anti-establishment sentiments are reflected in his writings, public lectures, and pamphlets he
distributed. One of the first newspapers that published a couple of articles by Jamāl ad-Dīn, was the London-based newspaper by the name of an-Nahla. The articles’ title, “English Policy in Eastern Countries,” and “The Reasons for the War in Egypt,” were both criticism of British policies in India and Egypt, as well as noting the concerns the British had regarding movements toward unification of all Muslims (through a “firm bond,” in Koranic terms: ‘urwat al wuthqā) which, of course, encompassed the Muslims in India. He had also argued that the British were awaiting opportunities to undermine this “Pan-Islamism” under the leadership of the Ottoman Sultan Abdülhamid II, and that they “knew [it] would endanger their influence in the East and their rule in India” (Keddie 1972a, 184).

Jamāl ad-Dīn’s presence in France was reflected in James Sanua’s newspaper, the aforementioned Abu Nadara Zarka (in chapter four) in the January 19, 1883 issue. Sanua published an article by Jamāl ad-Dīn in his next issue, on February 9, 1883, titled “ash-Sharq va ash-Sharqiyyin” (The Orient and Orientals). Jamāl ad-Dīn used this and another Paris-based Arabic language paper, al-Bashīr, to disseminate his idea on Muslim unification, even if it meant supporting one’s undemocratic government. This is significant, particularly in the latter publication, as its editor was a refugee from the Ottoman Empire, by the name of Khalil Ghānem, who often criticized the Ottoman Sultan in his newspaper. It is clear that in his writings in Paris, Jamāl ad-Dīn discouraged Ghānem’s criticism of the Ottoman Sultan, as he saw it undermining the unity of Muslims in facing the foreigners. Keddie notes “when forced to choose between advocacy or reform or self-strengthening for the Muslim world, Afghāni gave priority to the latter” (Keddie 1972a, 186). It is this unity he was striving for, however, by looking back at Islam’s Golden Age.
Jamāl ad-Dīn (al-Afghani) was a man who was very conscious of the history of intellectualism in Islam and, as his writings demonstrate, sought the solution to deal with colonialism in Islam’s own glorious past. Ilan Pappé, in the Modern Middle East argues al-Afghani “lamented the weakness of the Islamic world in the face of European colonialism and imperialism, asserting that a return to the Golden Age of Islam was the best way of tackling this predicament [colonialism]” (Pappé 274). Nonetheless, al-Afghani seems to have been aware of the important role the individual has in modern times. Vahdat points out that “[u]nderlying Afghani’s discourse there is a strong assumption that the modern world necessitates a view of human agency” (Vahdat 131). This agency for Muslims, as argued by Jamāl ad-Dīn, required manifestation in “activism, the freer use of human reason and political and military strength” (Keddie 1968, 3). Yet, for Jamāl ad-Dīn, as a nineteenth century Muslim intellectual, this does not seem to translate into individuality or subjecthood. The reason may rest in a long-standing tradition that excluded the masses from the intellectual circles, may they be theologians, Sufis or philosophers.

In “Intellectuals in the Modern Middle East: A Brief Historical Consideration,” Keddie provides a history of intellectualism in Islamic lands. She notes theologians like al-Ghazālī actually “wrote treatise on the need of keeping theology from the masses.” This was also practiced by the Sufis, who “restricted their higher truths to the initiated, as did many of the Shi’is.” Most significantly for its persistence to this day, Keddie argues, it is the work of the philosophers who developed this theory “most elaborately” by “[i]nsisting that their Greek-based philosophy was enjoined on them by the [Kor]an,” and citing certain interpretations from selected verses in the Koran as their evidence (Keddie 1972b, 42). Further, the exclusion was established in the idea “that humanity was divided into a small elite capable of understanding philosophy and a large mass who could not be exposed to it,
lest it upset their literalist faith” (ibid). It appears that Jamāl ad-Dīn also followed this “duality” in his work. Vahdat asserts that Jamāl ad-Dīn created two discourses, one for what he considered to be the enlightened elite in Islamic societies, according to the principles of which individual subjectivity was affirmed in such concepts as critical thought. He also developed a parallel discourse, which appealed more to the “masses” motivated by his anti-imperialist goals, and which in many ways was in sharp contrast to his first critical discourse.\textsuperscript{473}

Without a doubt, Jamāl ad-Dīn was actively trying to educate elite leaders in the Muslim communities, such as Abduh and others, by underscoring the importance of the sciences.\textsuperscript{474} Jamāl ad-Dīn believed “no reform [was] possible in Muslim countries until Muslim leaders and ulama have reformed their outlook . . . and that the decline of Muslim countries began with these leaders.”\textsuperscript{475} Furthermore, he harshly criticized the Muslim religious scholars “for their blindness and hostility toward modern science and technology.”\textsuperscript{476} He argued for the “scientific proof,” and deemed “no incompatibility between science and knowledge and the foundation of Islamic faith” (Keddie 1972a, 163). Nevertheless, he drew the inspiration for reasoning from philosophy.

Jamāl ad-Dīn’s emphasizing the importance of sciences and philosophy is evident in one of his articles; however, mysticism and openness to creative thinking is never far from his view.\textsuperscript{477} He cites names of philosophers such as Fārābi, Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna), and Müllā Sadrā among others, who are from more mystical traditions.\textsuperscript{478} Moreover, Jamāl ad-Dīn criticizes the ulama, who “study . . . sciences that are ascribed to Aristotle with the greatest delight, as if Aristotle were one of the pillars of the Muslims. However, if the discussion relates to Galileo, Newton and Kepler, they consider them infidels.”\textsuperscript{479} He further states the
purpose of philosophy “is man’s becoming man and living the life of sacred rationality. Its aim is human perfection in reason, mind, soul, and way of life.” From the extant documents written by Jamāl ad-Dīn, one can surmise his “ties to mysticism of a Neoplatonic type” and continued interest in “this school’s combination of philosophy, mystical ideas, and religious innovation” (Keddie 1972a, 38); one can also grasp his attempts to strengthen all his bases against European imperialism, and primarily of the British colonialists’ intentions. While his influences in the region, from India to Egypt, to Ottoman Turkey and Iran, paved the way for multiple socio-political reformation movements, the issue of what happens to the colonized subject remains beyond the scope of concern for reformists such as Jamāl ad-Dīn and others and would have to wait until later in the twentieth century.

FACING COLONIALISM: SUBJECTIVITY AND THE ARTS IN THE NINETEENTH AND THE TWENTIETH CENTURY MIDDLE EAST

Jamāl ad-Dīn’s concerns regarding colonialism and his plans to consolidate a confident “Pan-Islamic nation” led to reformation movements that began in the later part of the nineteenth century and continued in the first decades of the twentieth century. These reformation movements sought to overhaul the religious traditional beliefs, but at the same time the economy, and ultimately aimed to bring about modern states in the Middle East. However, the colonialists left their marks on the region. In this segment, it is necessary to discuss in further detail the implementation of colonial strategies that inflicted a sort of collective subjectivity, undermining the space and time within which a meaningful, “individual” stage may have come to be experienced. While nineteenth century reformers like Jamāl ad-Dīn and Muhammad Abduh recognized the pernicious effects of European
imperialism, it remained outside their reach to elaborate on the issue of the subject, such as what was undertaken later by Frantz Fanon and Edward Said.

**Colonial Discourses: Fanon and Said – the Imaginary Construction of the “Other”**

The ethico-aesthetic paradigm emerged to explore ways to circumvent the formal structure of power in order to bring about change when it would become necessary; it is informed partly by works of philosophers such as Nietzsche and Heidegger, who saw in the aesthetics and creative thoughts a pathway toward free consciousness necessary to bring about change (Nietzsche 2006, 65; Heidegger 1993, 197). Heidegger also warns against the calculative and systematic activities of humans that “enframe” earth’s resources, including other fellow humans and their relationships (Heidegger, 325). However, without criticism and critical examination, art and aesthetics can be another instrument in the hands of the power bases. Interestingly, I believe the requirement of this criticism is implied in Heidegger’s choice of the term “enframe,” even though he addresses the darker side of technology, as it connotes a sort of misuse or abuse of creative endeavors. Instrumental in this criticism is the examination of the mechanisms of colonialism, the subjects under the imposed colonial powers, and the role of the creative endeavors (i.e. imagination) in implementation of power mechanisms.

Frantz Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks* sets out to demonstrate “that what is called the black soul is a construction by white folk” (xviii). He analyzes the disruption through systematic treatment to the process of collective consciousness of the colonized. Fanon argues the process of transitioning from unconsciousness toward consciousness for the black man is intercepted, thus “the [blacks’] collective unconscious is not governed by cerebral heredity,” rather by what he calls “an impulsive cultural imposition” through which he [the
colonized] internalizes the sense of inferiority and all things negative about himself (Fanon, 167). The imposed culture, through the negative representation of its “other,” immediately tips the scale in favor of the dominant race, thereby engendering a debt for the dominated people. Therefore, in this type of “debt economy,” their “lack” of the dominant culture’s values places the dominated in the position of need to receive from its “other.”

The “debt economy” finds a whole new meaning when viewed in “real” economic situations as explained by Maurizio Lazzarato (2012). Lazzarato argues that in capitalism, major creditors have become the recipient of exorbitant amounts of funds through what he calls “the simple mechanism of interest” (Lazzarato 20). Through producing “credit” for the population, the financial institutions have been able to “appropriate labor and wealth of others.” He quotes Gabriel Ardent that credit and credit system is a “power mechanism of exploitation” and “one of the most effective instruments of exploitation man has managed to create” (Lazzarato 20-21). Lazzarato further argues that “even though neoliberalism equally involves the economy and subjectivity, ‘work’ and ‘work on the self,’ it reduces the latter to an injunction to become one’s own boss, in the sense of ‘taking upon oneself” the costs and risks that business and the State externalize onto society” (Lazzarato 93). Taking Lazzarato’s formula between the state and the society and extrapolating it into the economic relationship between Europe and the Middle East, as Roger Owen examined in the example of nineteenth century Egypt, the imperialists’ strategy to subjugate becomes evident on the state level. In other words, by closely controlling the state, they maintain a tight control over the population. This explains the support of capitalist powers of autocratic rulers in the Middle East, even to this day. Owen argues on the case of Egypt, “the role of the metropolitan states in relation to their capitalists, [and] the nature of the Egyptian state and the changes in the Egyptian social structure which imperial penetration produced,” all to be among the efforts to
transform the colonized region, not by military might, but through dependent economy, into a submissive colony (Owen 111).

In all examples above, the configuration of power determines the relationship between the members of society, or on the state level, between the colonizer and the colonized. Speaking from a post-modern view, we now have long left behind the early models of power, as Foucault elaborated; it is “not the ‘center of power’, not a network of forces, but a multiple network of diverse elements . . . [It is] . . . a strategic distribution of elements of different natures and levels” (Foucault [1975] 1977, 307). Nonetheless, as suggested in this study, the most powerful element remains the creative powers that can operate on multiple levels, particularly in implementing imperialistic mechanisms. The element of imagination has also played an instrumental role in colonialism and sustaining its grips on the Middle East.

Edward Said in Orientalism (1979) asserts that the European colonial programs were predicated on an “imaginary Orient” (Said 177). He scrutinizes the role of the academics in taking part in constructing the “imaginative meaning of Orientalism” (Said 3). He argues that without examining Orientalism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to manage—and even produce—the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period.

Said further notes the power relation presupposes the idea of “Orient,” for it defines “the relationship between Occident and Orient . . . [as] a relationship of . . . domination, [and] of varying degrees of a complex hegemony” (ibid). It is this “hegemony,” Said maintains, which ensures the continuity and power of the “Occident” over the “Orient.”
solidifies “the idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-
European peoples and cultures” (Said 7). Therefore, by creating “us” and “them,” the West
has established and maintained its hegemony over the “Orient.” In all the political, cultural,
and military interactions with the Middle East, as situations evolved into more modern times,
the West’s written and cited authority on the Middle East has gone through a process as well.
Said explains:

The Orient needed first to be known, then invaded and possessed, then re-created by
scholars, soldiers, and judges who disinterred forgotten languages, histories, races and
cultures in order to posit them—beyond the modern Oriental’s ken—as the true
classical Orient that could be used to judge and rule the modern Orient.484

Thusly, Europe maintained its distance with the “Orient.” In the literary examples he
closely examines, Said disentangles how the Western observer of the “Orient,” while his
presence is not directly tangible, allows himself to speak of the Orient’s “backwardness, its
silent indifference, its feminine penetrability . . .; this is why every writer on the Orient . . .
saw the Orient as a locale requiring Western attention, reconstruction, even redemption,” not
to mention receiving the added support from the literature on “the biological bases of racial
inequality,” and those referencing “scientific validity” that quickly became incorporated into
the discourse and epistemology that further accentuated the binary state of the “advanced”
versus the “backward” subject (Said 206).485

Through the process of imagining and creating an “Orient,” the West successfully
dominated the “Orient.”486 This brings up the issue of mimesis through which the Europeans
imagined an Orient that they could then possess and exploit.487 But, on a more apparent level,
it is the general state of the visual arts during the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries that
reveals emulation, whether from the European styles, or pre-Islamic arts in the case of Iran. In both cases, while exhibiting some innovations, mimesis achieves a sense of stability and continuity.

**Modernism and the Visual Arts in the 19th and 20th Century Middle East**

There appears to be a great difference in attitude toward the visual arts between the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries in the Middle East (Vernoit 19). Whereas the nineteenth century began with the domination of strict religious views on imagery, particularly for the majority of the population and those “who did not enjoy court favor,” the dawn of the twentieth century reveals “an unmistakable transformation in religious views” on the arts. The substantial changes were due to a series of religious edicts (*fatwa*), issued by none other than Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905), the faithful pupil and follower of al-Afghāni. In the spirit of modernization, Abduh argued for the “educational value” of the visual imagery and ruled it had no incompatibility with the religious law (Vernoit 19). The topic of visual imagery was not one that generally would be of concern to the Muslim population, unless it was linked to idolatry. Therefore, as Vernoit notes, when it came to the visual arts, not all held the same position. He explains: “The prevailing opposition to figural art . . . was stronger in Ottoman and Arab lands than Iran or India” (Vernoit 22). Nonetheless, with the emergence of Wahhabi’s movement in mid-eighteenth century, and their joining forces “with the Ibn Sa’ud family of Dar’iyya” in the Arabian Peninsula, actions were taken against shrine cities of Karbala, Mecca and Medina, which were meant as “directly challenging the Ottoman rule” in the region (ibid). It is worth mentioning that in Wahhabi belief, building elaborate tombs and mosques, as well as using any type of luxury material, were prohibited. Therefore, they were “hostile both to the Ottoman and the Qajar rulers, the
former on account of their Sufi tendencies . . . and the latter for their Shi’ism” (ibid). Their fundamental views advocated an emulation of the practices from the early years of Islam’s emergence.

With all the oppositions and resistance from the orthodoxy, the visual arts became an inseparable part of the modernization in the Middle East. This is evident in the number of portraits commissioned by the rulers (Ottoman and Qajar) (Vernoit 23), as well as the funerary monuments for the Ottoman rulers that employed an eclectic combination of Baroque, Rococo and Neo-Classical, which became known as the Ottoman court style.489 Similarly, the city of Cairo under Muhammad Ali underwent transformation, particularly due to the demands of the “growing European community” (Behrens-Abouseif 111) there at this time. The civil architectural style in the rapidly expanding city was “introduced mainly by Ottoman Greeks, Armenians, and Italians.” Whereas the ordinary residences remained faithful to local taste, it was the religious architecture that demonstrated more of the “foreign influence (Behrens-Abouseif 112). Contrastingly, in building for industrial, administrative, or educational purposes, it was the European building styles that were adopted (Behrens-Abouseif 113).

While there are plenty of examples from Egypt and the Ottoman Turkey that show emulation from European grand styles, early on, the Qajars in Iran looked to the examples from the pre-Islamic past (Scarce 235-36).490 The Sasanian and Achaemenid styles of architecture can be seen in the palaces as well as the carved stone relief narratives (Scarce 236). Nevertheless, in the second half of the nineteenth century, as argued by Scarce, “Nas[se]r al-Din Shah’s interpretation of the pre-Islamic past” became distinctly different “from that of his great-grandfather, as it was influenced by the impact of new technical
resources that both interested him personally and were used as effective means of royal propaganda” (Scarce 239).

Whereas the visual arts may not have been central in the everyday life of the general public in the nineteenth century Middle East, sending students abroad, the establishing of European style schools, and training artists continued until the early part of the twentieth century and no doubt left its impressions on the arts (Pappè 167), although the visual arts were never linked to the issues of identity and belonging in the cases of Turkish or Arab culture. It “indicates how the visual arts reflect the . . . hesitations of self and external identity” (ibid). As for Iran, the pre-Islamic art and culture remains (to this day) a source of inspiration, and “their revival and renewal . . . can be seen as an attempt to seek the security of a unique identity” (Scarce 246). It is in the mimesis, therefore, that a continuity of stability is sought.

MIMESIS: THE SCHOOL OF IMITATION AND THE UNDERMINING OF SUBJECTIVITY

By now, it should be clear that the process of modernization in the Middle East had as its major component the ever-present element of emulation from the West, whether it be art or technology. In the criticism of creative endeavors and what shapes subjectivity, therefore, it is important to tackle the issue of mimesis here. I intend to examine mimesis in two capacities: as a mechanism of representation, reflection, and imagination; and second, as a practical application: a practice within the religious realm as taqlīd, or imitation (Adamson defines it as “uncritical dependence on authority”), which developed as a way to facilitate and follow the religious instructions. I suggest, as a “fundamental mechanism” of power, in both capacities mimesis has been implemented by patriarchy to achieve unity and continuity,
as well to maintain a collective (as opposed to individual) consciousness that can be easily persuaded toward its own goals.

The Significance of Mimesis in the “Dynamics of Affirming Continuity”

The term *mimesis* in an Aristotelian context is a reminder of his argument with Plato in defense of the artist in the republic (*Aristotle Poetics* 1996). Plato’s low opinion of *mimesis* underscores the inadequacy of the imitative arts with respect to the realm of the “real,” thus resulting in the alienation of the artists as alterity in the process. Aristotle’s argument, however, emphasized the capacity of *mimesis* in illustrating human drama through imitating the character in the story as well as acquiring knowledge (*Poetics* xii). Whereas the concern with mimesis proved critical in the realm of the aesthetics, it is during the late antiquity and through Neoplatonism that the notion of mimesis expands to encompass all “philosophical issues from the sensory to the metaphysical domain” (Halliwell 2002, 313). In turn, *mimesis* enters the intellectual realm with far and wide consequences; its evolution into “mimetic theorization,” with the potential to adapt, reaches well beyond the late antiquity “from the fifteenth century Renaissance to the era of romanticism.” Stephen Halliwell elaborates:

Neoplatonism is so revisionist as to require a concept of Platonism as something more than a static affiliation—rather as a kind of philosophical spirit capable of perpetual revivification, though each time in a subtly different guise. [Therefore,] Neoplatonism . . . became a primary channel for the transmission of Plato’s ideas beyond the boundaries of paganism. 492
Plotinus appears to be ambivalent on the issue of *mimesis*. At times he appears to view it in a positive light, as how a work of art can remind us of the ideal form which manifests itself in the imagination of the artists; then, through technique and material, it is given physical form (V.8. 1-2). In other places, he seems prepared to placate the Platonists by downplaying the artistic products through stating they are inferior to nature (V.8.1.33). Then, once again he argues that the arts are not just products of a mimetic process. In a larger scheme of things, Plotinus explains that in mimesis lies the intention of seeking and unifying with the original form (V.8.1. 35-36). Plotinus, therefore, redefines mimesis and develops it into a mode that itself can regenerate and transform according to one’s different purposes. There are others who have explored opportunities of redefining mimesis with regards to the issue of interconnectivity of mimesis, continuity, and art.

Tom Huhn in an article picks up on the renewal theme and notes: “Mimesis is an ideal term to describe the dynamics of affirming continuity between things and ourselves.” In other words, mimesis bridges the gap between knowing and not knowing for us, between the realm of illusion and the domain of the real, and wherever there is obscurity and intermittence. Paul Ricoeur argues that the “reconceptualization” of mimesis actually first took place when Aristotle parted ways with Plato; it is when Aristotle recognized the “dynamism” and “action” involved in mimesis, and not just “producing a weakened image of pre-existing things” (Ricoeur 1991, 137-138). Thus, Ricoeur submits, this “mimesis brings about an augmentation of meaning in the field of action, which is its privileged field,” and which he calls “creative imitation” (ibid). Therefore, here in mimesis, the emphasis is on the “making of meaning,” which “is another mimetic means of forging continuities” (Huhn 204). The mediation of mimesis, by way of creativity and imagination, was extended to mechanisms of implementing power, particularly through religious authorities.
**Taqlīd and its Relation to Sufism and Philosophy**

The term *taqlīd*, which means to imitate (it has also been translated as “to follow”) - Adamson translates it as uncritical dependence on authority), is a significant phenomenon with respect to the issue of subjecthood. If we define free consciousness as one being a subject to itself, it then follows that one is responsible for one’s own actions, just as the Mu’tazilites had argued (Adamson 2016, 13). Thus the correlation between “freedom” and “responsibility” becomes evident in the above statement. Adamson refers to the Sunni criticism of *taqlīd*, as it has been practiced by Shi’ite tradition. However, both Sunni and Shi’ite, even the Sufi traditions, implemented mimesis into their practices in one form or another. Whereas the Shi’ites call it *taqlīd*, the Sunnis refer to it as *qiyās* (translated as “reasoning” or analogy in Adamson 2016, 167). Similarly, the Sufi tradition calls for the unquestionable submission to and the guidance of the *pir* or the master (the Perfect Man). Further examples, as discussed in chapter three, are the visual language used by Rūmī and Ibn Arabī (Adamson 2016, 195 and 349), who were heavily reliant upon mimesis in their literary works.

Consequently, while each denouncing the other, all three groups, emulating a particular pattern of reasoning inspired at the source by Aristotelian reasoning, justified some sort of mimesis that undermined the free conscious, thus limiting freedom by way of relieving the individual of any responsibility. As a result, consistent with the master-slave pattern (in its ideological sense), and the deterministic foundation (laid since the time of the Ash’arites and al-Ghazālī), the binary division between those who “know” and those who don’t ensured the dependency of the individual on the *ulama*. What qualified the *ulama* was their studies in the Hadith and the Prophet’s Sunna (tradition) narrated by a chain of sources.
These extensive accounts were extremely influential in how the laws were interpreted and implemented.⁵⁰³

An important figure who played an effective role in the institutionalization of taqlīd is Nasīr al-Dīn al-Tūsī (1201-1274).⁵⁰⁴ Al-Tūsī believed in the necessity of a teacher or guide, since he was of the opinion that not all humans are equal in intellect. This would inevitably lead to a kind of relativism in which all believers would be equal, and there would be no point sorting true from false. Thus, the more imperfect minds should look to a perfect mind to help them.⁵⁰⁵

The requirement of “intellect” (aql) had already been argued for by Avicenna and established by him epistemologically; even though named differently by each, “intellect” was part of both Shi’ite and Sunni tradition of reasoning (Adamson 2016, 332). What is of most significance is that mimesis rests at the foundation of all judgments that have influenced, and continue to influence, laws and policy that impact the individual to the benefit of patriarchy; by removing all responsibility from the individual, such policies restrict freedoms as well. This becomes more visible during the twentieth century, despite the democratic movements, which I will examine in the next chapter.

To sum up the proposed ideas in this chapter, it is the notion of the subject that continues to be the center of my concern. In this chapter my objective was to demonstrate how the origins of disregard for the subjective experience go back to medieval Baghdad. This is a significant point in the history of the Middle East, for it also coincided with the first time that Islam was transformed into a political ideology. While the Abbasid period marks the flourishing of the arts and sciences in the region, I demonstrated there was a political motivation behind the translation movement that collected and preserved the knowledge from
the antiquity. It was to provide a stable and concrete theory to philosophically legitimize the rule of the Abbasid empire. I established that while the knowledge was collected, translated and commented on, some of the scientific leads, particularly what could have had an impact on individual experience, did not reach their full potential. Instead, it was the Neoplatonic interpretation that was favored and mostly applied, since it well-matched the patriarchal and traditional structure in the region.

I also demonstrated that there is link between the notion of subjectivity and seeing, as the idea was manifested through the camera obscura during the European Renaissance, but this idea actually came from Alhazen, and his new theory on vision invited one to experience for oneself through senses. However, unlike Europe, this idea did not find fertile grounds to develop further in the Middle East. Moreover, what additionally undermined the development of subjectivity was the important text, *The Arabic Plotinus* that consisted of translation of parts of the *Enneads*, as well as original and complementary ideas. The influential *Arabic Plotinus* eventually marks a watershed among Muslim philosophers as they part ways at its juncture: one group, headed by Averroes becomes rationalist and pro-Aristotle, and the other, led by al-Ghazali, takes the Neoplatonic approach and becomes emanationist. The latter, not long after the split, dominates the scene of Islamic philosophy in such a way that it infuses with matters of faith and religion, and becomes unquestionable. Nonetheless, one witnesses in Europe, the subject turns against its “other,” even though they arrived at that position through their alterity (i.e. Muslims).

Also considered in this chapter is the issue of colonialism, which not only formed subjectivities in the region, as argued by Fanon and Said, but also played a crucial role in shaping resistance against, now-the-Middle East’s other, the West. I discussed the theories
that attempted to bring about reformation, however with the focus on the idea of using Islam as means to counter colonialism. One form of coming to terms with modernism was to seek mimetic strategies in the production of the arts. Considering the importance of this concept, I concluded this chapter with an analysis of the idea of mimesis and mapped it on to a comparable religious practice, *Taqlid*, which has ensured the continuity and stability in the patriarchal system.
CHAPTER SIX

The Formation of Islamic Republic of Iran upon Imagination and Mimesis:
Subjecthood and The Rule of Jurisprudence

The Iranian revolution of 1978-79 shocked the world and set in motion a search for causes. Most of the resulting analyses tend to locate the origins of the revolution in the errors of the shah and of various Americans, although some scholarly works assay socioeconomic explanations for the upheaval.506

— Nikki Keddie

In comparison with the revolutions in the West, the people’s uprising in the winter of 1979 in Iran stands out in that it was led by the high-ranking members of the religious class, or the ulama, who toppled the last monarch and ended the rule of monarchy in Iran (Keddie 1983, 579). However, this was not the first time that the people of Iran had risen up to bring about political change; during the course of the twentieth century and prior to the 1979 revolution, the Constitutional Revolution of 1905-11, and the oil nationalization movement under Mohammad Mosaddeq from 1951-53, are the two major examples. Nevertheless, out of the three rebellions/revolutions in the twentieth century Iran, the 1979 movement was the first revolution that had led to the full usurpation of political power by the traditional, religious patriarchy (Paidar 1995, 18). It compels one to inquire: how was the class of clergy that historically always enjoyed a position of prominence, albeit in the shadow of the monarchy, able to achieve absolute political dominance in Iran nearly a hundred years after the start of the democratic and reformative movements?
I argue, despite the campaigns toward modernization and political reforms, the lack of a conscious subjecthood\footnote{507} persisted into the twentieth century, mainly due to the pervasiveness of Neoplatonic ideas that by this time had become part of the knowledge and philosophy of the ulama,\footnote{508} and after the Iranian revolution were implemented into the ideology of the rule of jurisprudence.\footnote{509} I further submit the analysis of all significant events leading up to the Iranian 1979 revolution, as mapped onto Hegel’s master-slave dialectic, provides additional evidence that it was idealism in the thoughts of the Iranian reformers that paved the way for the rise to power of a theocracy. Moreover, the subjecthood as an issue has conveniently remained obscure to the theoreticians and philosophers, who initially helped the Iranian revolution to succeed, and later set out to resolve the inner conflicts of such a ruling philosophy. These thinkers strove to restore the aforementioned religio-political philosophy, either through a revival of the Hellenized Islamic philosophy, inherited from the philosophers of the translation movement through the incorporation of Aristotelian reason, or by applying Western hermeneutic philosophy, as in the case of contemporary reformists such as Mujtahid Shabestari, or by invoking a historical Persian past in the idea of “Iranshahri,” by Javad Tabatabaei. I maintain, thinking ideally, none of these groups or individuals has taken into consideration the importance of emancipating the individual from being subject to all but itself first, prior to commencing any reforms.

The modernization that had carried the fruits of the Enlightenment and made consumers out of the people of the Middle East, and in this case Iran, was extended to a superficial version of the idea of political freedom, without any provisions for the individual consciousness or recognition of the subject on its own merit. As a result, the subjects continued to be recognized either as subjects to monarchy and nationalistic aspirations, or later as subjects to their politicized Shi’ite belief, which had extended roots in medieval
times—the time of politicization of Islam by incorporating Greek philosophy, first during the Abbasids, then tailored specifically for Shi’ites through the Safavids as explained in the previous chapters. Consequently, all political revolutions/movements for democracy in Iran have failed to this point. Further, I submit, almost all studies on the twentieth century Iran have sought the reasons behind these revolutions in the socio-econo-political factors. There are two examples in consideration here. In *Ma Chegoneh Ma Shodim* (How did we become who we are) ([1995] 2016), Sadegh Ziba Kalam criticizes all theories that reason the “falling behind of Iran,” rejecting the “the Arab invasion,” “colonialism,” and “conspiracy theory.” Instead, he argues this was due to the geography, harsh climate, underlying tribal nature of the government historically, nomadic life style and lack of social stability, a centralized government with a heavy hand, as well as “the extinguished light of sciences.” Another author, Kazem Alamdari argues in *Why the Middle East Lagged Behind; The Case of Iran* (2005) that the Middle East in general, and Iran in particular, lacked what capitalism made possible for the west, namely the separation of church and state. He further argues it is through a sociological study of the history that one understands the roots of the impediments in the socio-economic developments in Iran, which underscores the deeply integrated state and religion in Iran, as an antithesis to capitalism. Immanuel Wallerstein in his *The Capitalist World Economy* ([1979] 2002) is well aware of this problem and has responded by proposing a system of categorization that underscores the link between political power and economy.

This study, however, concentrates on the philosophical analysis of what informs subjectivity and what has shaped the type of government emerging out of the 1979 revolution. Tracking the trails of patriarchy, Neoplatonic, and creative enterprises into the twentieth century, I suggest a philosophical discourse acknowledging the issue of subjecthood, where there is none, is required to counterbalance all other philosophical
suggestions predicated on collective consciousness. I will limit the scope of this inquiry to
the case study of Iran and its reformative and democratic movements in the twentieth
century. The Shi’ites’ complex view of spiritual versus political authority finds a new
reflection after the 1979 revolution in taking over as a political authority, while maintaining
its religious content. Whereas the religious and the secular positions of authority have always
been important parts of the equation, I will begin by focusing on the relationship between
these two sources of power and how they shaped the subjects in the twentieth century.511

THE RIVALRY OF RELIGIOUS AND SECULAR POSITIONS OF AUTHORITY – FROM THE
CONSTITUTIONAL MONARCHY TO THE IRANIAN REVOLUTION OF 1979

The Safavid period (1501-1722) was not just a turning point in the consolidation of
country and creating a strong economic partner to Europe, but it established Persia as a
country with a strong unified political leadership. Internally, however, this was made
possible through instituting the Twelver Shi’ism as the state religion at the cost of
marginalization and exclusion of other religious groups and branches such as the Sunnis,
Sufis, and even other Shi’a branches like the Ismailis.512 It is worth noting in comparison
Sunni Islam developed in an environment of “Sunni state,” which meant “political sphere
was incorporated into the doctrine of religious sphere,” thus the political establishment
enjoyed the support of religion (Momen 191).513 However, being a minority among the
Sunnis the majority of the time, the Shi’is drew authority from the “Imam” (a descendant
from the Prophet through his daughter’s line), in whom they sought and valued the spiritual
guidance, particularly in the pre-Safavid eras. Moojan Momen (1985) argues, it is at this time
that the model of kingship was emulated from the pre-Islamic Sasanian period and “the title
‘Shadow of God on Earth’ became an expression of that” (Momen 192). Nevertheless,
whereas the Sunnis lived in a society of well-integrated sacred with secular, Shi‘is felt as outsiders, and maintained distinction, even a “rivalry” between the leadership of “Imam,” what was represented in the ulama, and his followers and those who controlled political matters (ibid). This equation changed after the Safavids and by nineteenth century the ulama, had achieved many advantages.

Whereas the Qajar kings could not claim lineage to the Prophet’s family, similar to what the Safavid had done, they required the assistance of the ulama to provide the legitimacy of their rule. Momen argues “[t]he ulama were prepared to grant this but used the opportunity to consolidate their position and affirm their independence” (194). A “Shi‘i political theory” emerged, which was predicated on the idea that “the Imam held both the religious and the political leadership in the community.” Nonetheless, since the Twelfth Imam had entered “Occultation” and was hidden, his authority was to be divided between two groups:

[T]he Na‘ibs (representatives or vicegerents) of the Hidden Imam: the ulama who are charged with religious vicegerency and the rulers who have political vicegerency. If these two co-operate then the affairs of the community run smoothly since the ulama cannot apply the Shari‘a unless the ruler establishes order, while the ruler needs the ulama without whose guidance he will stray towards injustice and tyranny.

This, Momen argues, provided the “theoretical framework” until the revolution of 1979 (195). Parvin Paidar notes that at this time the institutionalization of Shi‘ism was accompanied by “acquiring features,” which made it distinctly different from the state of Islam in other regions within the Middle East. She elaborates on these different aspects as:
First, the institution of Shiism became economically independent from the state by setting up mechanisms for acquiring donations and endowment land (*vaghf*) from the public. Second, by the establishment of the practice of *ijtihad*, a process by which a *mojtahed* used his own reasoning in addition to the *Koran* and *hadith* to arrive at legal decisions and issued religious instructions to his followers in the form of *fatva* […] Third, the Shii faithful were required to follow the religious instructions and judgments, *fatva* of a living *mojtahed* on all aspects of social life. Fourth, the Shii clergy took over the secular judicial system of the pre-Safavid period. These courts, which had government-appointed judges, were gradually replaced by *shariat* courts and Shii clergy gained the power to make judicial decisions and even administer punishment. Fifth, a ‘dry’ formal, dogmatic, legalistic style of Shiism’ developed which was reflected both in scholarly works and in more mundane religious instructions to the faithful.  

It was these well-established and deeply rooted substructures, as the above quote summarizes, which eventually empowered the religious leaders during the 1979 revolution. Economically and independently funded, with the exclusive authority to interpret the key religious texts that could be (and were) decreed into rules and judgments, as well as the mandate to follow (*taqlid*), by the third quarter of the twentieth century, the religious class was poised to elbow its way all the way to the top.  

When the modernization campaigns in the nineteenth century brought the European technological achievements to Iran as discussed earlier, it may be argued the intellectual exchanges that inspired the ideas of equality, justice, and freedom for the Iranian intellectuals on the basis of Western modernization also transmitted such ideas on the same superficial
level.\textsuperscript{519} In the nineteenth century, the attempts made to remedy this problem took the shape of anti-colonial arguments, as in the writings of Jamal ad-Din Asadabadi; his proposals were predicated on the idea that Muslims should seek their own evolution toward such ideas by drawing inspiration from Islam (Keddie [1968] 1983). However, as influential and revolutionary as his ideas were, Jamal ad-Din was striving for a unity among Muslims (Keddie 1983 [1968], 79), beyond ethnic and nationalistic differences, so that they may counteract the incursions of the Europeans into the Middle East. In his writings he criticizes the “egoism” and defines it as putting one’s own “personal interest above the general welfare,” which causes “the bond of fusion and interdependence” to be broken (ibid). Further, he was promoting a kind of “intellectual elitism” by drawing on “the traditional belief in the necessity and utility of social distinctions . . . bolstered by religious teachings” in order to elevate the masses (ibid). Combined together, the ideas of the reunification of Muslims and their striving for “privilege and distinction” through religion were prescribed by Jamal ad-Din as the solution to deal with European colonialism. However, one must keep in mind his Islamic references by this time had gone through Hellenization, once during the translation movement (Gutas 7), and then developed further and synthesized with Neoplatonic philosophy during the Safavids (Adamson 2016, 399). Although some argue his vision was inspired by what had taken place in the West (Adamiyat 1978, 32) and he was calling for reforms to eradicate superstitious interpretations of Shi’ite Islam of his time, it may be reasoned he was influenced by the Hegelian philosophy, itself influenced by Neoplatonism.\textsuperscript{520} Jamal ad-Din “was an ardent anti-imperialist, who considered the adoption of Western science and technology in Muslim countries as an instrument for waging an effective opposition against imperialist advances” (Paidar 46).\textsuperscript{521} Therefore, in Jamal ad-Din’s mind, the concept of and what gave meaning to “freedom,” for instance, was
interpreted as freedom from European colonialism, not the liberation of a subject toward free conscious and individuality, similar to discourses that had shaped the European ego. 522

Among those who had seen modernism in Europe but viewed the implementation of the rule of law as the most important reform is Yousuf Khan Mostashar al-Dowleh (1813-1895), who was a “decent man and a great diplomat and statesman.” 523 Mostashar al-Dowleh, in his book *Yek Kalameh* (One Word), argued for a state with laws that treated all equally. Adamiyat regards *Yek-Kalameh* to be “the most important treatise on individual social rights, which was published in 1870” (1980, 83). Seyyed Javad Tabatabaei (2007) argues, more than being political, *Yek Kalameh* was a document advocating a legal system that necessitated the transition from *shari’a* (religious laws), to a “common law system” (Tabatabaei 2007, 14). 524 Mostashar al-Dowleh, 525 therefore, had understood that an important aspect of individual freedom was to be held accountable, and that could be implemented through common law. However, this notion was not understood this way in his own time, 526 and the main concern remained how one was going to negotiate and fare this legal authority with the center of tradition, which was *shari’a*; thus, the question of subjecthood persisted as indistinct. 527

Similarly, this ambiguity continued during the Revolution of 1979. At this time, too, the ideas of freedom and democracy were being expressed without a clear, common and agreed upon context (Abrahamian 1982, 515), 528 and without the recognition of the individual subject, equivalent to what had been experienced by the Europeans. There was even no consensus on the definition of the word among the different opposition groups. Consequently, while there may have been a diversity of ideas, in the absence of independent subjectivity, there were essentially no effective intercommunication links; rather, there existed only conflicting and competing debates, ideas, and road maps proposed and
represented by the collective consciousness of the followers of each group. It is these competitions that eventually paved the way for the oldest patriarchal group of them all to take over the rest and eliminate its rivals.\textsuperscript{529}

Furthermore, the ideology behind the Revolution of 1979, which was supported by an established, synthesized religious philosophy that justified the interest and the role of the religious leaders of the revolution, was met with no countering philosophy on the part of the monarch that could bring to present the legitimacy of his rule philosophically.\textsuperscript{530} Hence, whereas the mechanisms of power predicated on the religious philosophy were embedded within the communities and in harmony with the masses (i.e. through charitable taxes, exclusive authority of the \textit{ulama} on religious texts, \textit{taqlid}, ritual gatherings, etc.) and were able to mobilize them,\textsuperscript{531} the secular and political state apparatus of the Shah had no such popular positions and were made to situate themselves against the revolutionaries.\textsuperscript{532} These revolutionaries had powerful presence on the streets through demonstrations during the months leading up to the night of February 11, 1979.

To closely examine the complex role of the masses, one must return to the Iranian Constitutional Revolution that “introduced the constitutional system of government in which ‘the people’ were sovereign” for the first time (Abrahamian 1993a, 289). However comparatively, the crowd on the streets during all three political events (Constitutional Revolution, Nationalization of Oil and the ensuing 1953 coup, and the Revolution of 1979), were representative of different ideas, even though their movements have been collectively viewed as steps toward democracy in Iran. The Constitutional Revolution, for instance, has been called the manifestation of “the early phase of the discourse of modernity”\textsuperscript{533} and pro-democratic movement (Paidar 52), due to the direct involvement of the masses.\textsuperscript{534}
The Significance of the Crowd and the Role of “Fear” and “Pity”

Prior to the mobilization of the masses toward a constitutionalist objective, it is worth noting the earliest signs of public demonstration appeared in the late nineteenth century following “an economic concession given to a British company by Naser od-Din Shah [sic] . . . for curing and selling tobacco,” in 1890 (Paidar 50 and Keddie 1968, 29). The news of this concession was made public and criticized by the contemporary Iranian newspapers published abroad, which “gave rise to massive protests . . . led by clerics . . . with merchants as [their] allies” (ibid).  

There was no “legitimate reason” for making such a concession to the British company. Adamiyat argues that this was a profitable domestic economic endeavor that “the Iranian tobacco planters, businessmen and merchants were perfectly capable of managing” (1978, 36). Even before the official announcement regarding the concession, the opposition began offering their reasons for why this was a bad decision on the part of the government and how it hurt Iran’s domestic economy (Adamiyat 1978, 37). The ulama did not remain silent on the issue and saw the concession as “the sale of Iran to unbelievers” (Keddie 1968, 29). This reference is to Jamal ad-Din’s “famous” letter to the Shi’ite mujtahid (religious authority) in Iraq and urging him to act, which he did (ibid). Mirza Shirazi’s decree (fatva) was issued and prohibited the use of tobacco by the Iranian consumers (ibid). It can be surmised, then, that when it came to imperialism and the British, Jamal ad-Din temporarily set aside differences with the traditional ulama, and sought to utilize their influence in any way he could in order to thwart colonial incursions. The consequence of the protests both by the merchants, the religious crowd, and women in particular, of which Paidar gives specific accounts, led to the cancelation of the concession.  

Paidar notes some
of the insults shouted toward the Shah during the protests “calling him the female with a mustache,” “scarf wearer” and “unbeliever” (Paidar 51). The fact that women themselves were active participants is noteworthy according to Paidar; however, the use of terms that were denigrating to women is telling of their unconscious subjectivity; it also reflects their religious concerns.

The anatomy of the crowd in the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1905-9 has been examined by Ervand Abrahamian.\textsuperscript{540} He argues, contrary to the portraits painted of such a crowd as ‘criminals’ or ‘hired thugs,’ they were diverse groups of people, from “merchants” to “religious authorities,” “shopkeepers, workshop owners, craftsmen, apprentices, journeymen, and students” (Abrahamian 1993a, 306). Nevertheless, the changing sides of some groups in the midst of the revolution is of great significance. During 1905-1906, it appears that the protests were initially for constitutional rights, and targeted the royal court and the injustices carried out by the court-appointed officials (Abrahamian 1993a, 296; Paidar 1995).\textsuperscript{541} By mid-1907, however, the constitutionalists were not the only group on the streets; the royalists began to gather influence and demonstrate on the streets as well, challenging the constitutionalists (Abrahamian 1993a, 296).\textsuperscript{542} How some changed sides (from liberalist constitutionalists to royalists) and how conservative royalists’ plight was reacted to by the liberalist and even the intellectuals and the media is revealing.

Abrahamian makes the point that the constitutionalists, “anxious to stress the popular legitimacy of the revolution, either ignored the royalist demonstrations or . . . dismissed them in derogatory terms.”\textsuperscript{543} This pitted the royalists, consisting of “upper” and “lower” classes,\textsuperscript{544} against the members of the \textit{bazaar}, which was the center of urban economy. The same conflicts happened in other provinces, and reportedly out of the conflicts, two groups,
‘the people’s party’ and ‘the aristocratic party’ emerged.\textsuperscript{545} The royalists’ demonstrations received a boost from the support and participation of the religious leaders, which “transformed these demonstrations from purely pro-Shah assemblies into ‘Shah and Islam’ rallies and riots” (Abrahamian 1993a, 298).

Up until 1906, there was indeed a divide, albeit an uneven one, between the religious communities, with those associated with the court supporting the royalists, and others like the “popular Mujtahids” (religious leaders) and traditional teachers supporting the constitutionalists. In fact, a number of clerics, such as Mohammad Hossein Na’ini, argued that there was no conflict between Islam and the constitutional rule. Na’ini also argued “that it was the best type of rule in the absence of the messianic twelfth emam [sic]” (Paidar 52). Eventually, this divide became more balanced once the liberals “revealed . . . their secular intentions: anti-clericalism, feminism and egalitarianism between Shi’ites and non-Shi’ites, and Muslims and non-Muslims” (Abrahamian 1993a, 298; Paidar 1995, 56). In 1907, progressive newspapers began criticizing the ulama and satirized their decrying that “religion was dying.”\textsuperscript{546}

The issues of non-Muslims and women, argues Abrahamian, were a tipping point that compelled some of the ulama to “forsake the dangerous road of constitutionalism for the safety of traditional despotism,” which was clearly echoed in their motto “No Absolutism, No Islam” (Abrahamian 1993a, 299).\textsuperscript{547} They persuaded the “common people” to side with the royalists, by calling the constitutionalists “irreligious, heretical and anti-Islamic.”\textsuperscript{548} There were also other factors, such as the rise in the price of bread, a staple food, and “the fact that they had gained nothing from the revolution.” Abrahamian’s associating the pro-constitutionalists with the bourgeois class here underscores the role of business and
commerce, which proved to be not necessarily to the benefit of the “propertyless and lower classes” (Abrahamian 1993a, 300).\textsuperscript{549} The consequences of economic advantages the liberals received in the agricultural market translated into the continuous rise in prices that led to the angry crowd turning violent against the wealthy.\textsuperscript{550}

The poor members of the crowd were beginning to realize they “had nothing to gain from the revolution,” so they turned toward the religious leaders and the anti-constitutionalist royalists (Abrahamian 1993a, 300).\textsuperscript{551} This further strengthened the king’s camp and emboldened him to strike “harder by first organizing violent anti-constitutionalist demonstrations and then bombing the Majlis in June 1909 (Paidar 1995, 56). The king, Mohammad Ali Shah, accomplished the demolition of the parliament with the assistance of the Russians’ Cossack Brigade, which was followed by the imprisonment and execution of some of the liberal leaders (Abrahamian 1993a, 304). Despite the king promising “to reopen the parliament in three months, purged not of patriotic constitutionalists but of irreligious revolutionaries,” the unrest continued and spread to other provinces and cities and turned into a civil war (Abrahamian 1993a, 305 and Paidar 1995, 56). Once again, the “bourgeois” merchants in the bazaar began their strike, and by July 1909 “the Bakhtiari tribesmen and the Caucasian fighters reached Tehran.” Not having enough money to pay his mercenaries, and facing a “hostile bazaar, the royalist cause collapsed . . . M[o]hammad Ali Shah was deposed . . . [and the] prominent reactionaries such as Shaykh Fazlallah and Mir Hashim\textsuperscript{552} were executed for ‘hiring thugs to create public disturbances,’ and the second Majlis\textsuperscript{553} was convened.”\textsuperscript{554}

The second through the fourth decades of the twentieth century was, according to Paidar, “[t]he second phase of the discourse of modernity” in “nation building” that followed
the “post-constitutional developments” (Paidar 78). By 1925 the Qajars, who were “weak, corrupt and vulnerable to political manipulation by Western powers,” were replaced by Reza Shah Pahlavi (1925-1941), who, contrastingly, “seemed to fulfill the demand for a strong state capable of overcoming Iran’s economic, technological and military weaknesses” (ibid). The centralization came, however, at the cost of the elimination of the many of the diverse and grass root organizations as well as political parties that had been formed after the constitutional movement (Abrahamian 1982, 135 and Paidar 80); the concentration of power also alienated some of the clerics.\(^{555}\) There is much evidence that the clerics made their influence throughout the twentieth century.

In the first half of the twentieth century, the struggle had been whether to maintain the national unity, or preserve Islamic values, as interpreted by the ulama. One of the harshest criticism toward the ulama came from Ahmad Kasravi (1890-1946). Kasravi was a judge and an advocate of reforms in Iran, but not of a blind following of Europe (Abrahamian 1982, 161).\(^{556}\) However, his sharpest attacks were aimed at the Shi’ite clergy and the Sufis, to which I shall return.\(^{557}\) In his evaluation of Reza Shah, which was published in an article in 1942, he lays out a criticism of what the founder of Pahlavi dynasty had accomplished, which speaks to an uncertainty toward Reza Shah.\(^{558}\) While Kasravi praised him for “centralizing the state, pacifying the tribes, disciplining the clergy, unveiling women, eliminating aristocratic titles, introducing mass conscriptions, undermining ‘feudal’ authorities, trying to unify the population, and establishing modern schools, cities and industries,” he admonished Reza Shah for “trampling over the constitution, favoring the military over the civilian administration, accumulating a private fortune, stealing other people’s property, murdering progressive intellectuals, and widening the gap between the haves and the have-nots” (Abrahamian 1982, 154).
While it appears, initially Reza Khan (before taking on the title “Shah”) wanted to establish a republic, in a move inspired by Ataturk’s newly founded Turkish Republic, he realized the clergy was not in agreement with the idea of “republicanism.” Since he still needed their support, he decided to abandon the idea (Abrahamian 1982, 134 and Paidar 81).

By the end of World War II in 1945, and the occupation of Iran by the allies’ forces in order to defeat the Germans, Iran saw challenges from various provinces, through the formation of leftist, and some pro-Soviet parties, such as in Kurdistan and in Azerbaijan, each seeking autonomy. The fear of fragmentation of the national unity and the infiltration of communism will become the two most critical concerns of Reza Shah’s son and successor upon his ascension to the throne (Paidar 119, 123). It is early during his reign that the Nationalization of Oil movement takes shape, which tragically ended in the removal of his progressive and democratically elected premier, Mohammad Mosaddeq (1951-1953).

The study of the crowd during the toppling of Mosaddeq, the Iranian premier in the 1953 coup d’état is also illuminating. Abrahamian argues that Mosaddeq called on his supporters to stay off the streets on that fateful day; instead there was a crowd of only three thousand that came out, which were connected with royalists and those who were receiving funds from the CIA, including those sent by a prominent member of the clergy (Abrahamian 2001). Abrahamian maintains that this was no uprising, and had it not been for the presence of 24 tanks, the three thousand who eventually came to the streets on August 19, 1953 would not have been able to bring Mosaddeq’s government down. (See Appendix IV).

The crowd during the Revolution of 1979 further demonstrates, if nothing else, the close connection with the clergy, once again, particularly through the merchants of the
bazaar. Furthermore, there were theoreticians who facilitated and provided the necessary ideology behind the change.\textsuperscript{562} Just as with the previous movements,\textsuperscript{563} the wave of the revolution in 1979 gained momentum from smaller, but significant earlier events (Keddie 1993, 609). In a comparison with the climate during the Constitutional Revolution of 1905, Keddie argues that in 1978-79, “increasing number of Iranians shifted to progressive versions of indigenous Islamic ideology perceived as likely to restore Iranian self-esteem and combat Westernization.” This, she explains, was due to the general discontent from many groups among the population,\textsuperscript{564} who had witnessed attacks on their customs and beliefs during the fifty years of “forced . . . Westernization” by the Pahlavi dynasty (Keddie 1993, 615).

Interesting to note Homa Katouzian’s analysis on Iranians’ discontent with their rulers (2009). He states:

> Iranians typically opposed their rulers precisely because their lives and property were in the rulers’ power. But they nearly always welcomed a ruler who emerged in the midst of chaos and brought order, although once this was done society went back to its habit of adopting a negative view of the state.\textsuperscript{565}

The public discontent at the end of the Pahlavi era, as argued by Amanat, was due to “the socio-economic, demographic, and cultural changes”; however, it was “not enough to explain the potency of the forthcoming revolution and its swift success” (705). While initially the only groups who “yearned for a revolution on the Marxist model” were the Fada’iyan-e Khalq and Mojahedin Khalq “guerilla organizations,” it was the mass support of a religious figure, Ayatollah Khomeini “and his cohorts,” who capitalized on the people’s discontent that had been building for decades (Amanat 2017, 705).
Abrahamian elaborates and distinguishes in the support of the masses, two middle classes: the traditional and the modern middle class. He argues it was the traditional class, mainly “the bazarris and the clergy” that were “the backbone of Khomeini’s movement.” However, it was “the modern middle class that sparked off the revolution, fueled it and, struck the final blows” (1982, 533). Among these were “[l]awyers, judges, and intellectuals [who] began to publish open letters, and form human rights associations” (ibid). One of the first open letters cited by Amanat is the letter dated June 12, 1977 to the Shah from Karim Sanjabi, Dariush Foruhar, and Shapur Bakhtiar in which they listed complaints ranging from the “seriously mismanaged” oil revenue to “the disregard for human right and personal and social liberties, a breach of the very foundation of the constitution,” to “growing corruption, decadence, and sycophancy” (706). Among the modern middle class demonstrating on the streets were the university students, joined by “bank clerks, civil servants” and others who had “crippled the economy due to the undertaking of mass strikes. An important question Abrahamian asks is, “[w]hy was the modern middle class, which in the past had deeply distrusted the clergy, willing to follow Khomeini?”

To answer this question, Abrahamian suggests three reasons. First is the Shah’s late response to the complaints and criticism. He resisted negotiating with the secular opposition organizations, such as the National Front and the Liberation Movement until the final month in 1978; they were calling for a “conciliatory” action from the Shah to implement changes in his “autocratic rule” and to honor the Constitutional values. (Abrahamian 1982, 533 and Amanat 706). The second and third reasons rest in how Khomeini manipulated the diverse groups among the modern middle class.
In his statements in the fall of 1978, following the massacre of “Black Friday,” he particularly addressed the secular population with concerns that the Shah was planning to not only eliminate the *ulama*, but also the “intelligentsia.” He assured the population that neither he nor any of his cohorts had any intentions of replacing the monarchy with a theocracy. “He told the press that the future government would be ‘democratic’ as well as ‘Islamic’.” Khomeini also promised equality of women, drafting of a constitution of an Islamic republic by a “freely elected Constituent Assembly” (Abrahamian 1982, 533-34).

It is worth noting that the students and other modern middle class, due to the Shah’s oppressive measures, despite being familiar with the Constitutional Revolution, had missed the real history and had no critical knowledge of the “progressive thoughts” from earlier in the century. Abrahamian notes, therefore,

> [n]ot surprisingly [the] intellectuals . . . tended to see Khomeini, not as another “reactionary” Shaykh Fazallah[ sic] Nouri—whom he admired for rejecting the Western systems of government—but as another “progressive Ayatallah [sic] Tabatabai or Behbahani—whom he despised for being “led astray” by Westernized politicians.\)

Finally, Abrahamian presents as the third reason, Khomeini’s ability to obtain the trust of the followers of Ali Shari’ati, even though “Shari’ati’s works contain a great deal of anti-clericalism.” Abrahamian argues that Khomeini successfully set himself apart from other “proregime” clerics by “stressing such themes as revolution, anti-imperialism,” and the message of martyrdom. By the end of 1978, Shari’ati’s followers saw in Khomeini, not just a cleric, but a true revolutionary leader, who was able to finally establish a “classless society.” They elevated Khomeini with the title of “Imam,” a title that until then had been
reserved only for the twelve holy Shi’ite Imams, who were the direct descendants of the Prophet (Abrahamian 1982, 534). Overall, Abrahamian’s impression of Khomeini’s movement and thoughts is that it is best described as “populism,” because “this term is associated with ideological adaptability and intellectual flexibility,” contrary to “fundamentalism [that] . . . implies religious inflexibility, intellectual purity, [and] political traditionalism” (Abrahamian 1993b, 2).

The relationship between the clergy and the secular authorities cannot be thoroughly examined without a consideration of the role of the two emotions of fear and pity, which are closely tied to success or failure of action as noted by Aristotle (Poetics xxi). The creation of a thought and idea that incites fear has its roots in the past. The fear then becomes what controls and steers the power and energy of the crowd toward the objective of those whose imagination brought to existence that fear in the first place.

The opposition of the religious leaders to the Western powers in manipulating the politics in Iran has long stemmed from a belief that the Westerners, who are considered non-believers by the Shi’ite religious authorities, have had the intention of undermining “Iran and Islam.” Therefore, a defining factor in resisting foreign culture and influence has been “Shi’i Islam’s encouragement of self-sacrifice to combat enemies” (Keddie 1993, 607). Those who sacrificed were then the subject of pity from others, whom the clerics attempted to draw sympathy from for their own causes. One of the ways the religious leaders exploited this notion (Kasravi, 1943, 70) was when they channeled the crowd’s energy through the emotion of pity (aligning the stories of martyrdoms of the Prophet’s grandson in Karbala) with successful results during the demonstrations leading up to the revolution. This was not a new strategy. Kasravi notes in Shi’ism (1943) that “ever since the massacre at Karbala
happened, it has caused anger and pity among Muslims, and many rose up to avenge, and there has been much blood-shed. However, it was the Jafari\textsuperscript{576} Shi’ites who most exploited this event for political ends” (70).

The issue of fear appears frequently in other contexts as well. While there are many accounts of protests and criticism by the opponents of Shi’i ulama and their influence on the policies, laws, and government, unlike the support and the protection Martin Luther received from Frederick III, the Elector of Saxony,\textsuperscript{577} individuals like Ahmad Kasravi or Mohammad Mosaddeq not only did not receive such protection from the secular authorities, but the secular authorities seemed to always join forces and side with the religious class for the fear of one thing or another. Following the assassination of Kasravi in 1946, the secular authorities aimed to please and oblige the wishes of the clergy who were lobbying to free the assassins. During the premiership of Mosaddeq, the fear of the leftist Tudeh party compelled the authorities to be on good terms with the religious leaders because they “hoped to use them against the Tudeh” (Abrahamian 1982, 258) out of fear of the spread of communism.

Perhaps one of the fastest growing influential ideas that emerged was the rise of the left in Iran, following the Russian 1917 revolution, even though Reza Shah had taken measures to suppress all socialist ideas, to the detriment of all progressive parties (Abrahamian 1982, 138, 139). Nonetheless, Abrahamian argues that the 1953 coup was not out of the fear of communism so much as it was for maintaining the “control” over oil. This may be true, but if we consider the confidential documents and intelligence collected by the British at this time,\textsuperscript{578} it becomes clear that the element of fear of communism was clearly a useful strategy not just to manipulate the authorities in Iran, but to convince the Americans to get involved (Abrahamian 2001, 211).
An examination of the different opposition groups that unified under the leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini in the Revolution of 1979 demonstrates, argues Keddie, for the most part they “merely wished to escape the related evils of internal despotism and of ‘Westoxication’—socioeconomic and cultural dependence on the West” (1993, 616). This had been formulated into what Ayatollah Khomeini capitalized on in his speeches as he warned the population of the consequences (Abrahamian 1982, 533). If a more critical point of view had developed from judicious analyses that Kasravi started in the first half of the twentieth century, Khomeini’s statements perhaps would not have been as easily taken at face value.

**The Critique of Shi’ism and Sufism**

I cannot discuss waves of modernism and reforms without including the works of one of the most important figures of the twentieth century Iran, Ahmad Kasravi. It is Kasravi’s direct and blunt criticism of the religious, social, and political conditions in Iran that, while compelling him to become a prolific analytic writer, also brought his demise at the hands of the religious zealots in 1946. Two of his studies are of great interest here; these studies demonstrate the degree of his rigor and commitment to eliminate what he saw as backward and contradictory in any kind of reform. Kasravi writings on Shi’ism and Sufism reveal his deep understanding of some of the most challenging obstacles in Iran toward the path of true reforms.

Kasravi had studied as a religious scholar and even initially wore the attire of a cleric. As early as the 1930s he began writing analytically on Shi’ism. It has become clear that he opposed not religion itself but Shi’ism and Islam as interpreted by the clergy. He made a distinction between what all religions initially offered and what they turned into later
Kasravi believed that change for the people of Iran was not possible unless change came to their religious beliefs and they rejected values imposed by such beliefs.

In his introduction to *Shi’ism* he argues what he has undertaken has to do with the “problems of Iran” and that he has presented great evidence and “has reasoned,” and asks that the reader exercise “indulgence” and “wisdom” in reading. He states he understands many of the points he raises are unfamiliar to some, and that they may be “disheartened” by them, but that they should “read two or three times” because his strong reasoning requires that they do so, “for what they weren’t able to agree to the first time, upon the second and third readings, they will come to understand” (Kasravi 1943a, 36-37).

Kasravi provides a historical account of the spread of Shi’ism in Iran and traces it back to the time of Umayyad caliphs, against whose domination many Persians resisted (Kasravi 1943a, 73). It was their resentment toward the Umayyads, argues Kasravi, specifically caliph al-Mu’awiyya and not necessarily their “love for Ali” (the Prophet’s cousin and deemed by Shi’ites to be his rightful heir) that led to the consolidation of their political movements against the Umayyad caliphs (ibid). It is worth noting that the Umayyads were toppled by the Abbasids, with the effective help and support of the Persians (Bloom & Blair 2002, 74). Therefore, from the start, politics are an essential component to the idea of Shi’ism, but perhaps the most effective strategy implemented by the clergy is what Kasravi bluntly calls “exaggerations” and “lies” in his criticism of the Shi’ism.

In evaluation of the Shi’ite belief, Kasravi enumerates the pernicious effects of such belief. One of his complaints is regarding the exaggerations that he stated would “astonish” in phrases like “anyone who visits Hossein[’s shrine] in Karbala, it is as if he has visited God enthroned” (71), or phrases that are reminiscent of the papal indulgences during European
Renaissance. One of the obligatory rites for a good Shi’a was, regardless of the individual’s laxness toward the regular religious duties and committing every prohibited act, “visiting the tomb of Imam Hossein and weeping for him, [which] would wash away all their sins” (ibid). Kasravi also complains about the lies the clergy told, and the people believed. He also presents evidence that he himself was witness to, belief in a bird in Karbala that speaks the phrase “Hossein was killed,” or another instance, when two to three individuals rolled a bolder to the tomb of Imam Reza (the eighth Shi’ite Imam’s funerary sanctuary in North East of Iran), and proclaimed the stone rolled by itself to come visit the Imam’s tomb. Kasravi points out that the clergy, fully aware of falsity of such proclamations, chose to remain silent, for they believed such actions “would strengthen the belief of the populace” (166).

There are pages filled with numerous examples that Kasravi offers to prove that such exaggerations and lies undermine the dignity of humans and are beneath the religion of Islam. These are, however, expressions from the imagination that perpetuate the superstitious belief among the Shi’ite, argues Kasravi. Thus, the role of creative imagination endures to maintain the clergies’ grip on the pulse of the people. These statements further undermine the issue of a conscious subject, one who is subject to one’s own existence. However, Kasravi does not stop at the criticism of Shi’ism. He mostly despised what he called “introspectivism” about which he wrote in his book Sufism.

In Sufism (1943b), Kasravi attributes the roots of Sufism to Plotinus and Greek thoughts (1943b, 43). He explains Plotinus’ philosophy as how all is emanated from the “One,” thus exists the possibility of one re-joining the Divine consciousness by way of an “altered state of mind;” Kasravi goes on to note that according to Plotinus, human soul, by its descent in this world, has become contaminated, so by rejecting carnal desires, and focusing
on nurturing its spirit, it reduces that contamination and achieves piety. In criticism Kasravi states “these are dreamt by Plotinus, without offering any proofs” (1943b, 44). Kasravi sharply criticizes Plotinus’ statement that “we all separated from God, are from him, and toward Him we shall return.” He argues as if asking Plotinus, “How did you come to know this?” “How does one define the ‘altered state of mind?’” and “If one needs to turn away from what this world has to offer, why and for whom was this world even created?” (1943b, 45).

Perhaps most significantly, Kasravi laments the effects of Sufism in training up a population to be submissive, docile, and in the name of rejecting worldly needs, to relinquish home, family and the protection of the country (1943b, 57-59). He notes “the Mongols wanted the population this way, and it was in their interest that the Iranians surrender the country and its governance [to the Mongols], and to keep occupied with Sufism and things alike. [Indeed, t]he time of the Mongols was [like] the spring for such mis-guidedness and mis-directed education” (ibid).

Kasravi was even critical of the works of Orientalists in the West, which he considered an impediment in the progress of the population. He argues:

Sufism is and has been one of the causes of misfortune of the people [of Iran]. You see Orientalists, who don’t have the best interest of the [so called] Orientals in mind, have spent much effort to keep this institution [Sufism] from collapsing, and they write volumes and articles on the subject of Sufism, and under the guise of historical research, visibly support the sufis. This is why . . . the Cultural Ministry in Iran, which is an establishment founded by those opposing such groups, considers Sufism as one of the major wellsprings of its culture, and strives to publish and disseminate the literature by the Sufis.
In his second chapter, Kasravi’s criticism centers on the analysis of the harm Sufism has brought on the population. One of his problems with Sufism is in the idea of Unity of Existence. Kasravi argues, the philosophy of Unity of Existence is nothing but the product of a creative mind that cannot resolve the conflict between the raising of humans to the status of the divine on the one hand, and the lowering of the divine to the degree of the “chained wild animals and quadrupeds” (1943b, 94). Further, he admonishes the Sufis for their idleness and lack of productivity (1943b, 95). Moreover, he criticizes the “perverted” notion of love put forth by the Sufis, and even casts doubt on whether the word was correctly translated from Plotinus (1943b, 108). He contends that judging by the mystic poetry, this is not the love Plotinus meant, for the former leads to self-alienation, and monastic tendencies, and the latter encourages doing good; if one searches goodness, one must strive to do good in order to find love. However, Kasravi notes “what we least know the Sufis for is doing good deeds” (1943b, 109). Finally, Kasravi harshly criticizes the Sufis for “showing animosity toward reason.” He cites a quote from a Sufi that

our sage was asked once, what is reason? He replied one cannot reach the mysteries of divinity with reason, for the latter is ‘created’, and the former ‘eternal,’ and the created cannot fathom that which is eternal.

Kasravi summarizes that the conducts of Sufis is in marked contrast with reason, and that is why they negate reason and reason-based ideas, for it questions their irrationalities. He is very critical of how the Sufis legitimized their actions by likening them to some divine attribute. For example, they interpret “idleness” as not submitting to the worldly affairs, and “vagrancy” as a self-imposed asceticism to “kill meaning and selfishness” (1943b, 103).
In both volumes, Kasravi lays out in detail examples and instances that clearly speak to a corrupted consciousness that believes and internalizes what the leaders in these two traditions suggest; he pleads for mindfulness and reason-based approaches to analyze what religious groups such as the Shi’ite clergy and the Sufi sages craft in the form of narratives, mystic accounts, and poetry. The more fantastic the narrative, the easier it is to compel the population to submit. Unfortunately, Kasravi did not live to continue his work in establishing his method of critique; with the support of the Shi’ite clergy, the second of the two assassination attempts finally silenced his passionate voice and ended his sobering language and his sharp criticism toward what he saw as ailment for the Iranian people (Kasravi 1943a, 36-37).

Kasravi’s criticism of the Iranian brand of Shi’ism inspired Ali Akbar Hakamizadeh (Moin 1999, Rajaee 2007, Martin 2007) to author a brief but bitter criticism of Shi’i practices in Iran, entitled Asrar e Hezarsaleh (Secrets of a Thousand Years), “refuting and mocking many of the tenets of Shi’ism in Iran” (Rajaee 65). Most interestingly, he “proposed thirteen questions in the final pages and invited readers to respond to them” (ibid). Hakamizadeh thus challenged the ulama, for instance, on “the authority of the mujtahid and the legitimacy of man-made laws” (Martin 104). While the impact of Hakamizadeh’s questions did not reach very far, it was the young Khomeini who wrote a book in response, Kashf al-Asrar (The Revealing of Secrets), because it had made him “enflamed with rage” (Moin 61) for “undermining religion and thereby destroying the country’s independence” (Martin 104). In Khomeini’s eyes this was reflective of Reza Shah Pahlavi’s systematic attacks on the clerical establishment.
Perhaps Kasravi’s major error was, like Marx, that while he pinpointed the problem and had an accurate diagnosis for where the issues were, he failed in the prescription and solution, seeking to purify religion from superstition and backwardness.\textsuperscript{592} Indeed, this may have been influential in his elimination by the religious zealots.\textsuperscript{593} Further, his sharp criticism hit the Iranians’ collective cultural ego in its core from multiple fronts\textsuperscript{594} in such a way that left him with no allies; as a result he had neither the popular support, nor the support from the ruling or religious class. Consequently, his critical method did not develop further. From this point on, the \textit{ulama} remained, more than ever, close to the political power and continued to assert their influences in the formation of policies despite the reformist campaigns. The politicization of Islam that had taken place earlier was headed for a major revision to reflect modernist philosophies and theories leaving major marks in the political and even geographical scene.

\textbf{THE CONSEQUENCES OF POLITICIZING ISLAM IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY: THE STATE OF THE SUBJECT}

With the advent of modernism in the early twentieth century, the reformers were faced with the question of how to develop policies and laws in-sync with the modern world. At the same time, they aimed to reconcile the differences with the Shari’a law, which continued to be under the tight supervision of the \textit{ulama} and maintained a powerful presence. Moreover, it is the interest in philosophy that had appeared dormant, but not annihilated, since the time of Avicenna, that resurges with the particular sensitivity to Hegel and Espinoza (Adamiyat 1970, 71). In this segment, I will investigate progressive and influential ideas put forth by key thinkers and reformers spanning from the Constitutional Revolution era and beyond the political changes in mid-century, to the Revolution of 1979. I aim to
demonstrate the theoreticians’ attempt that began with mediating the common law and
Shari’a law evolved into idealistic thoughts and a political ideology with grave
consequences, by-passing significant sparks of individual and critical thinking.

**Early Reformers: Yusuf Khan Mostashar al-Dowleh, Mirza Fathali Akhoundzadeh,
and Mirza Agha Khan Kirmani**

The ideas of modernization and progress, while opposing the absolutism in
monarchy, took shape during the last decade of Naser al-Din Shah’s rule (1886-1896) with
the appearance on the scene of prominent political and intellectual figures such as Seyed
Jamal al-Din Asadabadi, Mirza Yusuf Khan Mostashar al-Dowleh, Mirza Agha Khan
Kirmani, and Mirza Malkum Khan (Adamiyat 1978, 28). Initiated by these notable
intellectuals, administrators, and statesmen, there were consistent attempts not just to
implement measures of reforms; they understood all too well that no reform could
materialize without the monarch’s support of the said reforms. However, this was not an easy
task to accomplish.

On the recommendation of his premier, Mirza Hossein Khan Sepahsalar (Moshir al-
Dowleh), Naser al-Din Shah went on a series of European trips. Sepahsalar had such a
profound impact on the reform campaigns that his tenure is aptly known as “Sepahsalar Era
of law and reform.” He inspired and supported the efforts of Yusuf Khan Mostashar al-
Dowleh Tabrizi (1813-1895) in authoring his book, the aforementioned *Yek Kalameh* (1853),
to which I shall return shortly. Sepahsalar’s objective was to expose Naser al-Din Shah to
Modern Europe and encourage him to support efforts toward modernization of Iran,
particularly its legal system. However, the Shah apparently did not make the connection
between the rule of law and setting limitations to his own power. Upon returning from his
third European trip, Naser al-Din Shah called a meeting and invited his administration and royal members of the government. He compared what he had witnessed in the matter of governance in Europe with what was in place in Iran, and expressed:

In this trip what we witnessed [was] that all order and progress in Europe is due to having the rule of law. We too have emphatically decided to establish the rule of law and order in Iran, and rule in accordance to the law.597

Nonetheless, a committee of five was formed to author laws for the country, and the translation of European legal texts was undertaken (Adamiyat 1978, 12). One of these texts written was *Yek Kalameh* (One Word), which was about the importance of the rule of law and significance of personal and individual freedoms, as well as the fact that the people should be the source of legislation (Mirza Yusuf Khan 11). However, as a student of Islamic law, and later becoming familiar with European laws, Mirza Yusuf Khan wanted to reconcile the two in his book. He compares the French codes of law with the Shari’a law in an attempt to justify the separation of the latter from common law. He states:

[A]nd the most important . . . difference is that the *code* considers only the worldly matter, so that it is suitable for the condition of every person, irrespective of their ethnicity and religion. There is a different book for religious matters. In contrast in the books of Islamic law, worldly matters are tempered and mixed with other-worldly affairs, such as obligatory prayers, fasting and pilgrimage. This causes great harm in administrating the affairs of the common people, because non-Muslim people living in Islamic lands have no desire to read your code of law [...] Thus if the foremost ‘ulama’, wherever they may be, were to write Islamic codes in separate book such as
the book of acts of worship, the afterlife, and books of civil and commercial matters, this would not be detrimental to the *Shari’a.*

Mirza Yusuf Khan was not alone in pondering upon the separation of religion and state. The aforementioned premier, Sepahsalar, shared this idea with him that “religious matters such as congregational prayers,” should remain under the authority of the clergy,” however, he advised, “not so much as [the measure of] a miniscule they [meaning the clergy] should be involved in the affairs of the state, nor should they be placed in between the government and the people” (Adamiyat 1980, 199). While Sepahsalar has been a prominent secularist figure in the efforts to implement the rule of law, there are other intellectuals in the nineteenth century who advocated secularism, freedom, and equality, particularly with respect to the women’s rights (Paidar 46).

Rule of law indicated civility for Mirza Malkum Khan (1833-1908), who was also a reformist during the reign of Naser al-Din Shah, at which time he was serving as Iranian ambassador in London but was “dismissed from his post owing to disagreements with the Shah” (Paidar 47). Malkum Khan published the newspaper *Ghanun* (Law) abroad that reflected his passion for the rule of law “and attributed the backwardness of Iran to lack of a constitution and codified law” (ibid). One of his efforts in advising Naser al-Din Shah was the “drafting of a Book of Reforms” that was prefaced by a “general warning” against the foreign powers taking over the country “unless the shah immediately decreed laws for reform”. Abrahamian notes the use of the term *ghanun* by Malkum was intended to distinguish it from religious laws (*shari’a*) and “the old state regulations (*‘urf*).” His advice to the monarch was basically predicated on two pillars: “the improvement of public welfare, and the equality of all citizens.” But, perhaps it was Malkum Khan’s widespread
reputation that mainly came from his establishing a secret society, the “Faramushkhaneh (House of Oblivion) in mid-nineteenth century . . . modeled on but not attached to the European Freemasons” that ultimately was viewed as his emulation of the “foreigners,” leading to his discredit by his opponents (Abrahamian 1982, 66). Despite Malkum’s reformist advice, the monarch became concerned when the objections from the religious leaders “denounced the concept of [gh]anun as ‘heretical innovation’ (bid’a) and accused the Faramushkhaneh as having connections to the ‘atheistic republican’ Freemasons in Europe.” It resulted in closure of the establishment and sending Malkum to exile in Ottoman Turkey (ibid).

An earlier figure of note is Mirza Fathali Akhoundzadeh (1812-1878), who has also been viewed as a “reformist” and a “secular” thinker. Akhoundzadeh considered the source of all problems was the Arab invasion of Persia in the seventh century, and he subscribed to the view of returning to the pre-Islamic glories of Persia (Adamiyat 1970, Paidar 1995, Amanat 2017). Akhoundzadeh had great esteem for the Western cultures; in particular, “he was a great admirer of Russian high culture” (Amanat 322). Paidar notes “Akhoundzadeh was a professed atheist, declared polygamy a social ill and argued for women’s right to education”. Paidar astutely notes in praising the pre-Islamic Persia, Akhoundzadeh was merely seeking for a solution to counter the type of religious domination that was being experienced in Iran. She states Akhounzadeh’s “glorification of Zoroastrian Iran . . . had little to do with the ‘reality’ of women’s position in ancient Iran. On the contrary, such a presentation of the past was a construction relevant to the existing socio political situation” (ibid). It cannot be overlooked that such strategy is seeking a solution within the binary of Hegelian thesis and antithesis. In fact this strategy has been persistent throughout the various
attempts for change in the nineteenth and twentieth century Iran, that is to say countering, with the intention to substitute, of one source of authority with another.

Similarly, albeit with conflicted attitude, there were other reformists who believed the problem was with the clergy themselves and saw them as unfit to be involved in the affairs of the state. Despite proclaiming his “lack of confidence in the class of the clergy” repeatedly, Mirza Agha Khan Kirmani (1854-1897) believed in seeking “the assistance of the ulama, if political affairs made it necessary.” Adamiyat criticizes Kirmani for taking this strategy too far, to a degree that it negates the enlightened thoughts, “of which he is oblivious himself.” Nevertheless, Adamiyat cites from Agha Khan’s letters to Malkum Khan that to implement reforms in Iran, “we must innately turn our hopeful eyes away from the Qajar clan and a few witless mullas . . . [for] all their actions are derived by self-interest and thus they cannot be trusted . . . these ulama of ours have no inherent independence of their own” (Adamiyat 1978, 29).

There is no doubt that Agha Khan’s source of inspiration “for modern thinking” was the “Western world” (Adamiyat 1970, 26). The significance of philosophic thoughts in Iran has been noted by Adamiyat. In a summary about the history of philosophy in Iran, he argues that philosophy reached its peak during the early Middle Ages (10th-11th centuries), when Avicenna (980-1037) was the most prominent figure. But there are no noteworthy individuals in philosophy until the age of Nasir al-Din Tūsi (1201-1274). The gaps in between the two and a gap that existed between Tūsi and the present time was basically filled with “Mulla Sadrā’s philosophy”603 (i.e. Neoplatonic philosophy), who he sees as the “preserver of philosophy in Iran.” From there on, it was Mulla Sadrā’s students who guarded those
thoughts until the nineteenth century and to the time of Hāj Mūlla Hādī Sabzevari (1797-1873) (Adamiyat 1970, 71-72).

One of Adamiyat’s criticisms of this philosophy in the modern times, nonetheless, is that it was considered “superior to the matters of nature,” thus deemed inappropriate to mix the two. Therefore, due to not being predicated on sciences and mathematics, as it was done previously, the philosophy remained deeply rooted in human imagination (Adamiyat 1970, 72). He further points out that “our philosophers were unfamiliar with the new, practical sciences” (ibid). This was not unlike what had taken place in Europe, argues Adamiyat, as “the philosophers of scholastic era,” too, were reluctant to reconcile the tradition and experience-based sciences at first. However, over time, “new philosophy in Europe developed out of the heart of scholastic beliefs, and evolved by placing its foundation in science and experience” (ibid).

In nineteenth century, one of the first attempts to translate and publish books on the new philosophy of the West was the translation of Descartes’ Discourse on the Method of Rightly Conducting the Reason (1637) that holds a contradiction in its preface. It was published in 1862, with the title “Book of Diyakert,” or “Hekmat Naseri” In the preface to the book, following acknowledging the king’s attention to this project, which was meant to “establish laws and politics of the regions, the execution of reforms and planning for sciences and industries and their patrons . . . and elevating the rule of order and justice,” it further notes, “of course it will lead to the exaltation of the Divine laws (hekmat) that are the essence of all” (Adamiyat 1970, 74). This conflicting attitude pervaded the nineteenth century philosophy in Iran.
Adamiyat quotes from de Gobineau’s observation of the Iranian thinkers interacting with the Cartesian Cogito, which he mentions as “memorable.” Gobineau had noted that even though the Easterners were already aware of this “essential formula” from earlier times, how they understood it was not what Descartes was seeking. He further notes “the Iranian philosophers that I have met, are more interested in achieving complete knowledge of Espinoza and Hegel, and the reason is clear, because the thoughts of these two philosophers are Asian [Eastern]” (Adamiyat 1970, 74). The attempts to translate and make the history of philosophy available in Iran continued in the work by Mohammad Ali Foroughi (1877-1942), whose search for the philosophical wisdom and reason in the works of European philosophers initially prompted him to translate Descartes’ Discourse (ca. 1931), but quickly realized he could not take on such a project without a thorough investigation of the history of philosophy (Foroughi, Introduction 1938).

Foroughi is a noteworthy member of the twentieth century Iranian intelligentsia, whose career spans from being “a member of Revolutionary Committee in 1905” to negotiating an agreement on the exile of the founder of the Pahlavi dynasty, to furthering modernization of the country and holding the post of prime minister multiple times during the Pahlavis (Abrahamian 1982, 122, and 164). In authoring The Course of Philosophy in Europe, he “may be one of the earliest intellectuals and statesmen in Iran to pay serious attention to modern philosophy and to issues of rationality in modern Europe” (Jahanbegloo 2012). But, perhaps most important for our purposes is his contribution in making that knowledge available in Iran. But, his contributions are not limited to this undertaking, as he believed in the preservation and reform of Persian language and literature necessary for any reforms in Iran (Jahanbegloo 2012, Amanat 2017). Foroughi’s strategy to reform, as argued by Jahanbegloo, encompassed both his interest and work in completing the history of
Western philosophy as well as his efforts to strengthen and modernize the Persian language through establishing of the Farhangestan-e Iran (Iran House of Culture), which was founded in 1935, “similar to Académie Française, [that] helped supervise the development and reform of the Persian language” (Amanat 475).

The modernization tendency of Foroughi has been heralded by Jahanbegloo as “dialogical modernization that is exemplified by the dual project of ‘Enlightenment from above’ and ‘Enlightenment from below’.” Jahanbegloo further explains the objective in Foroughi’s “dialogical approach” was “to accommodate Iranian heritage, as presented in the canon of Persian history, philosophy, and literature, with modern European values” (Jahanbegloo 2012). It is problematic, nonetheless, that Foroughi, who “through his career . . . advocated liberal forms of citizenship,” supported the idea of “Enlightenment from above,” as manifested through the despotic reign of Reza Shah, to implement reforms. Foroughi’s solution to this problem, according to Jahanbegloo, was the balancing of compulsory reforms from above with the reformation in language and literature, in other words, his “Enlightenment from below,” until the Iranians “become more mature in their political judgment and everyday reasoning” (ibid).

Foroughi’s efforts toward modernization, rule of law, and advocating reason paralleled with the way in which he integrated his works, may it be through his history of Western philosophy, or his works on Persian literature “into the narrative of modern Iranian nationalism.” Foroughi’s “progressive” works have been deemed as “a blue print for an Iranian national identity” (Amanat 476, Jahanbegloo 2012) that were meant to offset the Shi’i hold on the laws on the one hand, and to alleviate the tyrannical manipulation of the “blind Westernism” on the other. I found this argument problematic, for nationalism itself places
affairs back in the hands of patriarchy, albeit a modernist patriarchy; the need for a
centralized power at this time eclipsed the necessity of an individual consciousness, and the
need to change does not venture beyond a Hegelian synthesis.\textsuperscript{613} There can be no doubt that
Foroughi tried to initiate an Iranian search for finding their own place through becoming
aware of the modern philosophy’s use of reason, while standing firm on their own literary
tradition.

Virtually all attempts to reform in practice were formulated in a top-down model
since the beginning of such movements in the nineteenth century. Great thinkers such as
Jamal al-Din, in his grand plan to fight the British colonialism, had initially tried to persuade
the king, underscoring the leadership of the enlightened ulama. However, it seems toward the
end of his life he experienced remorse. Abrahamian explains:

On his death bed in 1897, Jamal al-Din expressed to a friend both hope and sorrow.
Hope because the “stream of renovation” flowing from West to East would inevitably
destroy the “edifice of despotism.” Sorrow, because he had wasted so much of his
precious ideas on the “sterile soil” of royal courts: “would that I had sown the seeds
of my ideas on the fertile ground of the people’s thoughts.\textsuperscript{614}

During the modernist movements of the nineteenth century, Jamal al-Din was
arguably the first to propose the use of the religion of Islam to resist against colonialism
(Keddie 1968). While he was unsuccessful in ousting the British and their colonial intentions
from Iran, or even bringing about any reforms, he had been able to leave a legacy behind that
prompted followers to continue with his ideas after his death (Abrahamian 1982, 64). Keddie
extensively addresses Jamal al-Din’s legacy, not just in Iran, but in the Middle East, and even
in India (Keddie 1972). From the scholarly work done on the subject, it can be surmised that
Jamal al-Din’s influence unfolded in two paths: in Iran, it radically reverberated in the reactionary measure that materialized in the assassination of Naser al-Din Shah in 1896. Abrahamian notes initially Jamal al-Din made very little impact in Iran (Abrahamian 1982, 64). However, the second path, which developed a more sustainable course came through another direction.615

Muhammad Iqbal Lahori (1877-1938), poet and philosopher, who is renowned for his efforts to divide India into two countries of India and Pakistan (1947)616 argues in his book The Revival of Religious Thoughts in Islam (1930) that Muslims must rethink within Islam without severing ties with the past. He also praises Jamal al-Din as “being the living link between the past and the future,” as someone who fully understood the “significance and magnitude of this responsibility” of Muslims (Iqbal 1930, 113). Iqbal was popular in Iran among the intellectuals with his poetry, and among the religious class for his affinity for mysticism (Irfan).

The individual in Iqbal’s understanding, which is colored by mysticism, is predicated on three concepts that he draws from the Koran: first, that he is chosen by God; second, that with all his fallibility, he has been given the responsibility to be God’s deputy on earth; and, third that the trusted man is a free man, who accepts this responsibility against his own well-being (Iqbal 110).617 Contrary to Bergson,618 in Iqbal’s view, the “real” individual experience is in the understanding of the introspective unity, which he distinguishes from those he found in the Islamic thoughts tainted by other traditions (Iqbal 111). He argues: “the perfection of this experience in the religious Islamic life culminates in the expression of Hallaj’s ‘Ana’al Haq’ [I am Truth/God]” (ibid). This makes the individuality defined by Iqbal a constructed and an imaginary one, since it disregards the sense-based experiences.
The definition of the “I” in Iqbal eloquently describes a being that is incomplete in its natural form and is understandably in search of a unity which is “more inclusive, more effective, more balanced, and more cohesive” (Iqbal 114). In explaining this “I,” he cites Ghazali, who deems it one with essence and distinct from “our varied states of mind.” It is that which time has no influence on, and “our experience comes from the consciousness of relation between the particulars and that expansive essence” (Iqbal 116). In response to arguments on the determinism dominant over the Islamic regions at the time, Iqbal notes, “[p]hilosophy is nothing but seeking the causes, in such a way that can be aligned with God . . . and with pondering of time, which is like the foundation of the link between the cause and effect, [one] cannot arrive but at the understanding of the Divine, which is above all in the world.” In support of his argument he submits the example of “Hegel’s view on the Truth and the Real, which he equates to the lack of limitation of the mind, and from which can be surmised that all that is true and real contain the essence of the mind” (Iqbal 128-129).

Around the time that Foroughi was writing *The Course of*, Iqbal published one of his most distinguished works in Persian language called *Javid-nama,* which is like “an encyclopedia of Iqbal’s thought” guiding one through his philosophical, political, and even his aesthetic ideas. Admittedly, he utilized his poetry “as a medium for spreading his ideas which he hoped would awaken Muslims from their centuries-long slumber.” Iqbal opposed the idea of “art for art’s sake,” and stated in *Javid-nama: “[i]f the formation of men is the goal of poetry, then poetry is the heir to prophethood.” Nonetheless, while relying on the traditional vocabulary and symbols, Iqbal sets out to fill the traditional symbols with new idealistic meanings that reflect what needs to be done through martyrdom and sacrifice. Iqbal’s affinity with mysticism in his poetry, and his political ideas predicated on Islamic principles became influential for the next generation of reformers in Iran.
Reformers in Mid-Twentieth Century: Mohammad Nakhshab, Ali Shari'ati, and Mehdi Bazargan

In the period between the two world wars and the 1953 coup, following the rise and fall of the Tudeh party’s influence, in opposition to the Tudeh party’s ideology, there was an interest in combining the idea of socialism with Islamic thoughts. A number of intellectuals such as Mahmoud Taleqani (1911-1979), and Mehdi Bazargan (1907-1995) (later revolutionary government’s first prime minister) argued that “Islam had answers for modern problems,” and that economic equity had been one of the objectives of Islam from the onset (Abrahamian 1982, 459). One of the intellectuals who has been credited with “being the first Iranian to attempt synthesizing Shi’ism with European socialism” is Mohammad Nakhshab (1923-1976). Nakhshab is the founder of a movement called “God-Worshipping Socialists” (Abrahamian 1982, 463). He was the first who saw “socialism and democracy as two manifestations of the same truth of the rule of people over people.”

Nakhshab’s contribution was in arguing for “morality” and ethics. In Marxism, he believed Marx’s philosophy was a reaction to capitalism’s excesses as well as the church’s corruptions. Thus, he insisted on “morality and ethics as a necessity in politics and society” (Nekoorouh 2017). This morality could be arrived at by way of a sort of “nihilism” (elahiyyat e tanzihi) of all that was conjured up by man in order to remove absolutism from all and any human endeavors. At the same time, his approach on the Divine, in the context of politics and administration, was nihilistic as well, in order to “reach progress on earth,” for “man hath only that for which he maketh effort” meant no excess value (capitalism) and the “consideration of morality until the [recognition of] rights of others” was necessary to preserve the rights of the individual (Nekoorouh 2014). Other intellectual and political
figures made attempts to find a middle ground. Khalil Maleki (1901-1969) had tried for a “third” solution. Following his disillusionment of and leaving the Tudeh Party, due to “political differences with the party’s leadership” (Abrahamian 1982, 256), Maleki had proposed a “third force,” and elaborated on what this “third force” was:

We are independent of both Western imperialism and the Soviet Union, of both the Tudeh party and the ruling class, of both internal militarism and international communism. We identify with the peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America, with the social democratic movements in Europe, and with the rank and file of the Tudeh that is dissatisfied with their pro-Russian and undemocratic leadership. We stand at the left wing of the National Front. The national bourgeoisie stands at its right wing. 625

Similarly, 626 except for his inclusion of an Islamic faith–inspired ethical notion, Nakhshab attempted to find a median ground. Therefore, what the “Movement of the God-Worshipping Socialists” proposed, was a “new school” in between the two super powers at the time (Abrahamian 1982, 463). It is worth noting that Žižek in his analysis of the “Arab Spring” in 2009, pondering upon an inscription in a clay dish, 627 argued the same point:

[I]nsofar as we tend to oppose East and West in terms of fate and freedom, Islam stands for a third position that undermines this binary opposition—neither subordination to blind Fate nor freedom to do what one wants, both of which presuppose an abstract external opposition between the two terms, but rather a deeper freedom to decide (‘choose’) our fate. 628

Nakhshab tried to establish a new link between “rights, freedom, and morality” for the first time that called for “human for itself,” or one who is “subject to itself,” which was
predicated on a “self-sustaining reason.” This individual was very different from the tradition that made him, historically and continuously, subject to a “God imagined on earth . . . in the form of [a] king or [a] sage” (Nekorouh 2017). It was, however, Ali Shari’ati (1933-1977) who “saw himself as continuing and completing what . . . Bazargan, Taleqani, and Nakhshab had started: formulating a secular religion that would appeal to the modern intelligentsia without alienating the traditional bazarris and the religious masses” (Abrahamian 1982, 467).

It is Ali Shari’ati (1933-1977) who argues Islam to be “a revolutionary ideology that permeates all spheres of life, especially politics, and inspires true believers to fight against all forms of oppression, exploitation, and social injustice” (Abrahamian 1982, 466). Shari’ati’s views prompted him, while studying in France, to write three letters to Fanon that criticized Fanon’s negative assessment of the role of religion in colonization (Fanon 1963). Similar to Jamal al-Din Asadabadi, Shari’ati argued “the people of the Third World could not fight Imperialism until they first gained their cultural identity, which in some countries was interwoven with popular religious traditions” (Abrahamian 1982, 465). Therefore, for Shari’ati, there was a clear link between cultural identity and religion that could be used against imperialism. Nonetheless, he had a long list of ailments, from which he believed the human society of Iran was suffering, that in addition to a global imperialism, included “international Zionism, colonialism, exploitation, oppression, class inequality, cartels, multinational corporations, racism, cultural imperialism, and gharbzadegi (blindly following the West)” (Abrahamian 1982, 467).

Thus, Shari’ati opened a space that was distinct from all active and influential groups that encompassed “progressive” thinking and the young population, while not excluding the traditionalist merchant class. He clarified his position on two leading waves that had been
struggling and at odds with one another to this point. On the one hand, he “denounced Western Imperialism,” but distinguished his theories from those on the left (i.e. Tudeh party, popular among the older generation of Iranian intelligentsia) in his criticism of Marx, particularly of the “Stalinist variety.” One the other hand, he had turned on the traditionalist, religious leadership for misinterpreting Islam as “apolitical” (Abrahamian 1982, 467 and Momen 258) without being anti-religion or anti-Islam. In a series of lectures titled Bazgasht (Return), 630 Shari’ati argues for a return to one’s own cultural roots, but not to one’s race, as in pre-Islamic Iranian Aryan roots, for he adamantly opposes racism. 631 He states “for us return to our roots . . . means a return to our Islamic, especially Shi’ite roots.” 632 Shari’ati further explains these roots are embedded not in the Caliphate Islam, but the Islam of the revolutionaries, 633 that which has been exemplified in the martyrdom of the prophet’s grandson and Ali’s son, Imam Hussein. He further clarifies: “[w]e want the Islam of fighters, not that of rouhani [spiritual leaders]; the Islam of the Ali’s family, not that of the Safavid dynasty.” 634 Consequently, for Shari’ati the “passion plays depicting Hussein’s martyrdom contained one major lesson: that all Shi’is, irrespective of time and place, had the duty to oppose, resist, and even rebel against overwhelming odds in order to eradicate their contemporary ills” (Abrahamian 1982, 466).

The political ideology was formulated by Shari’ati and well received by various groups while raising controversy with those in positions of power. 635 For Shari’ati it was the “Alawi Shi’ism” 636 and not the “passive Safavid Shi’ism” that had “an obligation to strive for achieving the ideal Shi’ite society” (Momen 259). 637 In Abrahamian’s view, “Shari’ati produced exactly what the young intelligentsia craved: a radical layman’s religion that disassociated itself from the traditional clergy and associated itself with the secular trinity of social revolution, technological innovation, and cultural self-assertion.” 638 Furthermore,
Shari’ati, in his ideal vision of an activist, created a synthesis between the intelligentsia and the militia. This idea would be capitalized on by Ayatollah Khomeini, whose opposition to the Shah went back to 1963, at which time he was sent to exile in Najaf (Momen 195). Safely from his location in Iraq, away from Iran’s secret service, Khomeini began a campaign in support of the ulama’s political role. In a book first published in 1971 called *Hokumat-e Islami* (Islamic Government), he laid out his theory of the rule of jurisprudence predicated on the executive and administrative role of the ulama (Khomeini 1979).

**The Post-Revolutionary Iran – Total Monopolization of Power: Foucault and the Iranian Revolution**

The idea of *Velayat-e Faqih* (rule of jurisprudence) had been proposed earlier, although in a different capacity, by two prominent Shi’i leaders, namely Mulla Ahmad Narāqi (d. 1829), and the aforementioned Mohammad Hossein Na’ini (d. 1936). The extent to which the ulama, such as Naraqi and Na’ini delineated the authority of the ulama, was to offer “guidance” to the secular rulers to ensure their adherence to the Shari’a law, as considered in the 1906 Iranian Constitution (Momen 196). Mehdi Hāeri, in *Philosophy and Government* (1995), submits that Narāqi, who was a contemporary of Fath Ali Shah Qajar, initiates this idea first, then in order to “reason,” sets out to collect references and evidence, “without proper criticism and investigation,” which enabled him to “arrive at the desired conclusion” (Hāeri 178). More drastic is Khomeini’s proposal that contrasts with others in that he “asserts that the faqih should supplant the ruler and rule in his place (Momen 196).

In his book, Khomeini, without providing any references or sources, offers his reasons for forming an Islamic government and argues that Islam is not limited to ethics, and that it is not adequate for an Islamic society to just have laws. For this reason, he contends,
“Glorious God, alongside of a collection of rules—meaning Shar’ia—has established a government, and an executive and administrative system” (Khomeini 26). Further, he substantiates his reasoning by a mimetic comparison (qias) with what the Prophet had done, disregarding the different circumstances. He further notes:

[A]fter the passing of the Prophet (PBUH), enemies and the sons of Umayyads (may God’s curse be upon them), did not allow Ali to establish Islamic government . . . and changed the foundation of the government. The regime and the way in which they managed and the Umayyads’ and the Abbasids’ politics were against Islam. The governing system was turned completely upside down, and was turned into a monarchy in Iran and an Imperial Rome and the Pharaohs of Egypt and continued in later times to what we see today.

According to Khomeini, this necessitates revolution in all Muslim lands that have been artificially, based on colonial intentions, divided and separated from one another (41). Hāeri argues, however, that historically, the rule of jurisprudence has never been part of the discourse in the Islamic fiqh (jurisprudence), and that it has never been considered, either by Sunni or Shi’i ulama that, in addition to possessing the authority to issue religious edicts, the ulama have the right to rule, simply because they are experts in jurisprudence (Hāeri 178). Khomeini’s position on the extent of the authority of the Shi’ite ulama, as documented in his own and others’ writings, demonstrates his gradual revealing of the idea that the authority of the faqih is as boundless as the Divine, hence absolute (Kadivar 2017).
The Theory of Velayat e Faqih (Rule of Jurisprudence) as Absolute

Vali Nasr in *The Shi’a Revival* (2006) argues that the Shi’i ulama “relied heavily on the Platonic notion . . . of a specially educated ‘guardian’ class led by a ‘philosopher-king’” (87). He notes Khomeini in his early career was recognized as a “noted philosopher (with a specialty in the study of Aristotelian logic) and had dabbled in mysticism, probably while influenced by his reading of the Andalusian Sufi mystic, Ibn Arabi. He even wrote mystical poetry, though none of it was published before his death in 1989.” Nevertheless, what is significant for our purposes, is that among his peers, Khomeini had earned the reputation of being an expert in analysis of one of the most difficult, yet popular texts—Mülla Sadrā’s *Asfar Arba’a* (Four Journeys) among the Shi’i scholars. In *Asfar*, just as Ibn Arabi had done earlier, and echoing a Neoplatonic voice, Mülla Sadrā explicates the journey toward Truth in four stages: “travel ‘from Him, to Him, in Him and through Him’” (Adamson 2016, 387). It has become clear that Khomeini saw himself as a man who has been “led to God, learns to open himself up to spiritual wisdom and then returns to the world as one who has become united with God, reflecting his divine attributes and qualities” (Nasr 2006, 84). Nasr quotes a conversation with Hāeri about the latter’s meeting with and expressing concerns to Khomeini during the Iran-Iraq war and the tremendous loss of life. Nasr recalls:

One night during the dark years of the Iran-Iraq war, as the 1980s were being consumed in blood, with countless thousands of Iranian young men perishing at the front, he went in distress to visit his old teacher. He found Khomeini alone, sitting on a rug in his garden before a small pool […] He opened up his heart to Khomeini and asked his mentor if he could not find a way to stop the awful slaughter. “It is not right
for Muslims to kill Muslims,” Haeri began. “Hundreds of thousands are dying in a war that has no end and no good purpose.” Khomeini made no sound until Haeri stopped talking. Then without turning his head and in even but reproachful tones, he asked: “Do you also criticize God when he sends an earth quake?”

This anecdote makes it clear that Khomeini was confident of his own “spiritual stature,” according to his interpretations of the concepts of the “Unity of Existence” and the “Perfect Man,” and possessed a “sense of destiny;” it was in this confidence that he could employ imagination and innovation to not only give a different picture of Shi’i Islam, but to use that image to control an entire country (Nasr 2006, 85) and beyond. However, the problem of the “individual” remains as hidden as before until we come across Foucault’s writings from his experience of visiting Iran in September and November of 1979.

In a letter to Mehdi Bazargan, the prime minister at the time, Foucault, who had been elated at the news of the uprising of the people and removing of the Shah and his despotic regime, expresses concern regarding the execution of a number of key individuals during the first few months after the revolution. He notes the “responsibility” of the government, regardless of what term prefaces it (e.g. democratic, Islamic, etc.) toward its citizens (Foucault 2000, 440). Foucault writes, “[w]e spoke of all the regimes that oppressed people while invoking human rights. You expressed a hope: that in the will, so generally affirmed then by Iranians, for an Islamic government, those rights would find a real guarantee […] No government can escape from those fundamental duties. And from that viewpoint, the trials that are now taking place in Iran are nothing short of alarming.” (ibid). Further he emphasizes, “[n]othing is more important in the history of a people than the rare moments when it rises up as a body to strike down a regime it can no longer tolerate.” Foucault is
impressed by witnessing how Iranians were willing to give up their life to bring about change. In an earlier article, on the people’s struggle, Foucault writes:

If societies persist and survive . . . it is because behind all the consent and the coercion, beyond the threats, the violence, and the persuasion, there is the possibility of this moment where life cannot be exchanged, where power becomes powerless, and where in front of the gallows and the machine guns, men rise up.648

It is the same concern that prompts Foucault to write the aforementioned letter to the then prime minister Bazargan. What Foucault seems to be alarmed about is the lack of empathy for individual life, as unfolded in the later months following the revolution. This issue has been consistent since the very beginning, that what was being implemented as Islam, was a kind of an ideology that was deemed more important than the life itself, which was supposed to protect. Foucault reminds Bazargan of the assurance he gave that “[b]eing Islamic, such a government would be bound by a supplement of ‘duties.’ And it would respect these ties, because the people could turn this shared religion back against it” (Foucault 2000, 440). However, the reality unfolded in a different manner. Under the rule of jurisprudence, individual life or individual experience has no feasible space to be recognized, and it can easily be sacrificed for the ideals put forth by the leaders.

The absolute power and the rule of jurisprudence has maintained power predicated on the Neoplatonic philosophy and its synthesis with Islam. Where there is no regard for individual life, there is no regard for individual rights. Yet, the idea of the individual still eludes the contemporary thinkers, who tend to propose solutions that continue to overlook the individual’s place, in exchange to save the unity of the country as a whole.
Contemporary Thinkers: Mojtahed Shabestari, Abdolkarim Soroush, and Javad Tabatabaei

The theory of Velayat-e Faqih was first proposed to the parliament by Hassan Ayat, a member of the legislative body and the Assembly of Experts for the Constitution in the summer of 1979 (Amanat 784); it was endorsed by Ayatollah Montazeri and Ayatollah Beheshti (Yaghmaian 253). However, more than ever, there has been an unprecedented crisis that has led to further fragmentation of factions, especially within the dominant parties (Yaghmaian 206). The gulf between the Iranian president and the supreme leader and his supporters continuously grows deeper. Among contemporary thinkers and reformers, there are many theories that have been proposed.

Responding to the necessity of different interpretations, Mohammad Mojtahed Shabestari (2005) argues that interpretation of the religious and other texts, such as the prophetic revelations, require understanding of the hermeneutic “process” (Shabestari 7). He criticizes the common belief (among the religious scholars) that one must “empty the mind of any pre-understandings, interest, and expectation before interpreting the Book [Koran], and the [Prophet’s] Tradition (ibid). Shabestari holds value in one’s previous experiences and knowledge and rejects that it causes conflict among the experts. He advocates a view that there should be a dialogue between the knowledge of fiqh (principles of religious knowledge) and other knowledge, and laments the lack of such interaction. (Shabestari 8). The argument, however, distinguishes between philosophy and religion and does not include the individual, for Shabestari is addressing the “experts” in the field, when he focuses on the religious texts (Shabestari 200).
Similar to Shabestari, Abdolkarim Soroush seeks to establish links between knowledge and religion but strives to expand the place of religion beyond time and space. In *More Abundant than Ideology* (1996), Soroush is particularly interested in clarifying the position of ideology with respect to religion and argues that religion (of course he means Islam) does not have the restrictions that ideology does (Soroush 125). His comparison of two prominent thinkers of the revolution era, Shari’ati and Mottahari, demonstrates the case in point. Whereas Shari’ati’s hero, Abuzar Ghaffari, more than anything else, represented the voice of social justice in early Islam, and with which Shari’ati always identified and understood Islam, Mottahari’s role models admittedly consisted of the religious and mystic sages as well as scholars (Soroush 99-100). While Mottahari had always been “sensitive to all affairs pertaining to God,” Shari’ati was seeking to nurture an “Abuzar-like” individual, who was “restless, rebel and faithful” (Soroush 102). Soroush concludes with the idea of “paradox of modernism,” in which he describes the entrapment of modernism in between the past (tradition), to which it can no longer look, and post-modernism that has brought “doubt” and “awakening.” Soroush’s solution is to only “seek asylum” in *erfan* (mysticism), which “holds within the ancient heritage of mysticism that from the beginning has doubted reason” (363).

Since the early decades after the revolution, and establishing of the Islamic Republic of Iran on the constructed idea of the *Velayat-e Faqih*, and the need to maintain control to preserve the status quo, discourses have shifted from preserving the passion for the revolution to how to continue holding on to the political power. At the same time, corruption and mishandling of the country’s affairs and injustices toward diverse groups of people have alienated the population, and disenchanted them with religion, not to mention disheartened them, due to the internal strife that has gripped the entire nation and obscured any hopes for
the future. This has prompted theories on how to create a unity from the diversity (different ethnic groups that make up the population) that has existed in Iran for centuries.

The “Iranshahri” thesis has been proposed by Seyed Javad Tabatabaei as a solution to this problem. Tabatabaei’s attempt is to circle around the sensitive and deadlocked discussions on religion, and look toward the Iranian history. In *The History of Political Thoughts in Iran*, he aims to put forth evidence from the history of political thoughts and strategies during other times of crisis (e.g. Abbasid Caliphate, rule of Saljuqs, etc.) that have been able to reinstate rule and order of law in Iran. According to Tabatabaei, the political thoughts in Iran can be traced back to the time of Sasanians, which have survived through the writings of distinguished literary and political figures, before and through the Islamic rule (Tabatabei 2015, 139). He argues, therefore, that treatises which were the “continuation of the “Iranshahri political thought” and focused on how to conduct effective administration and bureaucracy, developed independent of the “idealistic caliphate theories,” proposed by theoreticians such as Mawardi of Baghdad (Tabatabei 2015, 26-27, 147). Tabatabaei cites the examples of Abdalla Ibn Mūqaffa’ (d. ca. 760), who translated into Arabic one of the first political *Iranshahri* treatises possibly for al-Mansūr the Abbasid caliph, and of Nizam al-Mūlk’s (1064-1092) *Siassat Nameh*, which he compares with a Sasanian document *Nameh Tansar*, written by “an illuminated . . . and Neoplatonic sage” by the same name (Tabatabaei 2015, 105). While Tabatabaei emphasizes the pre-Islamic political art of government of ancient Iran, and prescribes it to remedy the current crises, he does not address the current synthesized nature of political power that reflects the Shari’a and carries concerns of preservation of Islamic *fiqh* as once-expressed by Khomeini, nor does he demonstrate any concern about the issue or the place of the individual in his theory.
The synthesis of the Iranian ancient heritage with the Islamic culture is problematic for Aramesh Doostdar. He is critical of “our approach toward the Islamic part of our culture, which is relentlessly ambiguous. On the one hand . . . we look toward the glories and grandiosity of the ancient Iranian civilization, and with a defeated pride remember the unsuccessful uprisings, which took place against the barbaric and injustices of Islam . . . on the other hand we take pride that our spiritual culture has flourished with Islam and [has been] nurtured in it” (105). Doostdar expresses concern for lack of thinking due to Iranians’ affinity for religion, and submits “we must battle our historical self, until perhaps gradually the power of our thinking can flourish” (414). Doostdar notes the religious, and more specifically the Islamic “I,” is devoid of the ability to think (415). Nonetheless, his definition of the “I” reveals a “unity that is the center of gravity of its being and is constant.” That being is in connection with its “other,” he argues. However, his examples identify this “other” as one’s own religion, nationality, or all that makes that “I.” He states: “the ‘I’ is the cause or base for unity of feelings, imaginations and thoughts of every human who observes things” (416). It must be noted that what Doostdar argues here is not individuality, but rather a universal feeling, and is distinct from what Bergson remembers in the “scent of the rose.” His rejection of religion, and specifically of Islam regarding thinking, is moot when it comes to “being,” because it is more of an existential question. A being has to “be” first before thoughts can be produced, for that which mind produces is nothing but imagination (Moradi 2017).

In criticism of Tabatabaei, Mohammad Ali Moradi notes the underlying Hegelian “master-slave” theory, which he argues has been inappropriately applied by the “leftist Hegelians” in Iran. Whereas Hegelian “master-slave” theory was aimed toward arriving from consciousness to self-consciousness in a society to which the issue of the “I” or the
subject has never been introduced, the idea of “master-slave” can be understood only in the context of “political ideological conflicts” (Moradi 2017).

The subject of the final chapter in this study focuses on the history of socio-political movements in Iran in nineteenth to twentieth century. One of the aspects of political developments during this period in Iran that sets this country apart from the other countries in the region is the competition between the two classes: the religious and the secular. I demonstrated how the class of the clergy, building on the Safavid political and philosophical legacy steps out from behind the king to place itself at the position of political rule.

I selected three sets of exemplary figures to mark the pathway to show this progression. The first group reflect the early reformers that strove, on the one hand, to bring the rule of law to the country, where its king ruled with absolute power, and on the other, to mitigate changes in the religious realm. The members of the second group that by the mid twentieth century had been exposed to some of the progressive and revolution-oriented ideas, in seeking social justice and equality, attempted to interpret from religious texts and religious historical accounts to bring about a solution to the persistent challenges of reformation, as well as countering colonialism and Western cultural and political influences. The third group, selected from among prominent contemporary thinkers, have proposed solutions to the continuous socio-economic problems that have now been added to the previous concerns. My objective in this chapter was to make visible that none of the individuals in these groups have been successfully either arguing for, or proposing a solution for the future of the country, because they have all overlooked and taken for granted the issue of the subject in their equations.
Do we need a theory of power? Since a theory assumes a prior objectification, it cannot be asserted as a basis for analytical work. But this analytical work cannot proceed without an ongoing conceptualization. And this conceptualization implies critical thought – a constant checking.  

— Foucault

This study investigates the principle question of why the movements toward individual rights have been unsuccessful in the Middle East up until now. By focusing on the example of a sixteenth-seventeenth century dynasty in Persia, this inquiry examines how the art and philosophy shaped the collective consciousness rather than promoting individual experience and subjectivity; subsequently, contrary to what the German Idealists such as Hegel and others have argued, and despite the Middle East’s affinity with Hegelian philosophy, artistic endeavors have not paved the way toward the making of a free subject for the people of that region. The main argument rests on how formulas from antiquity were effectively appropriated to unify a diverse population to submit to the rule of the philosopher/sufi/religious-kings strengthening patriarchal systems. Through intertextualization and establishing a three-pronged inquiry—i.e. patriarchy, Neoplatonism and art—I began this research with a genealogical investigation into the long tradition of patriarchal domination as it has informed the subject since the early centuries of civilization. This tradition corresponds to those in Europe only to a certain point, at which time there appears a split: one development heads for nuances of patriarchal strategies and toward the
Enlightenment, and the other maintains its traditional patriarchal models, which has preserved the dominance of absolutism and held collective subjectivity firmly in place.

Considering the integral role of art, it was necessary to commence from the prehistoric roots of the act of creation, that is to say, from the earliest known human creations in the caves that come closest to what we call art today; this approach signals an appropriate parallel to what lies at the foundation of Plato’s philosophical creation of the Allegory of the Cave. I suggest, following the period called “creative explosion” (Spivy 2005), once humans learned to give material form to their hallucinatory imaginations that were experienced inside the dark caves, they never ceased to remember how to create. Further, they continued and enhanced the act of creation by imbuing ideas into what they created in material form, consequently engendering myths. One such myth that has had lasting expression, exists in the idea of patriarchy itself.

The myths were perhaps the first attempts to give order to what Foucault calls “codes of a culture” (1994). Upon establishing a hybridized system—from the structures which existed in the early cities, and what came from the rural and marginalized dwellers (which aimed to protect families)—the first “other” was determined. Since this new system was reliant on the rule of men, the first other was identified as man’s other, i.e. the woman. This is where the foundation of misogyny rests which, systematically, has never left the contexture of civilizations, and it has unfairly tipped the balance of power to the benefit of patriarchy. The use of imagery was so prevalent in strengthening the position of patriarchal systems that it invoked a revolutionary and countering idea in the region at that time; since patriarchy in ancient times was reliant on polytheism, its counter argument became monotheism. Monotheism, however, was absorbed within the idea that was patriarchy, for
it was ultimately interpreted as suitable for such infusion and deemed crucial for its perpetuity. This did not happen without one main nagging criticism making its way throughout the centuries. I mean the concept referred to as the “prohibition of imagery” that still raises questions about what it actually means, and perhaps has been one of the few remaining gaps, through which one can find a space to critically examine that which humans have created and continue to create across time in relation to power.

Subsequently, one of patriarchy’s self-preservation strategies, well executed and implemented, has been through the arts which has contributed to what I have referred to as “artificial unities.” The artistic endeavors that include that which humans create, encompass the idea behind patriarchy itself, hence making it permissible to critique it, for the central idea of the prohibition of imagery was initially aimed to discourage inflating human creation with transcendental ideas that were also generated through human imagination and consequently assuming absolutist positions of power. The artificial unities have exerted great influence on the shaping of subjects, pulling them away from becoming a subject to themselves to experience free consciousness, toward self-alienation and a collective consciousness in the service of autocratic rulers.

The critical exploration of art and subjectivity, therefore, can uncover the hidden, implicit power relations between humans and works of art predicated upon the philosophy of power to establish a theory that can reach beyond what Foucault developed, but this is only part of the picture, so to speak. One of the most persuasive human creations has been Neoplatonism, itself a hybridized philosophy combining the earlier thoughts that acknowledge some sort of space in between (Republic 202-207 and Poetics xxxviii), with the idea of emanation of all from the “One” (IV.8). By supplanting and assuming the position of
the “One,” however, patriarchy, at least in the Middle East, has continued its dualistic and divisive strategy of constructing “artificial unity,” and simultaneously its “alterity” as means to gain undisputed authority.

I approached the issue of alterity from the perspective of consciousness. This is not unlike what Hegel argues; nonetheless, contrary to Hegel, I argue for an equal, engaging field between the two. To demonstrate this relationship, I utilized the example of the development of the Continental Philosophy from French (Cartesian Cogito), German (Kantian “thing-in-itself and Hegelian Lordship and Bondage), and even Analytic Philosophy (Hume). Another example has been achieving Renaissance in the West by way of the works from Christian Europe’s other, meaning the Muslims. Both examples effectively attest to the results of learning from one’s “other.”

The relationship between a subject that becomes aware of itself and others who have not done so, as attested to by history, has not been equal. One of the contributing factors to this imbalance has been “abjection” (Kristeva 1982). Abjection means not being aware or conscious of the “gap” that exists, the gap between what is real and what is made to appear as real, and that which is temporarily concealed by patriarchy’s numerous tactics and techniques of power (Foucault 2000) but exacerbated by alterity. However, my concern in this study has been the Middle East.

To concretize my theory, I presented the case study of the development of a significant dynastic rule in Persia in chapter three. The origins of the Safavids and their casting into a new patriarchy exemplify the use of creativity in constructing power techniques that on the one side, contributed to a made-up image of the king (as a sufi-king initially, and as a philosopher-king eventually), and on the other, gave material representation
to such an idea, as in the example of the Mi’raj painting. This creativity was also extended to iterations of Islam that strengthened the political power of the ruler. The Safavids kings exploited the ideas of the “Unity of Existence,” and the “Universal Man,” that had been given eminence by Ibn Arabi and others earlier. Using selected key paintings, I demonstrated how such strategy was implemented in material form to link the figure of the Prophet to that of the king’s as a Sufi par excellence.

Further, I argued for Plotinus’s power of imagination, found in both the Safavids’ and the German Idealists’ affinity with the transcendental in Neoplatonism. In the Safavids, it was refined through the philosophy of Mūla Sadrā, whose influence is still present in what has legitimized the rule of jurisprudence in Iran. Inspired by Plotinus, Mūla Sadrā develops a philosophy that successfully interweaves Platonism, Neoplatonism, and Islam into an authoritative principle of political governing system. But these traditional ideas are forced to come face-to-face with modernism following the European military campaigns into the region that left the Middle Eastern rulers apprehensive about their deficiencies in the new technology.

The confrontation between the Middle East and Europe was the subject of chapter four in this study, which illustrated in the three regions of Egypt, Persia, and the Ottoman Turkey, how they each grappled with modernization and reform. Without having access to the European experiences that brought about modernization and technology, the leaders in these three regions strove to emulate modernity, as it appeared in modern products, such as new technology that made photography and mass publication possible.

What this research revealed was that in the Middle East, proponents of modernism made a leap, bypassing the issues pertaining to the individual subject and individuality, and
moved directly toward the Hegelian idealism with which they found familiarity and felt at home. One of the greatest challenges for the Middle East at this time was colonialism, which was the result of Europe’s already experiencing its own subjectivity (albeit quickly turning it into a collective ego in Eurocentrism, opposing its other, the Middle Easterners). Therefore, it was once again the formation of camps around certain ideologies (artificial unities against the othering of the colonialists); as admirable as their goal of fighting colonialism was, most reformers missed any opportunity toward the individual experiences, and the results only strengthened a collective consciousness. In the meantime, colonial policies corrupted the subjects (Fanon), and gained legitimacy through accumulation of knowledge in the academic arenas that solidified the positions of the colonialists (Said). Both strategies left the colonized subject desiring to emulate the Westerners.

The idea of mimesis, however, was already hard at work as a technique of power in the Middle East that ensured the subjects’ dependency on the central source of authority, and removed any responsibility from the individual. Despite each using a different term, imitation or taqlid, (analogical reasoning or qiyas) respectively, have been central to both Shi’ite and Sunni branches of Islam. However, in Iran the conflict between these two branches was overshadowed by the rivalry between the religious versus the secular positions of authority in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries.

In the final chapter, I expanded on the rivalry between two groups: religious and secular. First, it was the Shi’ite ulama, who, carrying the abjection in their historical memory from the time when they were a minority under Sunni caliphs, always perceived the ruling class as unjust and undeserving to rule over them. The other group is the line of kings/dynasties that ruled Iran in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and were the subject
of resentment by the *ulama*. In the historical frame, from the Constitutional Revolution of 1905 to the 1979 Revolution, this resentment fueled further politicization of Islam, building on “fear and pity,” culminating into an ideology that successfully and effectively crippled reformations, and ultimately placed the *ulama* at the helm of the political rule, legitimized by the constructed title of the “Rule of Jurisprudence.”

The *Velayat-e Faghih* (Rule of Jurisprudence) theory was fine-tuned to achieve total power in Iran shortly after the triumph of the revolution, but as with any totalitarian regime, to maintain its grip on power, it needed to fill the existing gaps between what had been created and the challenges they faced in reality. An investigation of some theories currently flowing in Iran’s philosophical arena demonstrates that the question of individual experience is still hidden from view and is yet to receive any attention from the prominent figures among the theoreticians. This brings a greater sense of urgency to the main thesis of this study, at a time when the artificial ties (religious, ethnic, and political) are beginning to unravel, as exemplified by the in-fighting between the various groups: those struggling to separate their region with a semi-cohesive ethnic population, or those in conflict because of Sunni or Shi’ite affiliations—not just with those outside of Iran—but within the borders as well. Unfortunately, the Western capitalistic powers, by implementing policies that are aimed to protect big businesses (producers of arms and technology) and trade, have exacerbated the crisis in the region.

The history of patriarchy is intertwined with artistic enterprises which have implemented imagination and mimesis so firmly into its mechanisms of power that it is often indistinguishable from it; thus, it has deprived the subject any meaningful attempt toward consciousness. Hegel provided the blue print of patriarchy in his “master-slave” dialectic, in
which he not only has explained the power struggle throughout the history of civilization, but also offered a projected plan that works like a prophetic statement that ensures and foretells a perpetuity for patriarchy in its essence. Stated differently, Hegel’s “Lordship and Bondage” contains the genetic material of the power struggle from the early cities and early civilizations that requires a binary conflict and the subsequent ascension of only one above the other. This has turned Hegel’s philosophy into a philosophy of power, mainly exploited by authoritative systems to ensure their prominence.

The objective of this study, therefore, has been first, to draw attention to the issue of subjectivity in the Middle East. Second, it aspires to create a space in which the Middle East and the West, each through its “other,” can recognize the importance of the process of the formation and preservation of the individual within a collective subjectivity. Daryush Shayegan perhaps came closest when he identified an “ambiguous space” that emerged from the “Westernization” that the Middle East was subjected to, and when he notes the “mental distortion” of the nations in the Middle East as a result of this ambiguity. However, the only “I” he offers, is the “I” of the narrator, the author himself. Moreover, this research aims to make more visible the modern movements underscoring the sparks of individual subjectivity in the Middle East since the beginning of modernization and reformation, and to work toward developing discourses that will acknowledge and preserve individual rights as expressed by the contemporary voices.

It is also the intention of this study to point to an alternative that neither seeks to reach an unverifiable, vague goal of becoming one with the universe, hence achieving an artificial unity, nor seeks to negate artistic and creative endeavors. This study, instead, hopefully brings light to the notion that human creation will always remain human creation
and never grander than human beings themselves; as such, what humans create should be subject to interpretation and criticism. However, the history of patriarchy demonstrates that has not been the case.

Ever since humans learned how to pin down images in the caves and imbue those images with transcendental ideas, this skill has aided a strategy toward crafting a philosophy of power to achieve prominence and continuity. By espousing philosophy of power, patriarchy, under different names and different guises through various alliances, has been successful in maintaining its hold on power and domination continuously utilizing imagination. It has done so by first creating or championing unverifiable (simply the words of other humans) theories that lay out perfectly crafted and articulated formulas; these formulas determine how everyone else should perceive and abide (Foucault 1994) by that which is beyond human grasp, be it metaphysics, the ideal realm, or the Divine. These formulas are then labeled as essence, form, abstract, and known by many other names. They are infused with an imposed transcendental power, sometimes through visual or literary representations, whether it be Being, existence, and other philosophical terms that do not always clearly explain how some rise to political prominence, capitalizing on such ideals. Those who seek prominence then duplicate these formulas through mimesis and take possession for themselves of such relationships to the Transcendental, for mimesis affirms unity and continuity. Even the most materialistic systems use the idealized, imagined formulas and mimetically extrapolate from them a seemingly legitimate position of authority for themselves.

Therefore, supporting the foundation of every authoritative system, whether religious, secular, or even intellectual, are two significant pillars: artificial unity and imposed alterity,
achieved and maintained through imagination and mimesis. These elements are then incorporated into a philosophical theory solidifying and justifying it as a political theory, in other words, ideology. It is imperative for a patriarchal rule to demonstrate it dominates all. Just as it was important for the prehistoric people to give visual form to possibly an individual experience to be able to establish ownership of it, it has been necessary for rulers or political systems to have an encompassing philosophical theory, that not just signals their subjects as such, but also establishes them as the source of power and authority over those subjects.

As the first superpower, the Persian Achaemenids understood this well when they put forth their idea of “king of kings.” Ever since then, constructing political philosophy has been intertwined with art, as exemplified later in Plato. Therefore, there is creative endeavor at the root of hybridization of ideas supporting political rule. The creative mind can argue for a soul enveloped in the divine presence, or convince subjects there is only unity and nothing else. But there always remains a gap—of which one should always be mindful—between what is real (beyond our reach) and what we experience or create. The gap between the symbols and meanings, or between noumena and phenomena, should never be concealed by imagination and mimesis, for the gap is the only place we have to formulate questions that ensure growth through dynamism and dialogism.

Plato was right to identify the realm of the real and the realm of illusion. However, he could not build his republic had he not sought some sort of authority, which he did by crafting a hypothetical “perfect” formula as the essence and form, from the ideal realm he envisioned on the one side, and mimetically applying that to his republic on the other. This
system does not tolerate competition; therefore, to strengthen his position of power, he had to eliminate other creative thinkers by banishing the artists.

Aristotle recognizes Plato’s use of mimesis, and argues for the use of this valuable tool to make it work for the benefit of the state. Here art and politics mingle, and it becomes difficult to separate oneself (the subject) from that which provokes emotions, and creates a sense of community (artificial unity) in the process. From here on, every philosopher has tried to somehow follow suit. Plotinus’ story of hypostases offers a brilliant way to establish links to the metaphysics and makes accessible that which was supposed to lay beyond humans’ reach. Others, once again, have tried to use Plotinus’s formulas and somehow prove, by way of creating an alterity, that they alone are connected to the transcendental and hence are the only legitimate and worthy ruler, as in the Safavids or the current religious leaders in Iran.

The gap exists, yet autocratic leaders or thoughts have tried to obscure it, to conceal it through imagination and mimesis. By doing so, they take possession of that space, just as the cave people pinned down their hallucinations inside the caves, to take ownership of that which was extraordinary and magical. The processes of imagination and mimesis without a proper polyphonic criticism undermines subjecthood, and if there is a subject, weakens its being a subject to itself.

The subjects under such a system are distorted and suffer from self-alienation, as they are constantly pulled away from that which may bring questioning, self-examination, and ultimately establishing a healthy relationship with their alterity. The “other” is used to create a false unity by running a wedge between the subjects, so that they may never be able to know what the real problem is.
It has been important to use the philosophical language to justify being. Foucault talks about the authority of the word and epistemology. It seems necessary then to have a theory in place to analyze and critically study a phenomenon. I assert, even though activism takes place, it can be written off as history if there are no theories to help analyze the phenomenon. Theories give existence to phenomena, as if they confirm it, but, as with everything else, patriarchy has taken ownership of theories to its own advantage. It freely selects, hybridizes, and formulates - before capitalizing on - theories.

Hybridization, reconciliation, and blending ideas have taken place since the time of the early cities when the concept of patriarchy mingled with the structure of administering and running the city. Since then, patriarchy has only grown more immense; as a result, a potentially free subject is either preoccupied with the self, as in the current Western societies, or dissolved in the collective, as anywhere else that has not yet experienced individuality and the affirmation of the dignity of the being as subject.

The value of the individual has been defined in various contexts. Marx saw the value of humans in their work and production. Some, like Plato, view it in their ability to reach the highest good, as defined by the philosopher. Others deem humans’ worth in their ability to become masters of themselves, or define their existence as “free,” and perfection in unity. Still others contend a being is determined based on its ability to think. All of these qualities can be turned against another and easily create the alterity required for an autocratic system. I have argued for the worth of humans in their “being.” The value comes from the fact that they exist, not for their membership in an ethnic or religious community, not for their gender or sexual orientation, not for their unique geographical origin, and not for what they produce, materialistically or intellectually. The worth of humans intrinsically comes from simply
“being,” first. However, this being is constantly changing and must grow and achieve consciousness and presence (Aristotle and Heidegger). The individual existence and the dignity from that existence is intrinsic, and other affiliations and belongings follow later.

This is not unlike what the Existentialists argued; however, the individual in question here is not a constant, nor is it in a vacuum to create its own definitions and meanings of life for itself. It exists in an organic network (rhizome) with other beings, constantly changing. Therefore, no affiliation or belonging (i.e. being subject to) should hinder the growth and consciousness of humans, which should underscore individual responsibility and shaping its subjectivity by its “other” in a dynamic equity. How does one achieve consciousness? If we agree with Massumi, who argued that consciousness, or “thinking-feeling,” cannot take place without a well-established multitude of “relational” networks (2013), then it is plausible to suggest that the more the links between beings within the rhizomic network, the more consciousness can be attained.

Human survival is dependent on its other; humans are defined in their “other.” But, first they must re-examine their relationship with that “other,” for philosophy of power (i.e. patriarchy) has damaged those connections for centuries. Periods of conflict, self-centrism, and artificial unity, have provoked violence toward the “other” and invoked abjection. Those are missed and “unlived” periods that should have been spent recognizing the “other” as the one through whom we reach consciousness. Thus, the individual consciousness is made possible, not by artificial and manufactured techniques of patriarchy but, as Bakhtin noted, as shaped dialogically by its alterity through “utterance.”

Hegel’s “Lordship and Bondage,” seen through Kojeve, has it partially correct in bringing up the notion of recognition. The recognition must be predicated, however, on the
fact that they are both beings in an *a priori* sense. Nonetheless, as argued by Hegel, one becomes non-essential, because it is defined by the first self-consciousness. Defined through words and mediated by language, the first self-consciousness supersedes the other and seeks the position of superiority. Therefore, the relationship gets off on an uneven start (Deleuze in Keenan 251). The same holds true for twentieth century Iran.

Ali Shari’ati, the ideologue of the Islamic Revolution, once stated, “[i]t is in becoming that we can be . . . It is in action that truth manifests itself . . . Faith is [to be] turned into a conscientious ideology” (Matin 9). Therefore, it is not the “being” first, but rather the “becoming,” as defined by Shari’ati, that informs the potential of being. Without a being, a subject to oneself, Hegel’s master-slave is easily turned into a political ideology. It must be noted that the Hegelian theory of master-slave is the philosophical explication of the story of patriarchy that has been instrumental in producing philosophy of power, rather than a philosophy of peace. As such, the master-slave dialectic can then be applied to the relationship between the secular monarchy and the rise of a theocracy in Iran.

The consciousness of monarchy during the Shah came face to face with the consciousness of the *ulama*, and the long history of their mastery in filling the gaps of knowledge with imagination, mimesis, and constructed truth. The struggle between the two had its roots in the earlier Revolution of 1905; subsequently, the constitutional revolution led to the *ulama* proving their mastery over the monarchy following the 1979 revolution. One finds volumes of meaning in just the constructed titles, whether given to the aristocrats and endowed by the king to the court associated dignitaries, or the titles the *ulama* have designated for themselves. The struggle between the monarchs and the *ulama* ended in the
rise to political power in the form of theocracy in 1979 in Iran, and the formation of an
autocratic regime that is still in power.

But the *ulama* (read master) could not have accomplished this task had they not have
the recognition of the population, who were not free subjects (read slaves). This recognition
came even from the intellectuals and the educated class, who had bypassed the issue of
subjectivity, and directly emulated the Hegelian left’s formulas. Hence, the relationship
between the jurisprudence and the people is also the relation between master and slave, for it
is the position of the theocratic authority that defines the subjects. But, the question remains:
How does one bring about change in the face of an all-encompassing system?

“Change” can be a double-edged sword, if Nietzsche was right in saying: “the whole
history of a ‘Thing,’ an organ, a custom, can . . . be regarded as a continuous ‘sign-chain’ of
perpetually new interpretations and adjustments, whose causes, . . . sometimes follow and
alternate with each other absolutely haphazard” (Nietzsche [1887] 2006, 48). There are
moments in human history when certain events unexpectedly produce impetus for change
that is not unlike an electron in the orbit around the nucleus in atoms that, when provoked,
jumps its orbit back and forth, releasing a spark. Such were the events of May 1968 in France
that began with student demands for co-ed dormitories but rapidly expanded to include other
groups, namely workers that nearly brought down the established government in France at
the time.660 Even though the students lost politically and the establishment was back in power
before the end of the year, more oppressively than before, the effects of that spark found
lasting impressions in the proceeding wave of anti-establishment aesthetics and philosophical
thought.
These thoughts, which have since been manifested through the ethico-aesthetic theory, revealed that the events of spring 1968 confirmed it was possible to take action outside of the established formulas such as the class struggle, or the old familiar dialectics (both born out of human mind and enjoying certain credibility and weight), and that the linear relationship between the cause and effect can be transcended (Nietzsche [1887], 2006, 48). Nonetheless, in our own time these thoughts have yet to establish a way to overcome a paradox between the impromptu, schizophrenic, and creative action on the one hand, and the unpredictability (which Nietzsche calls “haphazard”) in reaching the desired outcome, on the other. After all, one of the arguments for re-establishing a centralized authority has been to avoid chaos and to maintain order. Even the diversity and interpretability awarded by postmodernism could not successfully challenge absolutism. The “bearers of absolutes” have welcomed the postmodern idea of “interpretability” and “the view that truth is a matter of interpretation,” and they have been swift to adapt it to their own ends (Vattimo 1997, 1 and 2009, 6). But it is not so much the question of “truth,” or “multiplicity of interpretation,” as it is being mindful of the gaps within that which becomes an “absolute.”

What authoritarian systems unavoidably rely upon is a system of illusions that lead one toward what may be even against the individual’s basic instinct, which is self-preservation, much less any “hopes of happiness” (Vattimo 2009, 7). The illusion can be destabilized by individual experience and one’s presence in that experience, keeping it in check and validated through links with human communities and networks of empathy. It is for this reason that all absolutists deny individual experience (or try to channel it as a collective), which can trigger what they may not be able to foresee or control. The human experience, particularly of where the “gaps” lie, are of utmost importance, for there is where questions can be formulated. This is why the authoritarian regimes conceal the gaps produced
in the process of illusion-making. But every time change forces these regimes to update their positions of authority, as happened in the Middle East during modernization, the Arab Spring, etc., there are sparks that can point to the existing gaps that should be focused on and dialogically examined and discussed. It is because of such gaps that the once-absolutist-powers have had to abandon restrictions on many of the fronts they held, such as gender and race. Nevertheless, there are more questions to be asked, since the challenges of alterity still remain and there is still more work to be done.

I have had to place outside the boundaries of this study several remaining but important questions. Among them are: Why weren’t the Germans able to read Hegel as the French did? How and through what process is subjectivity actually shaped by its alterity? I am also interested in pursuing further the issue of competition and superiority in patriarchy, which I have had to defer to a future opportunity. Moreover, I think there is much uncharted territory when it comes to studying Islamic Art and its philosophy, most specifically the work by the “Arabic Plotinus.” There is also great opportunity in an intertextualization between the creative arts and philosophy of the Islamic lands in general. Scholars have only recently begun to notice links between the issue of subjectivity, art, and power (Gruber 2018). And finally, a close investigation of the modern to contemporary visual arts in the Middle East as a separate topic went beyond the limitations in this study, hence it had to be deferred to a future occasion.

All that which has informed subjectivity through patriarchy and the ever-present Neoplatonism, has done so at the peril of the subject. One may challenge the status of individuality in the West; the individual under a “dominant reality” is also a slave itself (D&G 130). In the words written by Nancy:
The capitalist economy accumulates impasses, abscesses, and uncontrollable disorders. The society it governs does not believe in itself anymore. Words and concepts that were still valid fifteen years ago, like the “rule of law,” “human rights,” and “democracy,” are losing visibility and on a daily basis their practical as well as theoretical and symbolic credibility. Scientific, technical, juridical, and moral progress immediately displays, at every step, ambivalences that suspend the name “progress,” and along with it, those of “humanity,” “reason,” and “justice.” That’s when one brandishes idols, that is to say ideas reduced to a kind of belch. On one side, “God’s will,” on the other, “human freedom.” These expressions provide a front, of course, for large scale maneuvers aimed at seizing power and wealth. But this front is marked with figures of identification (or rather, of subjection) and of mobilization (or rather, of compulsive repetition). And these figures are painted on bombs.

This demonstrates that the dominant reality makes individuals imagine they are free, but they are actually subject to their own imagined reality, as under capitalism; thus, self is sacrificed for the dominant reality. After two World Wars and millions of its people killed in the process, the West’s insistence on its superior position has turned the Middle East into a domain with an expendable population to prove that position of power by turning attention away from its own economic inequities.

It is my hope in this study to bring the issue of the “subject” to the forefront. A subject that knows the difference between “subject and object,” and is not persuaded or programmed to treat others as objects, is more likely to establish a reciprocal relationship toward mutual consciousness. Nevertheless, one cannot achieve superiority this way because this relationship is predicated on equality.
APPENDIX I

The evolvement of the Qizilbash itself underscores what is of great interest in this study, which is the formation of the collective against the individual, and the reformulation required for the new patriarchy. Kathryn Babayan comments on how,

Qizilbash religiosity created the structure around which individuals coalesced into a single group, like the Shamlu, Rumlu, or Takkalu. A system of belief then entered into the dynamics of a set of Turco-Mongol kinship ties in the process of reformulation (Babayan 2002, xxxix).

Isma’il (1487-1524) was the youngest of the three sons of Shaykh Haydar, sixth generation and successor of Shaykh Safi al-Din (d. 1334), the founder and leader of the Safavi Sufi Order. In his ancestry, Isma’il’s mother and grandmother possessed royal Greek lineage, and his grandfather, Uzun Hassan (d. 1478), was the leader of the Aqquyunlu tribe, which ruled a considerable part of Iran in the second half of the fifteenth century (Newman 10). Furthermore, Isma’il was groomed for his future role among the Zahediyeh Sufi Order, founded by Shaykh Zahed Gilani (1216/17-1301), which was centered in Lahijan, in the north Iranian region of Gilan. His grandfather, Junayd (1447-1460), had taken up arms against Shirvanshahs in the Caucasus, and had been killed in the process. Upon the killing of his father Haydar that was by the hand of the Shirvanshahs with the support of the Aqquyunlu leader (Uzun Hassan’s younger son, Ya’qub) in 1488, Isma’il was taken into hiding, and taught in the ways of the Shi’i sect, under the protection of the local governor, Mirza Ali Karkiya. Newman sums up:
Thus was Isma’il by birth descended on both sides from princely families of differing faiths, by upbringing associated with well-established Tajik sayyid practitioners of a distinct body of Shi’i doctrine and practice and, at his father’s death, the spirituo-political leader . . . of a Sufi-style movement comprised of the region’s Turkish tribal levies . . . whose spirituality was informed by similarly Shi’i-tinged radical messianism circulating in the region (Newman 2012, 11).

Moreover, the decision to situate the “Ithna Ashari” or “Twelver” Shi’ism at the political foundation of the new dynasty, despite Shah Isma’il’s Sunni heritage, was not by coincidence. Babayan notes the “scholarly attention” this issue has received, in that upon the conquering of Iran, the emphasis changed from “Messianic claims” to the “political aspect of the title of shah drawn from the Iranian tradition of kingship” (xxxix). Roger Savory in Iran Under the Safavids notes three contributing factors to the justification of this decision. It was the Safavid leader’s “claim to be the representatives on earth of the 12th Imam or Mahdi (if not the Imam himself) . . . and [second,] the position of murshid-i kamil, or perfect spiritual director . . .; finally, by asserting that ‘Ali’s younger son, Husayn, married the daughter of Yazdigird III, the last of the Sasanid kings” (27). The idea of murshid i kamel is predicated on the idea of the “Universal Man,” and the potentiality of some to achieve a state of perfectness. In their view, the last point established a blood link between the family of Ali and the ancient Persian royal tradition (ibid), thereby validating the “divine right” of the Iranian kings by way of substituting the “kingly glory” endowed by “Ahuramazda,” the ancient Persian “Mazdean Lord Wisdom,” (Babayan 2002, 186), with the Prophet’s lineage. Hence, the “Twelver” Shi’ism was firmly placed at the core of “Safavid religious propaganda and political ideology” (Savory 27). Babayan’s historiography of the Safavids identifies two distinct phases in the development of the Safavids: the revolutionary phase (1477-1501) and
the imperial age (1501-1722). However, she is interested in the ways in which “embracing Shi’ism” and “Alid loyalty” (the cult of Ali, the Prophet’s son-in law and his blood line) “created a common culture” that brought about solidarity among the Qizilbash and the artisans (xl-xl). Furthermore, one must keep in view the issue of a “distinct political and cultural identity.” Bert Fragner, in his article “The Safavid Empire and the Sixteenth-and Seventeenth-Century Political and Strategic Balance of Power within the World System,” asserts:

Being officially Twelver Shi’ite, it was not difficult for Safavid representatives to present themselves as a distinct cultural and political unit in comparison to their western, northern and south-eastern neighbors, all of whom were Sunni (Fragner 2015, 23).

At the time of Isma’il’s birth, following the decline of Timurids’ rule, there existed multiple principalities that ruled Iran; each group was entangled in power struggles, vying for domination over the others through internal conflicts, in addition to responding to external pressures from the Ottomans to the west, who, since the capture of Trabizand in 1453, had been trying to move eastward (Floor and Herzig 2015, 18). Noteworthy is the rise to prominence of the military group known as Qizilbash, who were at the heart of the Safavid “political-military” body and were the confederation of a number of Turkish tribes known by the same name due to the adoption of a distinct red headdress since the time of Haydar. Savory mentions an “anonymous history” to be the reference on source of the head dress, known as “sufi taj.” According to the source, Haydar showed Uzun Hassan this head dress and that Uzun Hassan “kissed it and put it on his head (20). He explains the term “qizilbash” to have been applied initially to the Turcoman inhabitants of the regions east of Anatolia,
north of Syria and the Armenian highlands, and who had converted and become followers of
the Safavids; eventually however, the term came to refer to non-Turcoman supporters of the
Safavids as well (ibid).
Appendix II

Appendix II.A - Egypt

On the issue of competition, Juan Cole in *Napoleon’s Egypt* states: “[t]hroughout the 1790s, British naval superiority had confined the expansionist French to the Continent and thwarted an attempt to overthrow the British enemy” (13). Others like Iradj Amini in *Napoleon and Persia* (1999), reveal a more egocentric picture, drawing from Napoleon’s own recollections in exile:

I knew . . . that I had to draw attention to myself to remain in the public eye, and that I would therefore have to attempt extraordinary things, because people like to be amazed. It was by virtue of this opinion that I imagined the expedition to Egypt . . . This expedition was meant to create a great idea of France; above all, by founding a French colony on the Nile, it was to make up for the American colonies France had lost, and by ensuring trade with the Orient open up the paths to England’s possessions in India (Amini 1999, 10. See also, Mémoires de Napoléon, écrits sous sa dictée a Sainte-Hélène par un de ses valets de chamber, Paris 1819, 00.21-22).

In Egypt, Napoleon’s swift capture of Lower Egypt and ousting of the Ottoman client ruler Ibrahim Bey in less than a month was in part due to Ibrahim Bey’s soldiers deciding they were no match for the French; therefore, prior to abandoning the capital, they set their fine residences and merchant boats alight so that they would be of no use to the enemy (Cole 2007, 69).
While the British did not view Persia as a direct colony, they were concerned with its strategic location due to their interest held in the affairs of their East India Company (Lambton 1993, 149). This concern extended to the influences of other powers who had either gained (as in Russia) or had the potential to gain influence in Persia. Russian excursions into the northern regions of Persia had “deprived her of all her provinces north of the Aras River in the early years of the century and of territory in the north-east in the middle of the century” (Lambton 149). The “encroachment of foreign powers,” therefore, served as a great source of persuasion for Persia to seek the much needed advanced military technology and training from Europe (Amini 1999, 100). Amini writes of the review of Napoleon’s infantry by Persian ambassador, Mirza Mohammad Reza, who was “greatly amused,” by the event and had asked “how it could happen that all the soldiers marched together.” Amini quotes from the Duke of Rovigo that the Persian ambassador “particularly liked the military music. He had asked if the Emperor would kindly give him some of the musicians, as though they were slaves.”

To summarize, as the backdrop to the surge of modernism in the nineteenth century, there were two technologically significant facets to the increasing influences of Europeans in the Middle East. First, it was France’s new military power that emerged from the French Revolution, as attested to by their short-lived occupation of Egypt in 1798. Additionally, in the realm of military was Russia’s excursions from the north, briefly in Ottoman European regions, and on a more permanent basis, the Caucasus regions. Mary C. Wilson writes: “The ancient Christian kingdom of Georgia and part of the Iranian region of Azerbaijan were absorbed, and a treaty with Iran in 1828 showed Russia’s superior power” (7). Where military technology opens new territory, trade is not far behind. Innovations that changed the nature of trade between Europe and the Middle East are the other aspect of the European
influence. The use of steamships from the 1830s, and “the extension of telegraphs” in 1850s and 1860s are among such technologies that facilitated the import of goods such as textiles from factories in Europe in exchange for the raw material such as cotton from Egypt (ibid).

When Muhammad Ali took the reins in 1805 in Egypt, almost immediately he initiated a series of reformations which began with the purpose of self-preservation by first and foremost, establishing a bigger and more modern army and building a strong economy at the same time. Nevertheless, the superficiality of changes he had planned on and the external pressures from European economies did not allow for real reforms. Muhammad Ali’s new army was to replace the foreign mercenaries on whose services he had come to rely during the first year of his rule (Owen 114). To provide financial support for his army that by this time was made up of 100,000 men, Muhammad Ali,

replaced the tax-farmers with a system of direct collection by government agents […] In addition, further sums were raised by an extension of the state monopolies to cover almost every type of agricultural produce. Crops were taken from the peasants in lieu of taxes and sold abroad on government account, leaving the cultivator little more than enough for bare existence (Cole 2007, 114.).

In further expanding the economy to increase the government’s revenue, Muhammad Ali introduced new crop, namely cotton, which he knew was in high demand in Europe. There were also plans to produce textile from that cotton in order to reduce import, as well as send young Egyptians abroad to be trained in new technology. However, Muhammad Ali’s plans to create a modern administration that was capable of mediating and strengthening Egyptian economy proved unsuccessful. The pressures were building up from outside, particularly through “the Anglo-Turkish Commercial Convention of 1838, which outlawed
state monopolies and established a low external tariff of 8 per cent.” This led to the decrease of the revenue that had been mainly allocated toward the military, hence weakening Muhammad Ali’s military that dwindled to 18,000, as well as the loss of control over the agricultural export (Owen 115). Owen also notes that the weakening of the economic role the Egyptian government was playing at this time was hastened by the landowners and the producers of raw material, who were “anxious to end the monopoly system so they could sell their produce direct to European merchants rather than to the government (116).

With the state monopoly out of the way, the path was paved for European financial expansion and investment, which manifested in the establishing of the first European banks in Alexandria in 1850. Further, by this time, the modernization of the military and public projects, such as the construction of Suez Canal, were being funded by the European financial establishments. This left Egypt deeply in debt. Owen notes: “By 1875 Egypt had borrowed a nominal sum of nearly £100 million from Europe, of which the Treasury had obtained no more than £68 million” (116).

Appendix II.B - Ottomans

The Ottoman Turkey arguably felt the most pressure since it suffered its first major loss of a Muslim territory to Russia in the final quarter of the eighteenth century. The treaty between the Ottomans and the Russians at the end of this conflict “showed the unequal power of the two empires and led to the loss of . . . Crimea […] The Ottoman government began to create a new army on the European model” as a result. (See Mary C. Wilson, “Introduction,” in the Modern Middle East, edited by Albert Hourani pp. 6-7).

Within half a century, Ottoman Turkey began reformation of the Empire by acquiring Western military weapons, also with the blessings of the religious leaders. Sultan Selim III (r.
1789-1808) had the support of several şeyhül-islâms in his campaigns to modernize the administratively and militarily. Heyd names a number of religious authorities (9) as supporters of Selim III, who “loyally cooperated with his successor, Sultan Mahmud II, in destroying the Janissaries, abolishing the Bektashi order and modernizing the army and State” (Heyd 30). One example would be actually the submission of a project by one of the religious authorities, Tatarcik ‘Abdu’llâh, who proposed “the adoption of Western military science and drill, the systematic translation of European technical works into Turkish, and the employment of foreign instructors and experts” (Heyd 30).

While both Selim III and his successor, Mahmud II (r. 1808-1839) enjoyed the support of some of the ʻulamâ, not everyone from the religious ranks agreed with the Westernization and modernization plans. Early in the nineteenth century, Mahmud II began by changing his own appearance: he shortened his beard and dressed like his contemporary Europeans counterparts “in frock coats and trousers” (Shaw 49). He initiated a compulsory dress code by 1829 for male civilians, soldiers, and government bureaucrats, at which time most government ranks had accepted it (ibid). What particularly did not sit well with the opposing ʻulamâ, were first, the mandatory headdress from a turban to a “red fez” (1828), and second was Mahmud having his portrait painted in the European style. This was not the first time the Sultan’s portrait was painted despite the şeyhül-islâm’s objections; Selim III had also had his portrait painted multiple times (Heyd 34). In 1836 the display of the monarch’s portrait in government offices became customary, regardless of the ʻulamâ’s “expressed . . . discontent” (ibid). The Ottoman autocratic Sultans, however, ruled undisputedly and were clear in asserting their will and power, regardless of opposition.
Among those objecting change were the softas, or the poor, underprivileged students at the madrasa (school of religious studies), who were “the breeding ground of discontent and trouble-making” for the Ottoman Empire. Whereas there existed corruption, nepotism, and class difference among the ālamā who occupied high posts in the government, the underprivileged softas were among those elements of “class-struggle within the āl[a]mā corps” that had “turned against all authority” including the modernization initiated by such authority, even the presence of the European in their midst (Heyd 35-36). Heyd discusses a divide among the religious community regarding the reforms that aligned with economic and social status of the members of the said community. He mentions an account of an incident in April 1801 involving the softas and the Russian ambassador and other diplomats, accompanied by “a few ladies,” who had been granted permission by the Ottoman government to visit the Sūleymānīye Mosque. The softas greeted the Europeans with their slippers and stones (36). While Heyd dismisses these kinds of actions as “fanaticism and narrow-mindedness” that “often far surpassed those of the ālemā leaders, I argue there is more to such incidents that, while beyond the scope of this study, merits further investigation, if one considers the affected subjectivity of these students, who were actually executed following the incident.

Nevertheless, the position the “high āl[a]mā” took on the modernization campaigns, whether expressed in verbal or written format, was in support of the said reforms, sustaining their position based on “religious law and early Islamic history or . . . on reason and common sense” (Heyd 37). I suggest that mimesis played such an important part in these decisions that legitimized the learning from the “infidel enemy.” Heyd states the ālamā’s argument as:
Djihād, the holy war against the infidels . . . was one of the foremost duties of believers. To strengthen the army of Islam by every means was therefore an important religious obligation […] [Thus,] to learn from the infidel enemy would not constitute a religiously illicit innovation (*bid‘at*) but would be an application of the legitimate maxim of *mūkābele bi-‘l-misl* or reciprocation, that is, fighting the enemy with his own weapons (Heyd 37).
APPENDIX III

The complexity of the socio-political and religious structures and class hierarchy in the Middle East in general, and in Persia in particular, is distinct from Europe (Hauser 1951, 1962, 1999). (See the chapter on Germany and the Enlightenment.) Hauser explains the situation of the middle class in Europe (France and Germany) in 17th century to be that of indifference to political affairs, “by leaving the direction of state affairs to the holders of power” (98). By 1830, however, the middle class itself is in power. Hauser in volume IV states at this time “[t]he bourgeoisie is in full possession and awareness of its power. The aristocracy has vanished from the scene of historical events and leads a purely private existence” (2). Lambton explicates the issue as refracted through initially four identifiable hierarchic classes in nineteenth century Persia. The first group, is made up of the ‘men of the sword,’ who not surprisingly initiated the modernization reforms, and came mainly from the aristocratic families. The second group, the ‘men of the pen,’ consisted of educated men, bureaucrats, and those who were active in running the administrative offices. The bureaucrats in charge of Tanzimat in Ottoman Turkey became so politically powerful that they even marginalized some of the same young men they sent to Europe to become educated. They in turn formed the Young Ottoman Turks group. (See Findlay 1982, pp 147-180). The ālamā, or the members of the religious class formed the third group, who drew power and prestige not from the secular class, “but from religious learning, and the more learned among them were regarded as the representatives of the Hidden Imam, who was, for most of the population, the ‘true king’.” Although Lambton does not make the connection, but here I want to draw attention to the relationship between the idea of the Hidden Imam and the Neoplatonic idea
of the “Perfect Human,” from which the *ulama* surely drew inspiration (Lambton 163).

Finally, the fourth group according to Lambton, was made up of the merchants, which included “big merchants,” “money-lenders,” and members of the “bazaar and shopkeepers.”

Adamson provides further information on the four groups’ origin. The classification of the Ottoman society, modeling after Plato’s *Republic*, was the work of Ottoman philosopher, contemporary of Süleyman the Ottoman sultan, Ali Çelbi Kinalizadeh. The balance between these groups, according to Kinalizadeh, was maintained by the rule of the Ottoman sultan, as he “praises Süleyman as a real-life philosopher-king.” (See Adamson 2016, 413). Lambton explains these groups

were not in any way closed groups. Two things in particular served to unite them: marriage alliance and land ownership […] As a result . . . the difference between the classes were less sharp than might otherwise have been the case. By the end of the century members of the Qajar family were to be found in almost all walks of life; they were not only provincial governors and military commanders, but also ministers and members of the bureaucracy, writers, poets and Sufis (but very rarely *ulama*) (Lambton 163-166).
The coup was the culmination of the “oil crisis” that began in 1948, as argued by the historians like Abrahamian, which ultimately led to the nationalization of Iranian oil in 1951 and the electing of Mohammad Mosaddeq as the premier by the parliament (Abrahamian 2001, 184-86). The parliament (majlis) in 1948 rejected a proposal from the Soviets to obtain concession to the oil from the northern region. The parliament also rejected an earlier Supplementary Agreement with the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company dated 1933, which was made in secret and did not consider an equal interest for Iran (Abrahamian 2001, 184). Mosaddeq’s objective was to bring Iran “full control of the oil industry.” Nonetheless, Britain could not give up control and sought to “safeguard its vital interest” by removing Mosaddeq from power (Abrahamian 2001, 187). It is clear that Mosaddeq believed true independence of Iran was not possible if foreign powers could control its natural resources through receiving concessions as it had been done during the Qajars (ibid). It is also clear that Britain, as repeatedly appeared in the classified documents, could never lose “control” of the production, process and distribution of oil in Iran, or to relinquish full control to the Iranians (Abrahamian 2001, 189). Here is an example of an old patriarchy, not willing to relinquish “control,” and is willing to use whatever means it can to ensure its position of authority and interests. Amanat notes this from the attitude of the British toward Iran as expressed through the British Foreign Minister at the time, Anthony Eden, “who had studied Persian at Christ Church and earned his degree in Oriental studies; he viewed the world through the all-too-familiar Orientalist prism and was unwilling to accept the painful prospects of a postcolonial Britain” (Amanat 2017, 544). While I believe Amanat is jumping
ahead a bit here, I think his statement is a good example of the old patriarchy’s persistence in colonial intentions. Abrahamian notes that Britain expected Mosaddeq to fail on his own, and they tried to expedite his fall “through economic pressure, propaganda campaigns, and subsidies to the opposition” (Abrahamian 2001, 190). However, when these attempts failed, “they turned to the United States and harnessed the CIA” (ibid). Abrahamian explains that while the British were awaiting the collapse of Mosaddeq’s government, they continued with a series of charades in the form of negotiations that appeared as though they were willing to come to an equitable agreement, and that the failure of negotiations was due to “Iranian intransigents” (Abrahamian 2001, 191).

Abrahamian notes that indeed in the negotiations, “the impasse came . . . because of the clashes of economic interest between imperialism and nationalism.” However, the image projected of Mosaddeq by the Westerners was one of being “backed by the communist party,” (Quoted from President Eisenhower in Abrahamian 2001, 182) “anti-foreign,” “nihilistic,” and indulgent “in an orgy of mob rule” (Abrahamian 2001, 210). Abrahamian cites the Christian Science Monitor, dated September 21-22, 1953. See also Amanat, 2017, 544.

Thus in 1952, with the support of the United States, the British moved to persuade the Shah to replace Mosaddeq. On July 21 (known as Siyeh-Tir) Mosaddeq turned to the people (Paidar 131) and declared that the British were trying to take back the control of the oil, and that the Shah was using his influence through the army to manipulate the situation. Abrahamian presents many documents written by British authorities, the Foreign Office, and the British Embassy in Tehran that described Mosaddeq in unflattering terms, but they secretly admitted that “he had captured the imagination of people” (Abrahamian 2001, 187),
and that “he still had a hold on public opinion” (ibid). The British also began a smearing campaign through the media (newspaper and BBC). The Observer characterized Mosaddeq as “a ‘Robespierre fanatic,’ and a ‘tragic Frankenstein’ with a ‘gigantic head’ impervious to ‘common sense’ but obsessed with one xenophobic idea’ (May 10, 1951)” (Abrahamian 2001, 193). It is at this time that the crowds took to the streets “from the National Front,” to the “communist Tudeh party;” however, the day ended in bloodshed (Abrahamian 2001, 195). See also Amanat 2017, 540. Amanat notes people on the street chanted, “[w]e sacrificed our lives, we write with our blood: either death or Mosaddeq,” which was “voiced by ordinary people, [who] saw in Mosaddeq not merely a political leader but a savior of the Iranian nation” (ibid).

The United States ambassador, Loy Henderson concurred with the British Charge d’Affaires on the idea that only a coup d’état could now bring the events to a close to the benefit of the Western powers. Paidar argues that the Americans initially supported the nationalization of the Iranian oil because of their own competition with the British; however, they became “alarmed” as they saw the involvement of the pro-Soviet Tudeh Party (Paidar 131). Abrahamian notes it was the British that led the Americans to believe this, as the Tudeh Party at this time was in no position to threaten the government (from a BBC Persian interview, August 26, 2013). He comments that up until this point, the Americans were more inclined to exert “economic pressures and constitutional means to remove Mosaddeq” (2001, 196). Nevertheless, the CIA and MI6 began preparing for a coup through a plan called TRAJAX. The TRAJAX plan was a consolidation of MI6 “blue print named Operation Boot” and of CIA operation named “Bedamn,” a project they had initiated against the spread of Communism, and particularly the Tudeh party (Abrahamian 2001, 197). What the Americans lacked in information about the key personalities in Iran, the British more than made up
through their connections and business affiliates, whether in the army, among the merchants, or in the various tribes (Abrahamian 2001, 199-200). This soon changed and Americans like Wilber and Cottam became instrumental in the 1953 coup, by which time “the Tudeh Party’s support for Mosaddeq [sic] had weakened” and the prominent clergy, Kashani, who had supported him to this point, changed sides as well (Paidar 131).

Recently unclassified documents released from the U.S. government reveal that Ayatollah Kashani (who was part of the National Front, a party founded by Mosaddeq), had been in contact with the U.S. embassy and the CIA prior to the coup d’état. The documents prove however, that Ayatollah Behbahani, received large sums in monetary assistance (that became known as Behbahani Dollars) to helped mobilize a number of unsavory characters, including Sha’ban Jafari and Tayeb Haj Rezai in support of the monarch during the demonstrations two days prior to the August 19, 1953. (Kambiz Fatahi from BBC-Persian report broadcast on July 22, 2017). The clergy, as a result, remained an important player.
NOTES

1 Foucault, [1967], p.368.

2 The criticism of the fact that the terms “West” and the “Middle East” do exist, and utilized by nearly everyone is beyond the boundaries of this study. However, I have been mindful of its problematic nature.

3 Is it possible there is a connection between this oversight and Baudrillard’s criticism of Foucault?

4 One such example, found in the ancient Mesopotamia, is the Stele of Hammurabi that shows Hammurabi receiving the divine laws from the deity, Shamash.


7 Grun, Remondino, and Zhang, (September 2004), pp. 77-199.

8 It can be argued that the current destructions of works of art by the radical groups which are recorded and shared across social media are to construct their own image.

9 The term patriarchy, while undoubtedly tied to the history of its development, is meant here in a broader context, which is not limited to gender, or even individual. Viewed from the perspective of power, it is inseparable from inequity; it fosters collective subjectivity through religious interpretations and social, political, and economic apparatuses.

10 By free here I mean being subject to oneself, not to any group or political agenda.

11 This is a criticism of Hegel’s dialectic that argues for a progression out of conflict toward the unity of self-consciousness. It is noteworthy the root of the word “art” is “ar” (plural ars) means to join, to bring together.
12 This is an extrapolation on Said’s theory; historically, the difference in religions has played a key role in highlighting the differences between the West and the Middle East.


14 References come from Augustine’s City of God (Book XVIII), and Thomas Aquinas’s On Kingship: To the King of Cyprus (Chapter 14). Both philosophers draw parallels between what God creates/does and what the church/king should do and stand for. Also, there is compelling argument for the affinity between Neoplatonism and Islamic thought made by scholars in Neoplatonism and Islamic Thought, edited by Parviz Morewedge, to which I will be returning for a more in-depth investigation.

15 Foucault uses “apparatus” to point to mechanisms that are for “transforming human beings” ([1975] 1977). In an article, “What is dispositif?” (1988), Giles Deleuze unpacks Foucault’s “apparatus,” and explicates it in terms of lines: “curves of visibility, . . . utterance, […] lines of force, […] and . . . lines of subjectivations” (in French Philosophy since 1945, 398-399).

16 This is not unlike the Aristotelian cathartic formula, for the outcome is a collective experience of purging of that which can be counter-productive to the state.

17 By ideology here I mean ideas that are representative of a particular group and are meant to legitimize their political domination and to artificially unite.

18 This raises the question of: How does one avoid such pitfall, when engaged in intellectual or philosophical discourse? I consider constant examination of one's thought through dialogical discourses to be a possible solution.
I believe it was in a process of going back and forth, from the moment that the Cartesian “I” was perceived, to when it crossed the border into Germany to be the center of the Idealists’ philosophy, bouncing off of the Analytical philosophy in Great Britain, to bringing Hegel from Germany over to France, through Kojeve’s lectures, it is all within the frame of each as each other’s “other” that new ideas in European philosophy emerged in the mid to late twentieth century.

Heidegger notes that something compels the humans to “set upon” the resources, thus to enframe, but he does not elaborate on it.


It is true that what Nietzsche says here, were interpreted to suit the Nazis’ ISA even though what Nietzsche means here is regarding the individual striving for excellence. I think it is intriguing to note the relationship between art and power on the one hand and the individual versus the collective on the other. After all, Nietzsche considers this “forming” a sort of art, which makes the overlapping of art and power unavoidable.

A prevalent example that is found under every dome and on every rug design is that of a cosmic medallion with a focal point at the center.

I must add that the individuality in the West has always been fragile and in flux and by no means a fixed destination.

The events following the September 11 demonstrated a reveres, in passing patriot acts, and similar measures, that rolled back individual freedoms in the United States.

A similar example is during the Iran-Iraq war that proved successful (for those in power) in uniting the country that was threatening to fracture by diverse political groups, which were growing in discontent toward the government that was slowly solidifying its total grip on power.
This is true, perhaps until more recent events, about which I shall continue to investigate.

By free society I mean a society that respects and protects individual rights and freedoms. Also, “the struggle for critique,” is a means to counter the possibility of these struggles turning into hegemonic move themselves.


Iskandar and the Hermit, from “Khamsa Nizami,” attributed to Mir Mussavir, 1535-1540. The story bears a striking resemblance to the mystic story of a supposed meeting between Alexander and Diogenes.

The term “event” here may be similar to what Alain Badiou uses in Being and Event. Badiou’s event is applied with regards to philosophy and its conditioning of “truth procedures” external to and distinct from it (Badiou xviii); here, I use the term “event” to point to the seismic shifts of power, whether political, artistic, or ideological, in which one rises to a dominant position from a rift.

I will include the fact that patriarchy has abandoned many fronts that once held tightly, such as education, right to vote, etc. due to spreading of consciousness in those areas.

On a broader perspective, as argued by Adunis (1930 - ), the Syrian poet, both Shi’ites and Sunnis are affected with the notion of the dissolving the “I” into the greater unity. (Antoon, July 11, 2011, Aljazeera Opinion) [http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2011/07/201179124452158992.html], retrieved November 20, 2015.

There were moves from the merchant class, under the leadership of the clergy that boycotted and severely criticized any governmental patronage of the arts. This took place while the government of Iran during the 1970s, right up to just before the revolution of 1979,

35 The support of this group proved extremely influential in the Iranian Revolution of 1979.

36 It is noteworthy that what sparked the flames of the 1979 revolution, was the setting fire to a movie theater in Abadan, southwest of Iran, on August 19, 1978 at which 470 people perished, while watching a politically controversial film.

37 Shayegan 7.


40 Ibid.


42 Ibid.

43 The other side of the problem is “translation,” which I will discuss in the next segment.

44 In clarifying this distinction, Benveniste introduced the two terms “subject of the enunciation” and the “subject of the enounced” ([1966] 1971).

45 The speaking subject shaping the “other,” is addressed by Mikhail Bakhtin in *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics* (1999).
Lacan has explicated it as the “aggressive turn of the subject on the other” (*Ecrits* 1966). I argue, it is the fear of the aggression that compels the individual, although unwillingly at times, to submit to the collective consciousness.

The superiority issue is a problem that will remain outside the boundaries of this study and merits a separate project. David Graeber has thoroughly addressed the problem of conflict between the early communities, to which I will return in chapter two.

Shayegan 3.

Here I focus on Western philosophy, because the Islamic philosophy, at least the branch that became dominant, is mostly entangled with religion, and preoccupied with the metaphysics, therefore its definition of the group or individual is within that context (Yazdchi, 2013).

I use “re-interpretation’ here, because Plato has already interpreted his vision in his Allegory of the Cave.

R. Bain Harris notes the idea that there is a real versus an illusionistic world is not a new idea and existed in ancient Greece as well as in Hindu writings, however it is an imaginary idea. He states “[i]t is only a presupposition and not a scientific fact. It is a hypothesis and a point of faith, since its verification is beyond that which can be scientifically ascertained” (Preface, ix-x).

Harris, ix.

In addition to Plotinus’s own interpretation of his imagined system, the collection and editing of his teachings by Porphyry adds another level of interpretation, which was not immune to “exaggeration” (Corrigan 1), adding another layer of interpretation to the text.
Harris states in the Preface of *Neoplatonism and Western Aesthetics*, that a system of “evaluation” dominates Plotinus’s philosophy, in which the different components are valued at how much “real” or “illusion” there is within them (ix).

This is possibly a link between Neoplatonism and what Kant argued much later. The difference however is that Kant aims to untie the subject from being predicated on the Divine, by focusing on the unification between the universal in our faculties and the subsequent knowledge.

Will to Power, p. 85, 86.

The notion of beauty and ugliness is also significant during Renaissance and dictated much of the standardizing of the art. Giorgio Vassari in his *Lives*, elaborates what these standards are with regards to the High Renaissance artists such as Leonardo and Michelangelo.


Ibid.


Qtd. in Adamson from Gerhard Endress (1973).

One such groups is the Mu’tazilites, which I have discussed in more details in chapter five.

Adamson 2002, 1.

Gutas, in his first chapter refers to the agents of intellectual activities as “international scholars . . . active in the Near East,” who were “practicing their profession” (116).
Adamson notes that the “Arabic Plotinus” is actually made up of three texts, out of which, the *Theology of Aristotle* is the longest of the two. The Arabic edition of all three texts was published in 1955 by Abdurrahman Badawi, the source of Adamson’s reference.

Gutas mentions although many Abbasid caliphs contributed to this task, due to propaganda, most of the credit has gone to Harun ar Rashid, and his son Ma’mun (Gutas 122-25). I found further evidence of dedication of the scholarly work conducted during the two centuries of translation to other caliphs and princes, such as al-Mu’tasam and his son, Ahmad, in the *Great Islamic Encyclopaedia* (vol.6, pp. 579, 582).

*Ricoeur 2006, xiii.*

Marx has addressed this in chapter 24, volume I of his *Capital*, which explicates how the surplus value is transformed into capital. While I understand Marx wrote his book with the economic concerns, I believe it can be argued that there is also an economy in adding to meaning in the context of text and image.

*Asad’s note is on his criticism of Godfrey Lienhardt’s paper, “Modes of Thought,” (1954), in which Lienhardt notes: “The problem of describing to others how members of a remote tribe think . . . begins to appear largely as one of translation, of making the coherence primitive thought has in the languages it really lives in, as clear as possible in our own (97). Qtd by Asad (1993, 172).*

*Shayegan 4.*

*Dabashi surveys an impressive list of Persophiles and Persian subjects in their works, from Montesquieu’s *Persian Letters*, to Nietzsche’s *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. He cites Xenophon’s *Cyropaedia* (ca. 370 BCE), and Cyrus Cylinder to point to the issues of
tolerance and diversity, but he does very little to bring up the fact that such artistic and cultural products have yet to be critically studied.


76 Arkoun 1992, 17, cited by Abu Zayd (83).

77 Arkoun 1992, 56, cited by Abu Zayd (84).

78 This is because, Arkoun argues God (or Allah) cannot be problematic, since the understanding is “He has revealed Himself in his own words.”

79 Qtd from Abu Zayd 2006, p. 85.

80 Kamali notes specific examples that in his view indicate, and even ensure, such freedoms. For example “the principle of hisbah . . . commanding good and forbidding evil, nasiha, or sincere advice, shura or consultation, ijtihad or independent juristic reasoning” (2).

81 Interpreting the Self, 2.

82 I have discussed in my final chapter, the ideas of thinkers such as Shabestari, Soroush, and others in more details.

83 Yazdchi quotes from a text titled Seyed Ahmad Fardid, Didar Farahi va Fotouhat Akhar e Zaman, by Mohammad Madadpour, p. 77.

84 Foucault 2000.

85 Althusser and Foucault both refer to such apparatuses in terms such as RSA or dispositif, respectively.

86 We witness this in liberal feminism in how they focused on women winning the same rights as men. In response, radical feminism asserted, it was not adequate to just allow
women in society to take on the same positions as men, unless the issues of misogyny and violence against women were addressed. Further, the cultural feminists sought an identity for women, which they argued was rooted in the tradition of femininity, and that it “was simply better than masculinity” (Eller 16).

87 This is not limited to the visual arts and it has been extended and developed into creating property, such as in brand names.

88 Patriarchy also absorbs that which it cannot bring to conform, particularly in the artistic achievements.

89 Graeber (2012) discusses in length how the debt economy gave rise and strengthened patriarchy in his chapter 7.


91 Ibid, xxxiv.

92 http://LAFF-experiment.org. Here, I am reminded of Foucault’s Order of Things, where he contextualizes the way we organize in opposites, which he sees as a way of othering (xxiv).

93 I consider individuality in relation to the idea of a dominant power, a volatile issue. Even in the most politically progressive societies in the West today, we often find the individual rights and freedoms, particularly concerning women, at the core of hot-button political debates.

94 Feminists have given a specific date of five thousand years, but Eller disagrees that the prehistory was matriarchal (2000, 3).

95 Patriarchy and matriarchy imply binary divisions, and together they have a patriarchal connotations. There is no evidence that female or mother-centered societies did not follow the same structure as what they changed into as such societies (Eller 2000, 6).
Bergson, [1910], 1951, x.

Lerner makes a distinction between “history” and “history-making” with the latter being a “historical creation” from the time of the invention of writing in ancient Mesopotamia (1986, 4).

Spivy 2005, 14.


Ibid.

V.S. Ramachandran in an article demonstrates the link between the neurological activities of the brain and visual experience, with what becomes dominant in art (1999, pp. 15–51). I will be discussing the issue of “exaggeration” in chapter three.


Breuil (1877-1961) argued that the cave paintings were connected to ritual activities and that the caves were places of worship, hence saw the art as sympathetic magic (Spivy 27).

Freeman (1987).

This study was the result of examination of patient who had reported having visual hallucinations (Ffytch, 2004). Indeed there is a condition called Charles Bonnet Syndrome that causes vivid visual hallucinations.

Lewis-Williams argues that the Paleolithic artists painted images that had come to them in an “altered state of consciousness” inside the dark caves (2002, 41).
It is not just cultural theorists, but those among environmentalists, Afro-centrists and others who have created the “matriarchal myths” that have in turn become, “by default,” “the feminist account of prehistory” (Eller 29).

Foucault notes how information and knowledge collected, published and distributed, can become a source of authority. (1994).

The reference is the cradle of civilization in Mesopotamia, and its early centers of urban life.

Both Nietzsche and Foucault have pointed this out.


Eller notes: “the iconography of Mycenaean Greek religion is ‘overwhelmingly feminine,’ but written tablets reveal that a host of additional deities—significantly male deities—were also worshipped.” She also notes similarities in Iron Age Israel, which while “adamantly monotheistic,” they kept “female figurines of a specific type: . . . [with] a ‘pillar’ base, breasts and molded head . . . Scholars have termed these Dea Nutrix or ‘nourishing deity” (141).


This is significant since both the Middle East and Europe trace their heritage back to the ancient Mesopotamia.

After exploring the traditionalist/religious views that place women’s inferiority to men as a natural and God-created relationship, and giving Engels credit for redefining the sexual relationships in terms of “changing social relations,” to feminist theories relying on the “matriarchal” theories, not based on evidence, but based on myth, she arrives at the
conclusion that “most egalitarian societies are to be found among hunting/gathering tribes, which are categorized by economic interdependency” (29).

118 Lerner 54.

119 Graeber 182.


122 It must be noted in his Republic, Book 7, Plato deemed both men and women to possess virtues in theory and ideally (Plato’s Republic 236); however, in the real world, Aristotle’s biological statements was more influential and had political and social ramifications.

123 There are numerous accounts of Persian literature and poetry from the middle Ages that echo Aristotelian view on men and women.

124 Graeber demonstrates the complexity of the honor issue for men, versus the reducing of it to one thing for women. He points out that it was an aristocratic thing to loath commerce, because it was a symbol for interdependence. However, in reality the markets operated and money and goods exchanged hands. Further, he notes the veiling custom was adopted for the Greek women, from the Assyrians, which contrary to the “stereotypes” about Western civilizations’ roots of democracy and freedoms, was in contrast to Persia and Syria.
While it has been predominantly accepted that the roots of monotheism is linked with Abraham, there are other evidence pointing to monotheistic tendencies elsewhere, such as Hammurabi (1792-1750 BCE) and Akhenaton (1353-1336 BCE) (Shalain 71).

Shlain 1998, 80.

Lerner notes the importance of keeping in mind the complexity of the formation of the writing of the book of Genesis, which took place over a period of “roughly four hundred years” (162).

Lerner’s extensive research identifies three written versions of the Book of Genesis, by the hands of three different authors. She distinguishes between the narrative of J (for Yahweh), and the version called P (a merged version between the text written by an author called Elohist ‘E,’ and the J version). The accounts of the creation of Eve in the P version is different than the J text (162).

Reference in the Bible to the letters sent to the Persian king complaining about what Ezra was planning to do (Bible: Nehemia and Ezra’s books).

This notion can also be seen as giving intangible, divine characteristic to a material thing, namely blood in this case, another version of an artistic representation to its criticism this study has been devoted.

The nomadic and semi-nomadic patriarchal tribes, as described in the Book of Genesis, were comprised of clans, a community of families, each family made up of “a man, his wife, his sons and their wives and children, his unmarried daughters, and his servants.” Clans unified under a common ancestry or leader, would form a tribe. Blood strengthened the bond between the members to such a degree that imposed the responsibility of protecting members of the same blood against others, and bringing vengeance upon their adversaries (163).
132 Book of Ezra, Chapter 10, verses 7-16, 18. Ezra speaks on how those in Jerusalem had sullied the blood of the “chosen people” by marrying outside their Jewish heritage, and proclaims these actions as “abomination.” This is an example of what I will refer to as intra-alterity.

133 In Ezra, Chapter 4, when he mentions “the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin,” who had written letters to the Persian king in opposition of rebuilding the temple (Ezra 4:1-24), he is referring to those who were the residents of the city of Jerusalem but did not follow the strict code Ezra was advocating.

134 Lerner brings in the example of Rachel’s theft of the ‘teraphim’ from her father’s house to her husband’s house. While her reference is meant to show the “changes from matrilocality to patrilocality,” I think it also reveals an important connection with respect to the subject of interest in this study (168). There are numerous extant examples of teraphim, one even discovered in Israel recently, in February 2016 (http://www.cnn.com/2016/02/25/middleeast/israel-boy-finds-ancient-figurine/).

135 Stokstad, and Cothren 2011, 462.

136 I am arguing that fear, much like the sexual instinct as argued by Freud, is subject to deferment. Freud (2011).


138 The imagination therefore, can help cover the gap between form and content. Kristeva notes the issue of gap, and that we are born into fear and gap; we strive to fill that gap over our life time. Further, Heidegger’s essence of being as time, can prompt the fear of time in not knowing the future.

139 Bevan explains there was a universal belief that connected the supernatural with material, the law that connected a waxen figure of someone hated was believed to be
connected to the individual whose image it represented, and whose presence could be altered through the altering, or destruction of the image (28).

I could have included emotions such as pleasure or pain, however in recognition of the limitations of this study, I chose “fear” and “pity.” Kristeva notes humans are born with fear, and that it is pre-form and objectless. It is critical as it comes out when confronted with its “other” (6).

The quote within the quote is from Burke, page 36.

These emotions are focused on by Aristotle, not as random examples of human emotions Plato wished to suppress, but specifically as two emotions tied closely to the success or failure of action (Poetics, xxi).

Spivy 2005, 47-49.

Spivy 2005, 40.

By “historic” I mean what monotheistic religions have unfolded in time, with the blending of pre-existing practices and beliefs.

Gombrich 1969, 114.

A manifestation of this point can be seen in the long, self-proclaimed title of the ISIS leader, Abubakr al-Baghdadi, al-Husseini al-Hashemi, al-Qurashi, in which he is laying claims to the first successor of the Prophet, followed by names that designate his political lineage.

This is usually done with concern to solidify political power. The recognition of the power of imagery has a long history. From prehistoric time to the classical Greece, to Persian and the Roman Empires, there are countless numbers of artifacts, motifs and buildings that testify to this.

This view has been so prevalent that authors such as Shlain, or Kirsch, have often compared monotheism and polytheism in a binary way, concluding that monotheism has had less religious tolerance. Kirsch quotes Freud at the beginning of his book: “[r]eligious intolerance was inevitably born with the belief in one God” (1).

This is rather more of a complex issue than I can tackle within the limits of this project; there are two parts to this argument: first why the Germans could not read Hegel as the French did, and second, how subjectivity is informed by alterity. Further investigation on the second part shall be deferred to future projects.

I thought a comparison between Bowie and Keenan’s book covers was so revealing of this point.

The reference is to Keenan’s book. Each contributing author reveals a different aspect of Hegel’s work.

Belting (2011).

Belting 2011, 3.

I will discuss this in the optical theory of Ibn al-Haytham, in Chapter Four.

Belting mentions this story quoting from the Sultan following the revealing of the images of the angels, and seeing them for the first time in the former church: “[h]ow beautiful they are! But we must plaster them over again, since our religion forbids them” (55).


Kristeva states “[p]urification is something only the Logos is capable of” (27).

The reference is to the paintings on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, in which Michelangelo included nude male figures not part of the Biblical narratives. Further, Veronese’s inclusion of multiple figures and characters, as well as “lack of decorum” in his
painting, *Feast in the House of Lévi* (1573), brought him in front of the inquisition tribunal in July 18, 1573.

161 Mir Emad Hassani (1554-1615) is an example to mention here. He was assassinated on the order of the king, Shah Abbas in 1615 due to being suspected of having Sunni inclinations. His body was left on the street for a few day, for no one had the courage to bury him (Soudavar, 272).


164 Floor & Herzig. 2012, 1.

165 Babayan notes Shah Isma’il’s view of himself as the legendary king, Jamshid, is reflected in his book of poetry (*Divan*) (2002, xxix-xxx).

166 It is the premise of this study that “individuality” is a step, and not the objective, in the process toward arriving at a society/community that is predicated on fairness and concerns for human rights.

167 As an example here, I can quote Schiller, who wrote: “[m]an must pass through the aesthetic condition, from the merely physical, in order to reach the rational or moral. The aesthetic condition itself has no significance—all it does is to restore Man to himself, so that he can make of himself what he wills.” (Schiller 2004, 12).

168 Nietzsche uses these terms in *On the Genealogy of Morality*, to explain how this trait becomes inherent at the cost of individuality. He states: “The strange limitation of human development, its hesitant, long-drawn out, frequently recoiling and cyclic nature, is
due to the fact that the herd instinct of obedience is inherited most easily and at the expense of the art of giving commands” (Cambridge [2006]147).

169 Newman 2012, 8.


171 The seven members, ahl-I Ikhtisas, or “persons singled out for special duty . . . played . . . a vital role in bringing the Safavid revolution to a successful conclusion” (Savory 1980, 21-22).

172 Babayan points to Ismai’il’s “charismatic persona” (2002, xxxi), while Savory seems more realistic about the fact that the young Isma’il could not have accomplish what he accomplished without the help of the advisers (22).

173 Newman discusses the efforts Uzun Hassan made on multi-levels, from political marriages to paying homage to urban, rural and tribal constituencies in an attempt to bring them all together under a “universalist discourse” (10).

174 Babayan explains “[d]uring the revolutionary phase (1477-1501), the Qizilbash composed mainly of Turkmen converts to the Safavi cause, had organized themselves militarily into oymaqs, a Mongol term loosely translated as ‘tribe’” (2002, xxxix).

175 Savory 1980, 23.

176 Junayd and Haydar, Isma’il’s grandfather and father had converted members of the tribe in Anatolia and Syria, but not all had converted (Babayan 2002, xxxix).


178 This example was discussed in the second chapter.
V.S. Ramachandran in his theories on the ‘science of art’ argues that human brain is “hard-wired to concentrate perceptive focus upon objects with pleasing association, or those parts of objects that matter most” (Spivy 59).

Although Spivy specifically focuses on the visual exaggeration, I argue there is no reason this cannot be extended to other aspects of human activities.

Düttmann 2007, 5.

http://www.coldbacon.com/poems/fq.html, accessed October 20, 2016. Also, Spivy quotes from Elliot to conclude “human trait of distorting images of the body seems to be pervasive in many cultures (81).

While I don’t argue with Newman on the heterogeneity of Isma’il’s discourse, I do see a distinction between “heterogeneity” and “contradictory.” Isma’il calling himself both Faridun and Zohak in the same poem, is exemplary of this point that reveals his Neoplatonic (as explicated in the Unity of Existence) views.

Canby, 1999, 10-11.

Bloom and Blair (2002). Both Sasanian and the Byzantine emperors had puppet regimes and claims in the Arabian Peninsula.


A major conflict I have found is the form of government which has gone from a form of voting (bay’at) at the time of the prophet or his son in law Ali, to the formation of dynastic rule that has endured in the Middle East in one form or another for over fourteen centuries.

Grabar rightly points out that the formation of the Islamic art was not because of religious or intellectual directives, but rather it was the “result of the impact on the Arabs of the prevalent art” (Grabar 1987, 93).
It is important to distinguish between Gnosticism and philosophy here. Plato and his true follower Plotinus tried to philosophize the Gnostic viewpoint. Plotinus often criticized Gnostics who pointed to God for example, but in reality had no plan or program to teach how to reach God. What Plotinus did was to use reasoning to establish the idea of human potential to reach divine status (Pagels 1989, 135).

This took place through the translation movements in Medieval Islam, and as emphasized by some scholars, through the work of someone by the name of the Arabic Plotinus. Peter Adamson in his book by the same title notes that the Arabic Plotinus did not just translate the *Enneads* into Arabic; he rather added innovative philosophical thoughts there as well (2002, 1-3). The connection has also been brought up by Gutas (1998), in which he argues for a political reason behind the translation movement (2).


Nasr 1987, 139. There are enough examples in Persian literature alone just on this topic to support this claim that will require many volumes to fill, but is beyond the scope of this study.


Bloom and Blair 2002, 228-29.


Ernst (2008).
An example would be the carpet medallion and under the-dome designs that are reflective of the cosmic patterns according to the mystics.


Ibn Arabi (1980), xiii. Burckhardt uses these terms I have placed in quotation marks and says Ibn Arabi’s “thought . . . lacks a certain cohesion” because of it.

Ibn Arabi (1980), 45. In the Preface of his book, Ibn Arabi says that he saw the Apostle of God (meaning Prophet Mohammad) in a vision, who gave him the book called Fusus al Hikam, which he then decided to embark on writing the Bezels of Wisdom.

Ibn Arabi (1980), xii. Burckhardt points out that such works are contemporary with the Bezels of Wisdom.


Ibn Arabi (1980), 50. The well-known phrase of “I was a hidden treasure who longed to be known, therefore I created the world” is among the Muslim esoteric belief that sums up Divine motive in creation. An echo of this thought can be heard from the German
Idealists such as Fichte, who believed consciousness happens in “reflexive splitting” (Bowie 73).


214 Nasr 1987, 139, 181.

215 Ibid. See also 57, 58, and 113.

216 In Meydan e Naghsh e Jahan, the inclusive polity of the Safavids was duly reflected in Ali Qapu, (as the symbol of the government), the Masjid e Jameh (representing the religious community –shari’a), Masjid e Shaykh Lotfollah (representative of the Sufi sect – tariqa), and the bazaar, or the markets (the economic side –commerce).

217 Babayan explains: “Semnani’s ontology construed divine self-manifestation as occurring only through intermediaries who acted as mirrors of the divine, active witnesses of his essence” (2002, 99).

218 Just as views of philosophers like Democritus are completely left out from Plato’s philosophy, in comparison, Luther’s Ninety Five Theses, even though initially was an internal debate, was translated and leaked beyond the ecclesiastical circle.


220 This has been essentially what every philosopher in the history of philosophy has striven for (Russell 1972, xiii).

221 The use of the term “Islamic” as a prefix to Islamic art itself is problematic, since there are no instructions or prescriptions in Islam regarding devotional art or any type of art (Mirmobiny 2010, 1-7).

222 Gruber investigates the attitude of “preservation” as opposed to “destruction” of the works of painting in seventeenth-century Ottoman Empire (Gruber 2018, 95).
Recorded by one of the earliest biographers of Prophet Mohammad, Ibn Ishāq (d. 768), and al-Bukhārī (d. 870) who recorded the Prophet’s accounts or hadith. (Gruber, 2010).

Gruber & Colby [2010], 299.

Gruber & Colby, p. 29.


Gruber, 2010.


Gruber 2010, 4.


Gruber 2013, 12.

Foucault 1994, xxiv.

Gray 1977, 15.

According to Miller there were contacts as early as the fifth century BCE; she points out that there were Athenians in Persia who “sought the protection of the king when they suffered political reversal at home” (Miller 1997, 97-104).

In Shahnama, Firdowsi goes as far as declaring Alexander’s mother to be the Persian princess who marries Philip following Philip’s defeating the king. Shahnama, verse no. 2537 (Firdowsi 1979, 345). Alexander arrived in Persia through Anatolia and Mesopotamia in 334 defeating Darius III. On overthrowing the Persian Empire by Alexander see Stokstad 2008, 46.

Babayan notes the idea of the “Universal Man,” which she calls “perfect individual,” during the Safavid was understood as where “sufism, philosophy, Shi’ism and ghuluww merged (2002, xlv).

Worthington (2012).
Unfortunately this statement sometime is mistranslated as “God is great!” which is inaccurate; for example as appears in Bloom and Blair (2002, 99). ‘Akbar’ in ‘Allahu Akbar’ is a comparative adjective in Arabic meaning “greater.” This makes a significant difference when explaining the first principle of Islamic belief and the difference between the Creator and the created.

Another example to consider is Martin Luther’s criticism of the Catholic Church, arguing the point of conflict in the issuance of the “indulgences.” Luther points this out in his 95 Theses, no. 6 (Stokstad1995. pp.73, 234-35, 248-49).


Matthews 1993, 5.

I found many conflicting statements in the King James Bible quoted from Jesus for instance, that has the same problematic nature as the philosophy behind the Islamic art does, in that it adheres more to the Gnostic belief of unity than to monotheism. References to “son of God” (e.g. Luke 1:35) and “son of man,” (e.g. Mark, 10:45) are a couple of such examples. If we understand monotheism as the belief in one God, then here again the difference between the Creator and the created becomes muddled. (Mirmobiny 2010).


Corrigan 2005, 23.

This statement not only points to the imperfection of the child and the necessity of the father, but also sets the goal as to becoming like the father.

Although Plato believed women could lead the Republic, this did not change the patriarchal structure by any means.
The life of Plotinus is recorded through the words of his pupil Porphyry in the *Enneads* 1992, 1. Also, Corrigan 2005, pp. 1-2.

Deleuze and Guattari (1987).

I will discuss Lacan’s theory in detail in the next segment.

In sufi literature it is often the sage or the master, who acts as a mirror.

It is important to note here that the human freedom project in Kant is reliant upon this very point.


It is significant that this starting point begins in France, but moving the other direction (from France to Germany) it finds a level of consciousness through the works of the German philosophers. This is another instance of consciousness through alterity, investigation of which however is beyond the scope of this paper and shall be deferred to a future project.

Here I would like to make a distinction (gap) between the Abrahamic monotheism and Neoplatonism. My argument is predicated upon this difference, so far as there is the discussion of human interchangeability with the Divine (or the ability to unify with it), that makes this substitution possible. In my research I found that there is essentially a fundamental difference between the Abrahamic monotheism and Neoplatonism. Here, I argue the Christianity that is present is one that has been already mingled with Neoplatonism.

Quoted in Keenan 219.

Bowie 2, 49, and 98.

The reference is to Kant’s “sublime.”
This “paradoxical principle” in Novalis finds impressions in Adorno’s Negative Dialectics, in which he (Novalis) proposes bringing “systemlessness . . . into a system” (Bowie, 94).

Here is where I think Derrida is paying close attention to Heidegger.

I also detect presence of Freud here with the notion of adaptation and ego.

This may be true about all patriarchies, which can explain the adaptability and their longevity that results from how each patriarchy comes to terms with the conflict between the two.

Babayan cites precursor attacks such as on Hallaj (d. 922), Yahya Sohrevardi (d. 1191), indicative of the said fragmentation. (2002, 98).

The reference here is the story of the Ustad Yusufi Tarkishduz, from being enthroned by Shah Abbas I, and overthrown in three days, followed by his execution as well as the suppression of the group Nuqtavis that ensued (Babayan 2002, 4). Further, during the confrontations with other Nuqtavis, such as Dervish Kamal, the conflict of his belief in what can claim sanctity was exposed. Therefore, Shah Abbas I’s “survival was linked to a move away from past beliefs” (Babayan 2002, 107).

Babayan asserts that a number of revolts that had been suppressed, such as the Nuqtavis in 1593, and Dervish Reza in 1631, in addition to the declining power of the Qizilbash, as well as the ongoing debates that began to question the supremacy of the Safavi kings by contesting the power, both spiritual and temporal, in favor of the jurisprudence made it necessary for the king to “rely on legal (shari’a) rather than popular legitimacy to rule” (406).

Babayan 2002, 91.

Babayan 2002, 95.
Adamson 2015, 196.

Adamson also notes: “[a] century after Ptolemy, Plotinus took a great interest in astrology, devoting a treatise to the topic and discussing it at length in other treatises” (2015, 201). Although Plotinus did not believe in the influence of the heavenly bodies on souls, he “accepts that the universe is bound together by a kind of sympathy” (ibid).


Babayan and Babaei 2004, 7.

Ibid.

Babayan and Babaei. p. 8.

The example of the “appeal of the Nuqtavis” has already been discussed.

Among artists, who voluntarily had removed themselves from the service of the court is Reza Abbasi, whose change of his subject matter during the period (1603-10) attest to this. Newman writes that Abbasi painted “older men as dervishes and laborers he saw in the city” (Newman 69).

The two opposing scholars, preceding Mullā Sadrā have been identified by Adamson, as the two “feuding” schools in Shiraz; Sadr al-Din Dashtaki and Jalal al-Din Dawani (Adamson 2016, 373).

Adamson 2016, pp. 388-389. A note I shall have to come back to in a separate research project is the relationship between Ibn al Haytham’s optics and the notion of light as manifestation of existence, with creation emanating as rays of light (Adamson 2016, 82). In my view, Ibn al Haytham’s theory of optics, which could have led to the point of one person’s view/perspective (i.e. individual perspective), had Muslims not followed the Neoplatonic path of linking it with the Divine, it could have had a major impact on the awareness of the subject. Instead, Ibn al Haytham’s (known as Alhazen in the West) theory
became influential in Europe, and the linear perspective, as investigated by Belting (2011, 136, 254). Additionally, Adamson notes the significance of al Haytham’s theory of optics, as influencing the Western thinkers such as Roger Bacon and Kepler. He states: “[t]his was only one of the bright ideas to emerge from mathematical thought in the Islamic world, and to illuminate the European scientific tradition. Ibn al-Haytham’s whole project, in the tradition of authors like Euclid and Ptolemy, was an application of geometry to the problem of explaining sight (2016, 83).


280 The philosopher has been named by Adamson, as the elder Dashatki, one of the feuding parties within the Shiraz School (Adamson 2016, 387).

281 This is where the individual experience is undermined in Mullā Sadrā’s philosophy and becomes idealized.

282 Adamson cites this from a work by Porphyry that “is lost to us but was known in Arabic.” It suggests that when we know we have knowledge that “our minds literally becomes identical to the things known” (ibid).

283 Hourani, Khory & Wilson, 1993.

284 Vahdat argues within the context of modernism in the Middle East “progress is codified as the mere development of science and technology and their application to the social sphere” (Vahdat 2003, 129).

285 Here I am differentiating between hegemony as experienced in ancient times, as in Persian or Roman Empires, with the consciousness Freud demonstrated that the individual has a history as well.
It is interesting that the technology that exists today, such as phone, camera, computers, developed for military purposes first. Friedrich Kittler in *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* notes while “radar installation, missile bases . . . will be connected to computers . . . and thus will remain operational in wartime […] pleasure is produced as a by-product: people are free to channel-surf among entertainment media” (Kittler 1). My argument is predicated on the understanding that military success for the Europeans was the reassurance of the place of the Eurocentric “I.”

Although, these artistic productions sometimes came out of commercialization of the medium, specifically evident in the advent of photography, the sparks of critical thinking is visible across almost all the mediums the artists experimented with in the Middle East.

As apparent from the poetry, an age old tradition of art form, the only “I” that is spoken of, is one that which has found itself dissolved in the “beloved” (see poems by Rumi, Hafiz and many others).

By “capitalized” I mean art that develops into state sponsored projects, or part of the State Apparatus, which becomes either a source of pride or propaganda. In either case, it undermines a conscious and independent subject. I am very cognizant of the role of imagination in that which is “capitalized,” and crafted to work in the interest of patriarchy.


My reference is exemplified in artifacts such as Stele of Hammurabi, the Cylinder of Cyrus, the Rosetta Stone, and even the so called Elgin marbles. It is about the issue of European archeological excavations (even theft) and research that they could have been part of a dialogical discourse with Europe’s “other,” the Middle Easterners or even the Greeks; instead, they became part of the knowledge in the West perpetuating their position of being the master in the colonial relationship. At worst, the knowledge facilitated the manipulation,
and at best it has contributed to a false sense of pride for the Middle East and even Greece, but has not led to a critical reexamination of the self for the aforementioned regions. Quoting Juan Cole (2008): “[e]arly twentieth century Egyptian nationalists often, ironically enough, also viewed Bonaparte’s expedition as the irruption into a traditional society of dynamic modernity, bringing with it printing, the press, modern commerce, hospitals, and science, including the archeology that eventually allowed the recovery of Egypt’s Pharaonic past through the decipherment of the Rosetta Stone” (245). The debate on the question of “whose artifact is it anyway?” continues, as the opponents of the returning of the artifacts are skeptical, particularly given the recent devastation brought on by ISIS, that these artifacts can be preserved by the original cultures, from which they came.

292 This is predicated on the fact that the scholars in Diaspora have been exposed to the views of their “other,” and are supposedly familiar with the contemporary theories.

293 As discussed earlier in this study, competition is a patriarchal tool that is ever-present in the Middle East, and elsewhere, but it has become more and more invisible.

294 As demonstrated in chapter two of this study, Biblical sources are problematic, for much of the information has been written by the hands of later authors.

295 Milani does not however mention that indeed Persia itself received these influences from Egypt, Babylon, Assyria, and other nations it came to conquer.

296 This interference includes colonialism as well, which will be addressed in chapter five.

297 One strategy has been “mimesis,” to which I shall return at the end of chapter five.

298 The events of the recent decades have brought the question of modernity with regards to the Middle East and Islam. While some work has been done on the subject in the 1990s by scholars such as Karimi-Hakkak (1995), Boroujerdi (1996), Lee (1997), and Khuri
(1998), however “an elaborate discussion of the phenomenon and a theory of modernity remain wanting […] the traditional ‘western’ analysis of the region and its cultural modalities in terms of modernity is based on a notion of modernity, which suffers from an overly unilinear and unidimensional interpretation and conceptualization of the modern world” (Vahdat 2003, 123).

299 “Eighteenth century French officers and intellectuals were immersed in Greek and Roman history, which they knew intimately, and they identified with it (Cole 2007, 11).

300 Cole 2007, 56.

301 Cole 2007, 11.

302 Cole notes in writings of Captain Moiret who “said that the soldiers indulged in reveries about Egyptian women, hoping they would be Cleopatras […] The men began thinking of Alexandria; they imagined the city of the Ptolemies and of the Roman Empire (Cole 2007, 11).

303 Cole further notes al Jabarti could not understand Napoleon’s use of the term “liberty, suggesting that perhaps Bonaparte meant to boast that he was not a slave like so many of Egypt’s emirs” (ibid). Al Jabarti also rejected the pamphlet’s claim that “all are equal before God.” Cole quotes: “[h]ow could it be, when God has chosen some above others, and all the people of the heavens and earth have borne witness to it?” (Cole 2007, 34).

304 Cole 2007, 68.


http://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/the-egyptian-satirist-who-inspired-
The problem of debt still continues to plague Egypt.

The information on James Sanua had been very difficult to find until the University of Heidelberg made the “project collection” of the journal, *Abou Naddara* possible. A significant portion of the work was completed in a dissertation by Elaine Ursula Ettmüller, titled “The Construction of a National Self through the Definition of its Enemy in James Sanua’s Early Satirical Writings.”


Sanua’s Biography, “project collection” (ibid).

Lambton explains in the nineteenth century Persia, there was no sense of nationalism, and all affiliations and loyalties rested locally, or between classes. Only religious ties transcended all interests, as “[t]he shah was still padishāh-i Islām and Persia the mamālik-i Islām” (150).

Lambton writes, among a handful of Persians who were sent to England, between the years of 1811-1815, were influential figures “in spreading knowledge of Western Europe in Persia.” There were also others who were sent to study languages, medicine, engineering and fortification, as well as “artillery,” “cavalry . . . and the art of gunsmith” (1993, 151-152).

In his first volume, page 5 (equivalent to page 6 in the printed edition), “Majlisi describes his aim as providing the believers with the means to ‘humble the despicable heretics,’ (i.e. the Sunnis).” According to the Encyclopaedia Iranica, he achieved this through
texts deemed to be lost or forgotten. Encyclopaedia Iranica, on Mohammad Bāqer Majlisi, and Majlisi’s major writing Behār al-Anwār, accessed July 5, 2017.


314 Afary and Anderson cite from page 117, in Momen’s Introduction to Shi’i Islam (1985). They note that Majlisi “propagated a dogmatic and legalistic reading of Twelver Shi’ism and stressed the role of the imams as ‘mediators and intercessors for man with God’,” an iteration that is basically associated with Shi’ism and is one of the points of disagreements with the Sunni branch of Islam. They also argue that Majlisi was the “first major theologian,” who translated a series of texts about “Shi’ite theology, history, and rituals,” which had traditionally written in the language of the Koran, into Persian. Majlisi has also been credited for the spread of Shi’ism, by encouraging pilgrimages to cities such as Karbala, which at the time, was under the domination of the Safavids (43).

315 The notion of mimesis is very important here, to which I will return in chapter five for a more in depth discussion on how mimesis does not just produce events and actions, but that it produces meaning as well (A Ricoeur Reader: Reflection and Imagination, 138).

316 See also Checklowsky (1979).


318 Nematollahi Mahani, 2013. p. 35. See also Afary and Anderson, p. 47.

319 Afary and Anderson, p. 46.

320 Afary and Anderson, p. 54.


The quote is from the first American envoy to Persia, Samuel Benjamin. Encyclopaedia Iranica, [http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/tazia](http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/tazia), accessed June 1, 2017.


Diba argues Kamal al-Mūlk’s skills in academic style has been downplayed for the most part, mainly due to “primarily the construction of his myth through his own *Memoirs* and the efforts of his admirers” (Diba 2013, 95).


Other scholars such as the contemporary author, poet and art critic, Javad Mojabi, conversely argues the Kamal al-Mūlk, and generations of artists he trained, contributed to actually holding Iran back from modernity (Mojabi 1998, 6).


Diba 2012, pp. 645-659.

Diba states this is as early as the time of Fath Ali Shah (r. 1798-1834).

While an important publication, Vaghayeh Etefaghieh (Happenings) was established during and on the order of Amir Kabir in 1851, historical sources report that the very first newspaper was published earlier in the century (1837), untitled and in Tabriz by Mirza Saleh Kazerouni, who was among the first groups of students sent to Europe by Abbas Mirza. Vaghayeh Etefaghieh included information about the food prices, news from the court and played an important role to educate people as well as being influential in later publications. Modares, Cultural Improvements

http://www.iranchamber.com/culture/articles/cultural_improvements_iran_qajar.php


Diba 2012, 647.

According to Lambton, in the second half of the nineteenth century, a significant number of publications, including books, lithographs and periodicals were published in Calcutta, Istanbul, Cairo and briefly, in London.

Diba states photography was introduced toward the end of Muhammad Shah’s reign (1834-48); he was Nasser al-Din Shah’s predecessor (650).

Diba emphasizes: “the extent of the ruler’s passion for this medium and of his contributions to its development can be measured by the fact that of the Gulistan Palace Library’s collection of more 40,000 photographic prints, at least 20,000 were taken by the shah himself” (651).
It demonstrates the infusion of Neoplatonic philosophy into Islamic thought, which as I have argued earlier, is predicated on human imagination and creativity that was introduced through the translation movement, and the works of the “Arabic Plotinus.”

The first account comes from Nasser al-Din Shah’s own travel diary, recorded by Hakim al-Mamalik. The second version was recorded by I’timād al-Saltana in Mir’at al-buldan i Nasiri (Afshar 264).


Encyclopaedia Iranica on Hajj Mülla Hadi Sabzevari.

I have explained Plotinus’s elaborate three principles in chapters one and three: The One, The Intellect and the Soul. Also, this is pertinent in the subject/object relation.

Afshar cites Abbas Zaryab-Khoi, who realized the significance of this anecdote.


Stein includes images of the Two Women in Chador, Women and Children in Picnic in Persian Park, A Young Dervish holding a Tabar (axe), as well as Mausoleum of Ujlaitu in Sultaniyya, The Colossal Bull (Lamassu) Gate, Persepolis, and The Blue Mosque in Tabriz (1900). (Stein 122-125).

Stein 122-125.

Abrahamian notes: “[i]n a public lecture on Persian civilization delivered in London soon after his dismissal, Malkum Khan admitted that his main intention was to clothe the political philosophy of the West in the respectable terminology of the Koran, hadith and the Shi’i Imams” (Abrahahamian 1982, 67).
See Mary C. Wilson, “Introduction,” in the Modern Middle East, edited by Albert Hourani (27). Wilson cites an example of “when Britain requested redress of certain Christian grievances, the specific matter was settled to the satisfaction of the Christians and the European powers, but no general statement of policy or new legislation ensued.”


Mazanec begins his article with a brief history of the reforms, dating back to the time of Sultan Ahmed III (1673-1736), and his Grand Vizier, Ibrahim Pasha. This period is known as the “Tulip Period,” from 1718-1730. (p. 21).

Ibid.

See Mary C. Wilson, “Introduction,” in the Modern Middle East, edited by Albert Hourani, the quote is from Feroz Ahmad (26).

Ibid.

Heyd 29. Also, Lambton 146.

Heyd makes it clear that there was a well-defined economical hierarchy among the ālāma, who were affluent and stood by the monarch, and those who lived in poverty, were verbal about the unjust policies, and actually opposed almost all modernization programs (Heyd 36).

S.J. Shaw notes the introduction of the printing press as one of the high achievements of the Tulip Period (Shaw vol. 1, 235 and vol. 2, 128).

Nietzsche points to Christianity, but this maps onto the other instances well. On the “ascetic priest’s” task of “interpretation,” he writes: [r]egarding Nature as though it were
a proof of the goodness and guardianship of God; interpreting history in honor of a divine reason, as a constant proof of a moral order of the world and a moral teleology’ explaining our own personal experiences, as pious men have for long enough explained them, as though every arrangement, every nod, every single thing were invented and sent out of love for the salvation of the soul; all this is now done away with, all this has the conscience against it, and is regarded by every subtler conscience as disreputable, dishonorable, as lying, feminism, weakness, cowardice—by means of this severity, if by means of anything at all” (Nietzsche 2006, 123).

Nietzsche uses the term “artist” in his example of Wagner. But I think this phrase is also appropriate in the context of this study.

Nietzsche 2006 (original 1886), 101.

Shaw 1977, 71.

Shaw, 1977, 128.

Shaw argues that the Young Ottomans took this path, because they felt marginalized by the new ruling class of bureaucrats, and found no place for themselves in the government (ibid).

These publications are: “Tasvir-i Efkar (Description of Ideas) (1861-1870), the Ceride-i Askeriye (The Army Newspaper), founded by the Seraskerate in 1863, Muhbir (The Informant) (1866-1868), Hürriyet (Liberty), published in London between 1868 and 1870, Basket (Understanding) (1870-1877), and many others of shorter duration” (129).

Ibrahim Şenasi is an example of a Young Turk, who is the product of the reforms (Tanzimat). While he grew up studying “the classics of Islamic literature . . . at the same time he learned about the West from several foreign officers working in the Arsenal,” where he had taken a job as a scribe. Eventually, he convinced his superiors to send him to France to
improve his French language. When he was met with bureaucratic and political obstacles in his promotion upon his return, he “turn to literary activities,” whether it was translating French works of poetry by Racine and la Fontaine, or publishing, and even presenting his own work in the theater (Shaw 130).

369 The Young Ottomans eventually began to realize the problem of the Tanzimat government as being too caught up in tyrannical bureaucracy, where “the new rural aristocracy, and the non-Muslim merchants and industrialists were dominating the ruler and his subjects to an unprecedented degree” (Shaw 132). Their proposed solution was to draw “on the progressive rather than the conservative aspects of Islam.” They concurred on “constitution, Parliament, and Ottomanism” (ibid).

370 Yazici 2010, 35.

371 Shaw expands that The French Theater (1840) eventually came under the management of “an Italian magician named Bosco, who in addition to his own performances put on French plays and foreign operas for mixed audiences of ottomans and foreigners.” The diversity in the theater continues, when in 1844 “a Syrian actor, Mihail Naum, who founded a repertory theater that continued actively until 1870, presenting opera, musicals, and plays such as the masterpieces of Molière to audiences that at times included the sultan.” These production, were mainly in foreign languages, with little to “no wide penetration or interest among the masses.” The Ottoman Theater, founded in 1867 in old Istanbul, was the first theater that put on shows in Turkish language. It was run by the director of an Armenian company, by the name of Agop Vartovyan. Agop received special concession to establish similar theaters elsewhere in the city. What is important about these theaters is that they eventually were venues to “Armenian and Turkish plays, including Namik Kemal’s controversial patriotic play, Vatan Yahut Silistre.” A collaborator of Agop, by the name of
Mardiros Minakyan (1837-1920) became “a leading force in Ottoman drama until 1909” (Shaw 129).


373 It is my understanding that Shaw uses Dolmabahçe here as the garden-filled area onto which Abdelmeçid I orders the construction of the new palace complex in 1843. This is the complex that included the elegant royal theater, built in 1855.

374 In addition to audience boxes and seating for three hundred, the theater structure has an opulent dining hall, specifically suited for entertaining diplomats and dignitaries (Yazici 36).

375 The incorporation of their own cultural signs and symbols into the European designs, was not just to show their modernist intentions, but also it signals a sort of a take-over of the ownership predicated on competition, therefore, it is not a blind mimesis, which can be the subject of another study.


377 Shaw, W. (February 2009).


379 Erika Larson states: “By way of Ottoman society’s and eventually the Turkish republic’s continuous transformation into a modern society with its frenzy of visual signs, the photograph became increasingly charged and its power to influence and persuade, generate commercial interest, evoke desire, and so on, became more and more difficult to ignore. Larson mentions a quote from Sultan Abdülhamid II (1842-1918) made in late nineteenth century that is to the point: “Every picture is an idea. A picture can inspire political and emotional meanings which cannot be conveyed by an article of a hundred pages.” Quoted in
Under the Ottoman Empire, during the nineteenth century, it was established, “both in his own conceptual scheme and in the eyes of his neighbors and his governors,” that one was essentially recognized and classified by one’s religious affiliations. “He was a Muslim, Greek Orthodox, Gregorian Armenian, Jew, Catholic, or Protestant before he was a Turk or Arab, a Greek or Bulgar, in the national sense, and also before he felt himself an Ottoman citizen” (Davidson 62).


See “The Advent of Ideology in the Islamic Middle East” (Part II) by Carter Vaughn Findley, Studia Islamica, No. 56 (1982), pp. 147-180. Published by: Maisonneuve & Larose. While Hegel is dismissive of the Turks, and “ambiguous” about the Arabs (Almond 132, Hourani 1991, 301), it appears Findlay recognizes the inspiration received by those who were sent to Europe to study.

Hegel. (1977, 23). He states: “[i]t is precisely on account of the importance of the moment of designating the complete otherness that the term ‘true’ and ‘false’ must no longer be used where such otherness has been annulled. Just as to talk of unity of subject and object, of finite and infinite, of being and thought, etc. is inept, since object and subject, etc. signify what they are outside of their unity, and since in their unity they are not meant to be what their expression says they are, just so the false is no longer qua false, a moment of truth.”

Neoplatonism went through a process of translation and appropriation by the Arabic Plotinus during the 9th century translation movement in Baghdad (Adamson 2002, 3).
For later connections, see Lahuri (1979), 31. In 1905 Iqbal, in his trip to London, met and studied with Dr. Mac Taggert, who was a follower of Hegel. These studies were very interesting for him; about Hegel’s philosophy Iqbal stated that they are a kind of Sufism that enlightens the mind and teach humans the path to know God.

387 I have explained this in more detail in chapter 2.

388 Almond 129.

389 Almond 132. Also Dabashi has noted this, but from the Persian perspective (Persophilia 2015).

390 In Hegel, the subject’s striving for consciousness and the process of achieving the Absolute Truth, maps onto Plotinus’ journey toward the One. Also, the connection between the Persian prominent poets, such as Rumi, and Nizami with Neoplatonic mystics such as Ibn Arabi has been discussed by Nasr (1987, 126).

391 It is worth noting that subject-hood is essentially viewed as synonymous to self-hood in mystic tradition, which is interpreted and selfishness and subject to admonishment, because it opposes unity.

392 It is my understanding that experiencing of subjecthood is a stage one must travel through, and it is by no means a final destination. Once the subject becomes aware of its subjecthood, it must strive for a balance between its two aspects of “Apollonian” and “Dionysian,” according to Nietzsche in The Birth of Greek Tragedy (1999). It must then strive to establish an equitable relationship with others in the community.

393 Nietzsche, 2002, § 54, p. 49.

394 The widely documented period from approximately mid-eighth century to the end of the tenth century pin-points the “transformative” epoch, during which much of what was
written and available in Greek “throughout the Eastern Byzantine Empire and the Near East were translated into Arabic” (Gutas1).

This is a significant shift that merits a separate study that can demonstrate the main focus in Islamic thoughts shifted from its initial concern of equality to the issue of freedom.

Nasr 1983, 177. Nasr argues that the “revival of Mulla Sadra’s school” during “the major social and political transformations of the late Qajar period and the Constitutional Revolution” were so intimately related that it signals how his philosophy surpassed its influence during the Safavids. This demonstrates the applicability of Mulla Sadra’s philosophy toward the formation of the new patriarchal policies at the time of the modernization (Nasr 1983, 192).

It is my understanding that the need to formulate a kind of political philosophy that employs the works of the philosophers from the antiquity became an issue during the Abbasids. The Umayyads before the Abbasids ruled primarily based on the idea of Arab supremacy, and empowered by their military might and subsequent successes (Bloom and Blair 2002, p. 74).

Joseph Arthur de Gobineau (1816-1882), who was a French diplomat to Iran, (once in 1855, and again in 1861), is an interesting figure. Despite his reputation of being ruthlessly an Orientalist and even being called racist because of his notorious essay: An Essay on the Inequality of Human Races (1853-55), he has an interesting insight. De Gobineau spent three years in Iran, during the Nasser al-Din Shah’s reign, and met with people from all walks of life, from courtiers to philosophy enthusiasts. From his observations, he deemed necessary to translate Descartes to Persian, although not very professionally, with the help of a Jewish Rabbi by the name of Mulla Lalezar. This leads me to believe that he noticed the
lack of the presence of individuality in Persia, to the degree that he took it upon himself to take on such a project. See Gobineau, Arthur de, in Encyclopaedia Iranica, http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/gobineau (accessed July 6, 2017). See also Kamali, (1997), 496.

399 It can also be argued that the timing of sending students abroad, as part of reformations in the nineteenth century Middle East, coincided with the contemporary philosophy in Europe, which was of course more Hegelian than Kantian.

400 Abrahamian argues for the presence of what he calls bourgeois and petite bourgeois during the Constitutional Revolution of 1905-9, which actually, as a class, alienated the poor and the lower classes, consequently strengthening the religious class who turned against the revolution and sided with the monarchy (Abrahamian 1993, 302,303).

401 Lambton 1993, 166.

402 Shaw (February 2009).

403 By no means has this inferred an all-Muslim effort. As Adamson points out, others were involved, such as Christians for example, who knew Greek and Syriac, “a dialect of Aramaic and thus, like Hebrew and Arabic, a member of the Semitic language group” (2016, 21). It is however, a Muslim-procured condition and environment. See also Gutas (1999, 5).

404 Adamson explains that Alhazen’s work “adapted” al-Kindi’s idea in “describing the visual ray,” and revealed that light travels in a straight path, that is to say “the points on the surface of the eye register only the light rays that fall on them most directly” (Adamson 2016, 82).

405 Rotman 1987, 19.

See Introduction, Hockney, 2001. Hockney accumulated visual and textual evidence that clearly shows, starting early fifteenth century, the images began to look more “realistic.” He argues that artists began using camera obscura to accurately place their subjects in space.

Belting informs that even though the knowledge was available, “[b]etween tenth and thirteenth centuries ‘the sign (0) stayed within the confines of Arab culture, resisted by Christian Europe, and dismissed by those whose function it was to handle numbers as an incomprehensible and unnecessary symbol’” (Belting 2011, 10).

In other words, these were subjects, who were in fact objectifying their audiences, with their own agendas through the magic of pictures, if Horkheimer and Adorno were correct in Dialectic Enlightenment.

Agamben 2009, 51.

As argued by Neoplatonists, mystics, and sufis, the only memory of the self for the individual is from when it was one (in unity) with its creator/source. (VI.9.11)

The question maybe raised here regarding the state of the visual arts in the Middle East from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance (thirteenth to sixteenth centuries). While the in depth study of this subject requires a separate project, suffice it to say, in regions such as Persia and Ottoman Turkey, there was tendency toward the visual arts of the far east, as attested to by miniature paintings that follow a different kind of spatial arrangement and perspective, which reached its height during the Safavids. This is evident in the “distinctly Mongol style of painting [that] began to emerge . . . at the end of the thirteenth century” (Canby 2005 [1993], 27). See also Gray 1977, p.17.

I have addressed the problem of the “prohibition of imagery” earlier. This is not to say prohibition of imagery prevented making images. As evident in the historical examples,
there are no shortages of imagery despite this prohibition, however it seems the prohibition of imagery effectively rendered the critical power of analyzing imagery non-existent. It is thus safe to assume that non-recognition (i.e. prohibition) of something will not engender analytical debates on it, which is my point here.

414 See Neoplatonic and Islamic Thought (1992). Morewedge on the “unity of being” notes: “[t]his unity is regarded as favorable; it embodies in its full achievement a union (ittihād, ittisāl, hūlūl) of the mystic’s experience and a Divine state, e.g. the self and the Necessary Existence.” I have addressed the “misrecognition” in this context projected by the Neoplatonists through the image of al-Insan al-Kamel, or the “perfect man” in Ibn Arabi’s philosophy in chapter 2.

415 One of the translators, of Persian origin, Abdullah (also spelled Abdala) Ibn Muqaffa (718-775) is noteworthy since he is mentioned by name in the Oration on the Dignity of Man, by Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494). Benton and DiYanni in vol.2 of Arts and Culture note the name “Abdala the Saracen,” in Pico’s Oration is Abdullah Ibn Muqaffa (46). See also the first note in Pico’s Oration, translated by Robert Caponigri (1956, 3).

416 See Belting, pp. 130-31. Bacon had read Alhazen’s work in Latin, before he authored his seven-part Opus majus in 1267. In the section on optics, which he had drawn influence from Alhazen’s work, Bacon was arguing that “God’s grace reaches human souls in much the same way that a straight, unbroken ray of light strikes the crystalline of the eye.” It is no surprise that Bacon was imprisoned, for the implication of the “straight path,” would have been detrimental for the church, as the mediator between humans and God.

417 Benton and DiYanni, vol 2, p. 131.

418 Belting notes that however, “Descartes’ conclusions do not explain how similarity comes about between objects and our visual impressions of them” (Belting 125).

420 I understand the “death of God” in Nietzsche as specifically removing what causes the individual to ask the question “why.” However, if the place of the subject and the predicate is reversed, thinking, as in Cartesian cogito, becomes a condition to be counted as a “being.”

421 See Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, § 54.

422 Of course, this is what Freud tackles, in focusing on the history of the individual/subject.

423 Horkheimer and Adorno 1989 (original 1944), p. 54. This is certainly applicable to a collective consciousness as well.

424 When one self-conscious being defines the “other,” in Hegel’s view the other becomes “non-essential,” for it is mediated by language and is not “real.”

425 Gutas informs that there were even “translation activities” during the Umayyads (r. 661-750), however not as “socially significant” as what was undertaken during the Abbasids (Gutas 28).

426 See also Nasr 1992 (1968), p. 293.

427 The Sunni branch quotes from various Hadith sources of what the Prophet did on specific occasions. Then by way of comparison, adjust and adapt to circumstances and challenges at hand. It is clear however, the Prophet’s situation was very different in scope and in objectives. Therefore, it seems the use of Hadith, and quoting may have served as a way to legitimize the action of the authorities after the prophet.

428 There is plenty evidence to this claim in the art and architecture alone that demonstrates the conscious efforts to emulate and appropriate the art and architecture of the Sasanians as well as the Byzantine courts. See Hillenbrand (1999). It is my argument that
such reconciliations are creative endeavors and should be viewed as artistic products alongside of the other artistic productions.

429 The Abbasids claimed they were related to the Prophet, by way of his uncle Abbas. That is where the name of the dynasty was also derived. See Hillenbrand 1999, 38.

430 Particularly, since they had come to power with the aid of the Persians (Bloom and Blair 2002, 74).

431 There has been much debate on the reasons behind the shape and the city planning of Baghdad. There seems to be a dual purpose to the city planning of Baghdad in the round form. Euclid’s definition of a circle has come up in describing the location of al-Mansur’s palace at the center (Elements Book 1, definition 15), leading us to believe (Gutas presents evidence on this) al-Mansur intentionally chose Euclid’s description to plan his city, because he wanted to put to practice “the ancient knowledge.” On the other hand, he was asserting the ideological statement of being literally and figuratively at the center of his domain (Gutas 52).

432 Gutas, 28-29, 90. Gutas brings up an interesting example, by citing the Arab historian, al-Mas’udi regarding how upon Christianity dominating the Byzantine, it set out to corrupt the works of the ancient Greeks, and their philosophy. Gutas points out, that while Muslims saw themselves closer to Christianity than the pagan Greeks, the intention was “Islam, or the different versions of it vying for supremacy in the . . . ninth-tenth centuries” (Gutas 90).

433 Adamson explains that al-Farabi takes Aristotle’s argument of God being pure intellect as the “First Cause of motion for the entire universe, […] but one intellect for each of the simple motions of the heavenly bodies.” The Neoplatonic addition comes from his
description of the intellect “in a kind of cascade of causation” from God (Adamson 2016, 68).

434 Averroes is the foremost Muslim Aristotelian philosopher, who argues God necessitates creation, and knowledge is arrived at by discovering the rules of his creation. Therefore, Averroes uses reason to bring together Islam and Greek thought. Al-Ghazali on the other hand, argues for a “free” God that is beyond any necessities (this is where he differs from Avicenna), and all is nothing but according to what he wills. Al-Ghazali’s philosophy closely follows Neoplatonic philosophy in the hierarchy of creation, soul and intellect (see Adamson 140, 179). Adamson also notes that the Aristotelian reason-based arguments were not as accessible as the Neoplatonists, since in those days, either their books had to be written and copied to be distributed, or like Ibn Arabi they had to travel to the region to disseminate their ideas.


436 Adamson 2016, 11. The Abbasid caliph, al-Ma’mūn favored the position of the Koran as created, and not eternal, as proposed by the Mu’tazilites, and in fact toward the end of his reign in 833, he had taken measures to ensure that “the judges and scholars . . . admit that the Koran was created by God, and not eternal like God Himself.” Adamson notes that this was unusual because it was within the scope of the scholars’ authority to determine such issues. He argues this probably was due to al-Ma’mūn’s plan to “assert his own authority over that of the scholars” (ibid).

437 I have mentioned this in the previous chapter. This question often comes up about the autocratic regimes in the Middle East, particularly among the Sunnis. The Shi’ites situation is a bit different, as it is more weighted down by Neoplatonic interpretation of the religion.

Nasr 1992 (1968), 293.

Ibid.


Moosa 2005, p. 6. Moosa gives the date 1091 of the appointment and Adamson just mentions “following the year 1085.” What seems clear is that al-Ghazālī was in Baghdad between 1091-95, at which point he experiences depression and anxiety (Adamson 2016, 142).

While I continue to look for additional historical evidence on this, I am tempted to also consider as a contributing source of anxiety to al-Ghazālī’s condition at this time, the threat of the Christian Crusades, as he must have also been concerned about the state of Islamic political power in facing with the Christian Crusaders. We see similar language from Ibn Arabi in facing with the shrinking Muslim territories in Medieval Spain.

Although Adamson tells us like al-Farabi, he “considers acceptance of authority appropriate for most people” (143).

Adamson 2016, 140-141.

Adamson 2016, 141. He uses the example of the shadows that seem static as seen by the eye, but the as moving throughout the day, as perceived by the mind.

This seems to be the motivation behind his book Munqidh min al Dalal, or Deliverance from Error.

Adamson 2016, 141.

It must be noted here that al-Ghazālī does not see a contradiction between logic and religion, as he “emphasizes that logic has no bearing on religious belief, and it would be
a misunderstanding of both logic and religion to think they could come into conflict” (Adamson 2016, 144).

Adamson informs us: “al-Ghazālī wrote a work summarizing the views of Avicenna, and called it *Maqāṣīd al-Falāsīfa*, which means *Aims of the Philosophers*. This was followed by a second treatise called *Tahāfūt al-Falāsīfa* . . . usually translated *Incoherence of the Philosophers* […] al-Ghazālī’s summary and critique had an ironic legacy in Latin Christendom, where for a long while only the *Maqāṣīd* was known” (2016, 147).

Adamson 2016, 148.

Adamson 2016, 148.

Ibid.

Adamson 2016, 149.

Moosa 2005, p. 213. While Moosa is making the argument for individuality in al-Ghazālī, he is doing so within the Neoplatonic framework of a “virtuous state of mind and virtuous dispositions” that deems the self the same as the spirit (ibid).

Adamson points out that “the eastern lands of the Muslim empire had seen an influx of Hellenic philosophy and science in the ninth and tenth centuries” (113).

Adamson 2016, 145-146.

Following the translation movement and the widespread readership of the Arabic Plotinus, through the works of scholars like al Ghazali, all the way to Mulla Sadra, and from there to Hajj Mulla Hadi Sabzevari, a direct link can be seen. The Neoplatonic thoughts, continued their impressions straight through the contemporary times, to the philosophy of the “rule of jurisprudence” that evolved out of the Iranian revolution of 1979. I will discuss this further in the final chapter.
The authority comes from the institution of *Marja’ Taqlid* that was established to focus on the extensive sources for *Hadith* and the Prophet’s *sunna* (which was deemed sources of imitation, but in order to adapt to the contemporary problems they needed to be interpreted), in order to issue judgment on the subsidiaries of the faith, which have to do with practical aspects of the religion (Jafarian 3).

Lambton 164.

Hauser, vol. III. [1962], 1999, the chapter on Germany and the Enlightenment.


Keddie explains that Jamāl ad-Dīn’s views were situated in between “pure traditionalism” and “pure Westernism.” She provides the range of examples within “modern Islam,” that came to have affinity with Jamāl ad-Dīn’s “style of thought . . . from the Islamic liberalism . . . to the later more conservative Islamic revivalism . . . and the Muslim Brethren, and include Pan-Arabism and various forms of Middle Eastern nationalism” (Keddie 1972a, 2).

Keddie 1972, p. 2. (1972a)


In his lecture at the Sorbonne, Renan had stated Islam was hostile toward the sciences, which had been published in *Journal des Dèbats*, on March 29, 1883.

Keddie notes Jamāl ad-Dīn’s interest in these movements may account for the hostility toward him from the orthodox ulama (Keddie 1972, 20).

Keddie 1972a, 20.

Keddie 1972a, 20. The more orthodox Shi’is believed that in the absence of the twelfth Imam, Muslims must follow the guidance of the “learned but fallible judgment of one or one of several mujtahids, [while] the Shaikhhis, following the ideas of Shaikh Ahmad
Ahsai, believed that each epoch had its own ideal guide, whose role was more exalted than that of the mujtahid.” The movement of the Babis that in a way was anticipated by the Shaikhis, is also another historical movement that Keddie argues left an impression on the young Jamal ad-Din, not as a follower, which he clearly was never a Shaikh or Babi, but as how he witnessed firsthand in these movements that there can be different ways of religious interpretation (Keddie 1972a, 20-22).

Keddie points out that this is the first time Jamāl ad-Dīn “speaks favorably of Pan-Islamism and of Sultan Abdülhamid II. The connection of support for the Sultan and for Pan-Islam with opposition to British encroachments on Muslim territory . . . made explicit” (Keddie 1972a, 184).

Keddie 1972a, 185.


Vahdat, 2003, p. 131. It seems Vahdat is not distinguishing between individuality as a subject to itself and “agency” in Jamal ad-Din’s discourse, which primarily underscores the role of the elites in modernity.

In the biography of Jamāl ad-Dīn Muhammad, Abduh writes, that upon Jamāl ad-Dīn’s arrival in Egypt, he “began to take lessons from Afghani in mathematics, philosophy, and theology, and brought other people to take such lessons.” Keddie cites Abduh as having written: “Afghani first of all drew to him a group of young students, that later officials and notables also frequented his gatherings, and that the differing reports of his teaching made people eager to meet him and know what he was like.” Jamāl ad-Dīn according to Abduh then, focused on “the rational sciences” (Keddie 1972a, 83).

Keddie 1972a, 163.

Keddie 1972a, 162.
This particular article was titled “The Benefits of Philosophy” and was published in *Mu’allim-i Shafīq* (Keddie 1972a, 163).

These names include Shihāb ad-Dīn Suhravardī (d 1191), who was the founder of Illuminationism. Also, Mīr Dāmād, Mūlla Sadrā’s teacher, both were directly involved in reconciling “mysticism, rationalism, and Shi’i beliefs” (Keddie 1972a, 163n).


Heidegger uses the term “Gestell,” which ordinarily is a “fixed” term. However, in Heidegger it is revealed as “challenging forth,” and “gathering together.”

These values according to Fanon include language, or “wearing European clothes . . . using European furniture and European forms of social intercourse . . . all these contribute to a feeling of equality with the Europeans and their achievements” (Fanon 9).

Said, p. 3.

Said 92.

Said cites Gobineau’s *Essai sur L’inegalite des races humanines*, and Cuvier’s *Le Regne animal*, as well as Robert Knox’s *The Races of Man* (ibid).

This is not unlike the process I have explained in the second chapter. Once humans learned to give a visual form to something, they could possess it and establish hierarchy. Similarly, by creating an imaginary “Orient” through cultural products (literature, visual arts, and an entire movement called Orientalism), the Middle East was successfully colonized by the West. Said notes two types of Orientalists: those who speak to the exoticism and backwardness that define the west in sharp contrast (as in Flaubert), and those who highlight
the brilliance of the past civilizations (as in Massignon), to which Europeans saw themselves as heirs (Said 207, 258).

487 Here I am reminded of Erich Auerbach’s *Mimesis*, in which a literary comparison between the West (e.g. Homer) and the East (post Christianity) reveals a different style of narrative, with more focus on the humanities in the latter. Auerbach argues the Western style in which the thoughts of the characters are externalized, are different from the Biblical stories (as in the story of Abraham’s sacrifice), through which not all point are illuminated, hence there are gaps open to different interpretation (Auerbach [1953] 2003, xviii). See also Said 1979, pp. 258-59.

488 Vernoit 19.


491 In chapter four I have explained Nasir al-Din Shah’s interest in photography as another example of this.

492 Halliwell 314.

493 This is not unlike his “hypostasis,” which is predicated on a hierarchical mimetic relationship, and applicable to the artist’s work. Therefore, Plotinus can maintain the superiority of the creator over its creation, something that the Muslim philosophers could agree with.

494 It is this aspect of Neoplatonism that plays an important part in what becomes the “rule of jurisprudence,” as a system of political government in Iran after the revolution of 1979, engineered by Ayatollah Khomeini, to which I will return. It is worth mentioning here that Halliwell’s argument demonstrates more than Plotinus’s direct influence; it is this
transformative and regenerative potential that impresses the future theoreticians and philosophers (Halliwell 323).

495 Huhn (June 2013), *Art Bulletin*, 203-205.

496 Vernoit translates it as “the principle of following established religious doctrine” (31).

497 There are also a number of Koranic verses underscoring the individual’s responsibility. See Koran: “Every man’s fate We have fastened On his own neck” (17:13); also, “And pursue not that Of which thou has No knowledge” (17:36); see also, “Every soul will be in pledge for its deeds” (74:38).

498 Although the sharp point of criticism of the Shi’ites by the Sunni scholars such as al Ghazālī and others appears to be the Ismā’ilīs (Adamson 2016, 54 and 143-44), *taqlīd* is not restricted to this branch alone (Momen 1985). Also, Adamson notes “[t]eologians regularly accused other theologians of slavish adherence to authority, while philosophers like al-Fārābī happily tarred non-philosophers with the *taqlīd* brush” (Adamson 2016, 143).

499 The objective that should have been individual’s independent judgment (as explained in the concept of *ijtihad* – meaning independent judgment –Adamson 2016, 143) gradually and over the centuries became reliant upon the expert opinion of the scholars, who referenced the established customs and laws that existed mainly for business before the advent of Islam. Adamson notes when disagreements in the interpretations of the major sources took place regarding a law (as in prohibition of drinking and gambling), after the death of the Prophet, the religious scholars sought to resolve the conflict by referring to the “legal practices . . . [that] grew out of pre-Islamic Arab society” (165).

500 One of the Shi’ites reasoning sources stems from this Koranic verse “Ask those who are reminders of God, if you do not know” (16:43), which eventually divided the
population within the Islamic communities to two groups of “knowledgeable” and “ignorant.” From this the necessity for *ijtihad* and *taqlīd* emerged among the Shiʿites (Jafarian 1). It seems there is a great leap of imagination to go from “asking” to “blindly following.”

501 *Qiyas* and *Istiqra* are two terms within the Sunni practice, which mean comparison and inductive respectively, are both predicated on mimesis. They are applied to resolve conflicts between the sources of religion. It is worth noting that there are four sources, with particular importance regarding the laws. These sources for both Shiʿite and Sunnis in “legal matters” are so close that “its jurisprudence does not differ more from the four schools of Sunni jurisprudence that they differ among themselves” (Momen 184). However, others have argued that the methods maybe similar, but the difference lie in their laws (ibid). The principles of jurisprudence (*Usul al-fiqh*) draw authority from four sources: the Koran, *Hadith*, *Sunna* or accounts of the Prophet (since there is a reference in the Koran 33:21 to take the Prophet as an example), consensus, and intellect (intellect or reason, which is called *aql* is only accepted by the Shiʿites). The difference between Sunni and Shiʿite laws come from, consensus by way of *qiyas* (analogical reasoning) for Sunnis, as opposed to, consensus based on intellect (*aql*, the source of human reason, meaning the *aql* of the *ulama*) for the Shiʿites (Momen 184-186). I argue there is very little difference between the two, if we view them from the perspective of mimesis. The “analogical reasoning” has led to uncritical imitation of the Prophet’s accounts, and the successors in Sunni Islam, and the consensus by way of the *ulama*’s reasoning has ended in *taqlīd* or imitation in Shiʿite religious practices.

502 An example would be of Rumi himself, who criticized *taqlīd* in one breath, and then submits to Shams with such devotion that it provokes Rumi’s students’ jealousy (Adamson 2016, 349).
There are two parts within the religion of Islam: acknowledgement (called Principles) and practice (called Subsidiaries) of faith. According to Shi’a belief, when disagreements arise from how to carry out certain religious duties, or rules, it is the “Imam,” who fills in, in the absence of the Prophet. After the twelfth imam (from the lineage of the Prophet) disappeared, it has become the duty of the ulama to take on the responsibility of interpreting the instructions for the “Subsidiary” part of the faith (Jafarian 3). I must note one of the quotes from an Imam cited by Jafarian indicates that the Shi’ite Imams (from the direct lineage of the Prophet) made it clear that it was their responsibility to interpret the Principles of the faith and that they would leave it up to their followers to figure out the subsidiaries of their faith. Jafarian however does not explain that “the followers of the Imams” meant the people, not necessarily the ulama; obviously, because such a class did not exist at the time. Here is another instance of an imaginary jump that ensures the prominence of the ulama over everyone else.

Not to be confused with Shaykh Tusi (995-1067), who was also instrumental in establishing taqlid (Walbridge 2001). He was a pupil of Shaykh Mufid (948-1022), both followers of the Twelver Shi’a belief. It is worth noting that the evidence to the founding of the taqlid goes back to the time of the translation movement, after which point the need to incorporate reasoning into religion became evident.

Adamson 2016, 332-333.

Keddie 1983, 579. Keddie offers a two part explanation predicated on a comparative study, one with internal, and the other external examples in other revolutions.

This is not to say instances of individual responses did not take place. As discussed in previous chapters, it is the lack of theory that leads to the lack of acknowledgement and hence, the lack of consciousness about the issue of subjectivity.
This philosophy had justified the position of the monarchy up until the moment when the *ulama* themselves assumed the synthesized position of religious and political authorities after the revolution of 1979. I should also mention the emergence of other groups such as the Babis, who severed ties with the “Arabic religion” and “tyrant Shi’ite rule,” and sought to offer new interpretations out of the Sufi tradition. However, they were not much different in neglecting the issue of subjectivity than the other groups. Their leader, Ali Mohammad Bāb in his pilgrimage to Mecca made statements predicated on the negation of God and revering humans (Homa Nategh in Mullayan-2).

I must also note the role of British and Russian policies and influences, which played a role. While the British appeared to be supporting the Constitutional reform, by 1909 the Russians entered the picture directly by supporting the monarchs, both pursuing their own interests. The point is, such influences are carried out with more facility in the presence of a society, whose members have missed (or never have experienced the acknowledgement of) the issue of subjecthood.

The same argument can be extrapolated to other movements in the Middle East, and for the same reason.

While there is the example of the Bābis, a group that was also inspired by Neoplatonic thoughts, I have chosen to exclude them, for their influence on subjectivity merits a separate study.

Paidar 33.

Abu al-Hassan al-Mawardi (972-1058) was a Sunni jurist who contributed to the integration of politics and Sunni Islam (Momen 192).
514. It was Shaykh Ja’far Kashifu’l Ghita, a contemporary of Fath Ali Shah, who issued a religious edict that declared *jihad* (religious war) against the Russians, which authorized the king to enter the conflict (Momen 194).

515 Momen 195.

516 See also Keddie 1993, 604.

517 Paidar 33. See also Momen 1985, pp. 116, 186, 191.

518 Following the 1953 coup d’état, Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi had “spent the remainder of the 1950s eliminating his political opponents, particularly Tudeh Party, The National Front, and other segments of the secular left, which he regarded as the most important threats to his regime” (Afary 2009, 202). This left no secular opponents to counter the religious class’s rise to political prominence in 1979.

519 The idea of freedom, was understandably aimed in response to colonialism; therefore, by superficial I do not mean insignificant. My main point here is that there seems to have been no place for the individual rights in the preoccupied minds on how to unify against colonialists through the suggested strategies to eliminate foreign influence.

520 I discussed this connection in Chapter 5. The point is regardless of whether it is from the Islamic Neoplatonism or the Western Neoplatonism, it still invokes the same collective conscious, rather than an individual one.

521 Paidar cites Keddie’s *An Islamic Response to Imperialism*, 1968.

522 It must be said that arriving at free consciousness is not the end. It has not been for the Europeans, and it must not be for the Middle Easterners. However, it is a necessary step toward establishing a free and just society predicated on empathy and dialogical relationship. As noted by Afary (2009), “the modern notion of freedom became unbearable for some, to whom freedom of choice meant insecurity and loss of identity […] Some wished to ‘become
one with the world by submission to a person, to a group, to an institution, to God,’ in order to transcend their loneliness and individual existence and to become ‘part of some body or something bigger than’ themselves” (200).

523 Tabatabaei 2007, 14. See Also Amanat 2017, 328.

524 See also Adamiyat 1980, p. 105.

525 Mostashar al-Dowleh had spent early professional life as a secretary at the British Consulate in Tabriz. Adamiyat notes “Mirza Yusuf Khan was knowledgeable in Islamic Law and aware of the European Laws” (1980, 173). Adamiyat also points out that Moshir ad-Dowleh Sepahsalar (Naser ad Din Shah’s premier) advised Mirza Yusuf Khan to make sure he does not enter the ulama, into the secular and governmental institutions, as he believed in the separation of religion from state (pp. 198-200).

526. Tabatabaei mentions “according to some reports, on the order of Naser ad-Din Shah [they] beat him over the head [with his book] so hard that it affected his eyes, and he passed away soon after” (2007, 14).

527 It is worth mentioning that Mostashar al-Dowleh’s book was influential in writing the Constitutional laws. On the opposition side from the ulama’s camp, was the Hāji Molla Ali Kani, who wrote: “the horrid word freedom . . . seems attractive on the surface and good, but on the inside, [it] is full of deficiencies and problem. This . . . is to the contrary of the prophetic laws and their guidance, and of all the exalted kings and of their high-ranking officers” (Adamiyat 1980, 200).

528 This was evident in the slogans raised, which included “death to the Pahlevis,” “throw out America,” “Hossein is our guide” (reference is to the third Shi’ite Imam), “Khomeini is our leader,” “independence, freedom and Islam.” Abrahamian also mentions this is the first time the crowd shouts “we want Islamic Republic” (1982, 515).
This elimination appears in sync with the Hegelian dialectic, as one group subsumes, or eliminates others in arriving at the synthesis. Here, the role of the Tudeh party and their support of these developments is crucial.

Hamid Shokat in his book *A Conversation with Kourosh Lashai: An Inside Look at Iran’s Left Movement* (Akhtaran Publication 2003, Tehran, Iran) asks Lashai about an invitation he received, as a member of the left movement, from the court to help develop a “dialectic” ideology as a means of justification for the monarch’s White Revolution in 1963 (268). Also, the Shah had already eliminated all the political and secular leftist groups that could have been worthy opponents after the 1953 coup (Afary 2009, 202).

To this I also might add contact with the external influences against Mohammad Mosaddeq, as recent declassified documents from the 1953 CIA coup in Iran demonstrate. (BBC, Washington, July 22, 2017, reported by Kambiz Fatahi). Accessed September 10, 2017. While these documents do not prove the prominent clerics’ direct involvement in the coup, among the documents there is evidence that per Shah’s request, two days before the overthrowing of the prime minister, the US embassy had transferred large sums of money to their operatives, including a prominent cleric, Mohammad Behbahani to support the Shah in opposition to Mosaddiq.

On September 8, 1978 a peaceful, “staged sit-down demonstration” was met with shooting rampage from the air and ground by the Shah’s troops. Abrahamian notes “September 8 became known as the Black Friday and left a permanent mark on Iran. It placed a sea of blood between the Shah and the people. It enflamed public emotions, intensified popular hatred for the regime, and thereby further radicalized the population (Abrahamian 1982, 516).

Paidar 50.
534 Keddie notes: “Iranians, who in peaceable periods seem eager to please and loath to disagree openly with the powerful, whether in home or with political superiors, have in the last 90 years engaged in an unusual number of large scale popular revolts and revolutions” (1993, 602).

535 Paidar emphasizes the role of women in the protests, which included attacking “shops which had not closed in protest and [forcing] them to do so.” Further, the role of the Shii mujtahid (clerics with authority to issue religious edicts), Haj Hasan Mirza Shirazi, who officially issued a fatva forbidding the use of tobacco (Paidar 51).

536 Here I must note that, just as it had done with Egypt’s cotton, the British wanted to get direct access to the raw material of tobacco, via by-passing the middle merchants. It already had the monopoly of tobacco from the Ottomans through a company by the name of Regie. The British also wanted to expand the domain to Iran; that is why they persuaded Naser al-Din Shah to grant them the concession. However, this was costly to those domestic investors and merchants. This common adversary brought the merchants closer to the ulama, particularly after the ulama were urged to act (Adamiyat 1978).

537 Adamiyat mentions this concession apparently impacted 200,000 jobs negatively (ibid).

538 Adamiyat cites Haji Mohammad Rahim Esfahani in making statements against the concession (1978, 36).

539 A great example of this is in the harem of Naser al-Din Shah. When the king wanted to ignore and break the prohibition decree, his wives took away the water pipes stating that those who wed us and made our union legitimate, have forbidden tobacco (Paidar 51 and Taymouri 1982, pp. 106-8).
Abrahamian defines the crowd as “any large gathering whose behavior is not regulated by formalized rules of conduct and whose aim is to impress its opponents either by collective action or by the show of group solidarity. This includes protest demonstration indoors as well as hostile outburst in the streets. But it excludes institutionalize gatherings, such as parliamentary assemblies, where laws of procedure structure the behavior of individuals” (Abrahamian 1993, 307).

Paidar’s investigation underscores the role of women in strikes, demonstrations and even street-by-street fights during the Constitutional reforms, then the revolution, and even after the second Majlis. According to Paidar, women even contributed in collecting money and jewelry to raise funds and establish a “national bank” to pay off the government’s debt to Russia that had enabled the Cossacks to fight the constitutionalists (Paidar 59).

Abrahamian notes that the Qajar did not have the organized mechanism of despots such as an organized police or secret service, but they were the largest employer of many, from different groups of people, such as servants, clerks, kitchen, etc. When the first parliament (majlis) convened, one of the items addressed was the court budget and cutting back on the excess spending. The House Treasury announced to the employees that it cannot meet its obligation to pay their wages. This led to the employees petitioning the majlis first, then taking to the streets. (1993, 297-298).

Abrahamian mentions examples of “reformist newspapers,” such as Sur-i-Israfil, Habl al-Matin, and Musavat to be among the publications that were describing the demonstrators as “hired hooligans,” “gamblers,” “blood thirsty drunkards,” and terms of such sort.
Abrahamian quotes Malik al-Shi’ara Bahar, who only passingly noted this, but he himself identifies them as “aristocrats, merchants, craftsmen and unskilled laborers tied to the palace economy” (1993, 297).

The latter was in the words of the British representative in Kirmanshah (in Western Iran) (Abrahamian 1993, 298).

Sur-i Israfil openly criticized the clergy in “articles and pamphlets . . . and described mullas as ignorant, corrupt, and parasitical” (Sur-i Israfil, February 13, 1907). (also Abrahamian 1993, 298). Another paper, Habl al-Matin, criticized the ulama’s demands to oversee the laws passed by people’s representatives to ensure its religious legitimacy, by mockingly stating the ulama should also form a court to judge the representatives elected by the people (Habl al-Matin, June 18, 1907). (Abrahamian 1993, 298). It is worth mentioning that this sarcasm has become reality, as in the current legislative bodies, after the 1979 Revolution, go through two cleric assemblies’ screening to determine their qualification.

Noteworthy in this slogan is the correlation between Neoplatonic absolutism as it maps onto iterations of Islam at this time.

Abrahamian names two clerics, Haji Mirza Hasan in Tabriz, and Sheykh Fazlallah in Tehran, whose defecting to the conservative side had a huge impact on the population, as also pointed out by Ahmad Kasravi, who himself was critical of the clerics (Abrahamian 1993, 300).

Abrahamian’s use of the term is a bit problematic here, in that as Ann Lambton has pointed out, there was very little distinction in the classes in Iran at this time, for the merchant class and the clergy appeared to have a rather complex relationship that dissuades one from equating them to the bourgeoisie in Europe.
Abrahamian notes: “[i]n Tabriz, […] in June 1907 . . . a mob had besieged the City Council and had lynched one of its prominent members, a wealthy grain merchant who was suspected of cornering the market” (1993, 301).

Abrahamian specifies that the religious leaders had great influence on three groups within the society that proved instrumental. The first group was consisting of people from the religious schools, mullas, students, mosques, and “ecclesiastical foundations (vaqfs).” Those in the second group were “lutis,” who “were religious-minded athletes in the bazaar.” The third group was the “orthodox Shi’ite,” consisting mostly of various types of laborers, and low-skilled workers.

Mir Hashim was a local preacher in smaller districts of Tabriz, “whose popularity . . . had won him a parliamentary seat” (Abrahamian 303).

The majlis was initially called National Assembly (Paidar 54).

Abrahamian 305.

Reza Shah (formerly Reza Khan), in his rise to power, initially formed alliances with conservative reformers in the fourth majlis and began to restore some of the aristocrats into their prominent positions (Abarahamian 1982, 131). He initiated legislation for compulsory military service, which transformed a “professional army to a truly national army,” with himself as the commander, but the support of the landowners, whose labor forces now had to be drafted into military service for two years, abruptly ended. Further, to achieve leverage over the balance of power between the northern neighbor, the Russians, and “southern neighbors,” the British (because of all the concessions they had received), brought in a third power, the United States and New York’s Standard Oil Company, and appointed an American, Dr. Millspaugh, as “the treasurer-general of Iran” (ibid). The compulsory military service directive did not meet with the agreement of the ulama either. They saw two years of
military service, as “indoctrination in a secular institution administered by anti-clerical officers [that] would corrupt social morality and public religiosity” (ibid). The fifth parliamentary assembly, with the “working majority of Socialist and Revival parties under the leadership of Reza Khan as the “prime minister,” began a series of reforms (Abrahamian 1982, 132 and Paidar 80).

556 Kasravi was deeply a believer of religion. Amini in the Introduction to Kasravi’s Shi’ism quotes from Kasravi’s Aiyin (1932) that “ever since Europe commenced inventions and has built a few machines, it has risen up against religion, and has set out to uproot that which contains the essence of peace for the people of the world. Now, anti-religionism is what the [Middle] Easterners [who are] returning from Europe are bringing as souvenirs for their fellow countrymen” (2011, 6).

557 Kasravi wrote, among others, two books, Shi’i-gari (Shi’ism) and Sufi-gari (Sufism), in which he provides a phenomenological study of each phenomenon, then includes his criticism of each with respect to negative impacts on subjectivity (edited by Mohammad Amini, 2011 and 2014 respectively).

558 Abrahamian considers this as the ambiguity of Kasravi’s own generation toward Reza Shah; he compares it to the later generation, who took a more negative attitude toward the Pahlavis, basically focusing on the admonishments (1982, 153-54). It is my understanding that the ulama had a hand in this attitude, for many of the reforms were aimed at undermining their power and influence, to be sure.

559 Abrahamian 2001, 186.

560 Reference is the day of the coup, August 19, 1953.

561 From a BBC (Persian) interview, Be Ebarat e Digar: Goftogoo ba Ervand Abrahamian, broadcast date August 26, 2013.
I will discuss the theoreticians such as Ali Shari’ati and Mohammad Nakhshab later in this chapter.

These events range from the tobacco protest in 1891, to the nationalization of oil in 1951, to the “last economic and political crisis of 1960-64, highlighted by demonstrations in 1963 that resulted in many deaths and brought about the exile of the religious leader of the movement, Ayatollah Khomeini, in 1964” (Keddie 1993, 609).

Keddie names “the ulama,” “the bazaaris, “ordinary peasants, nomads, and the urban poor” (ibid).

Katouzian 2009, E-version, from Introduction (no page number).

Abrahamian explains, whereas the regime had taken extensive measures to suppress all secular voices, however the two groups within the traditional middle class, the bazarris and the clergy had remained independent from the state, both financially and in terms of the popular institutions such as mosques and other religious gathering places (1982, 533).


Ibid.

Abrahamian 1982, 534.

I will discuss Shari’ati in length further in this chapter.

Abrahamian refers to it as the “radical message of Muharram,” the month in which the Prophet’s grandson was killed in Iraq in the year 680.

This was an appropriation from the Marxist groups.

Abrahamian states Khomeini incorporated into his speeches expressions in the style of Fanon such as “the mostazafin [those were kept powerless] shall inherit the earth.”
“[T]he country needs a cultural revolution,” and the “people will dump the exploiters onto the garbage heap of history” (ibid).

574 Keddie notes, following an article in the Ettela’at paper that contained an attack to Khomeini, who was in Iraq at the time, there were demonstrations and conflicts that resulted in casualties (1993, 614). The religious observance of the 40th day of mourning concurred with more demonstration, to which more people joined from liberal to the leftists (ibid).

575 Abrahamian quotes from a parliament deputy who spoke with a foreign social psychologist in 1973, “religious ceremonies, especially Muharram plays were politically useful in that they channeled social frustrations away from communism into harmless directions.” Cited from a Ph.D. dissertation by M. Good “Social Hierarchy and Social Change in a Provincial Iranian Town,” Harvard University, 1977, pp. 426-84.

576 The “Jafari jurisprudence” is a Shi’ite school of thought that derives its name from the sixth Imam, Jafar Sadeq, and has followers among the Twelver, and Isma’ili Shi’ites.

577 From Martin Luther’s “Diet of Worms Letters and Papers,”

578 Abrahamian brings detailed account of experienced British diplomats as well as “informal network within the armed forces,” in addition to their “contacts” from among the various tribes, newspaper editors, the bazaar, and nefarious characters such as Shaban Jafari, a “gang leader,” even with “mid-ranking clerics” (2001, 199).

579 The term ‘Westoxication’ is from an essay published in 1962 by Jalal Al-e Ahmad that suggest Iranians should look “to their own and Oriental ways” (Keddie 1993, 616).

580 It must be noted that Kasravi was not anti-religion or anti-Islam. He deemed however, necessary to purify religion of what he considered corruption and superstition.
Kasravi wrote in his autobiography he was actually persuaded to wear the garb of the ulama by his guardian following the death of his father (Amini 2016, 56).

In his criticism of the Ismai’il Shi’s Kasravi writes “in Islam, there has never been a more contemptible and a more harmful invention than the invention of introspectivism, and no other enemy has brought on such harm that the introspectivists have brought on Islam” (2011, 7).

Amini in the introduction Kasravi’s Shi’ism, page 17.

1943b, 64.

He uses examples such as: “if you submit all you have to love, call me an infidel if [you] experience any losses.” Or, another quadrant by Hatef Esfahani that states: “from the dew of love the clay that was, became Adam; from that [creation] numerous rife and excitement resulted in the world. The tip of the blade of love hit the vein of spirit; one drop fell, and was named [the] heart.”

In Sufism, reason is the opposite of love. Kasravi quotes Sufi poems that admonish reason: “love arrived, and reason wandered away; morning broke and candle became destitute. The leg of those who reason is wooden; wooden leg does not bend in submission (Rumi). Love arrived and took reason as spoil; oh my heart to thy soul this heralds” (Najm al-Din Razi).

Kasravi, 1943b, 114.

Kasravi is very disturbed at what Rumi narrates for example of his relationship with and devotion to his mentor Shams. Rumi writes, during the time he and his teacher spent three month fasting in seclusion, he obliged the wishes of his mentor, when he wished to be with a women, Rumi offered his own wife. Then Shams wished to be with a young boy, and Rumi offered his own son. Then Shams wished for wine, and Rumi obliged by personally
carrying the wine jug through the markets. Then Shams proclaimed and praised Rumi’s submission, and stated he was testing the devotion of his pupil. Kasravi notes the conflict between such acts and wishes, and wonders whether this is a true story, which would be “absurd,” or if it is fabricated, he wonders about the followers, who would make up such stories and attribute them to such prominent personalities (ibid).

589 Hakamizadeh asks questions such as: “isn’t it sacrilegious to seek indulgences from the Prophet or the imams, or seeking to be healed from their burial places, prostrating on them, building domes and high courts? Say so if it is, and if it is not, please explain ‘sherk’ [equating anything with God] first, so that we can see how this ‘sherk’ is different from that which Islam and the Koran challenged all along?” pp. 85-87.

590 Rajaee notes that there were actually two treatises, one by Ruhollah Musavi Khomeini and the other by Muhammad Khalesizadeh, both teachers at the Qum Seminary. Since Khoemini’s treatise was lengthier and more comprehensive, the leadership of the seminary approved Khomeini’s version to be published (65-66).

591 Moin 61, Marin 104.

592 In his book Bahaism (Bahaigari), he refers to his proposed religion as “pure religion” (pakdini), which he encourages everyone to read (1943c, second chapter, page 1).

593 This would have caused alarm among the ulama as it would have been seen as innovation (bed’at) in the religion, strictly prohibited in Islam according to common knowledge.

594 My references here are his criticism on Shi’ism and Sufism as well as literary tradition that in his view was filled with ideas that “mis-educated.” I must also reiterate, in addition to the volumes mentioned above, he authored a book on criticism of the Baha’ism, which branched out from Shi’ism earlier in the century. Kasravi admonished Baha’ism with
the same harshness as he did Sufism, for he believed both groups, just as with Neoplatonism, were founded based on imagination and creative mind (Kasravi 1943c, second chapter, page 1. http://www.kasravi.info/ketabs/bahaigari/BAHAYIGARI%20b2.pdf accessed October 28, 2017.

595 Adamiyat 1980, 119.

596 Adamiyat quotes from Abbas Mirza Molk Ara’s memoirs that “none of us who understood this could express to the Shah that the first line of such a law would be one that restricts and takes away the concessions and autocratic rule of the Shah himself and you [the king] would never agree to that. Therefore, we had no choice but to nod our heads in agreement” (1978, 12).

597 Adamiyat 1978, 12.

598 Mostashar al-Dowleh 15.

599 Abrahamian translates Daftar e Tanzimat as the Book of Reform. Raeen names the book as “secret book,” which was meant to provide advice to the Shah in how to establish law and order (Raeen 12).

600 Abrahamian 1982, 66.

601 Raeen notes Malkum Khan’s founding of the Faramushkhaneh was his way of continuing to promote his progressive thoughts, to familiarize people with the Western civilization, and countering the ancien regime (Raeen 13).

Adamiyat uses the phrase “Mulla Sadra’s philosophy” here in an anachronistic manner, but clearly he means a philosophy that is linked by Neoplatonic thoughts, since Mulla Sadra (1572-1640) the philosopher emerged in the seventeenth century.

Important to note here is the fact that the philosophy in question, since the Middle Ages and the time of Ghazali, has been seen as partly divine knowledge, that which is predicated on Ontotheology.

Adamiyat brings in the example of photography and Sabzevari’s problem with photographs, which I discussed in previously.

de Gobineau notes publication of a translation of Descartes, which was also ordered and supported by Naser al-Din Shah. This was made possible through the efforts of the secretary of the French embassy and Al’azar Rahim Musa’i Hamedani, known as “Mulla Lalezar.” The first time a translation was done was nine years earlier, and according to Mujataba Minovi most copies of it was burned, and very little or none of that edition survives (Adamiyat 1970, 72).

It is important to note, the term hekmat and philosophy has been interchangeably used in the texts I have examined. One example would be Foroughi’s Seyr e Hekmat dar Oroupa (The Course of Philosophy in Europe) (1931-43).

While, Gobineau’s reputation as a Eurocentric orientalist can be seen here, I think he correctly makes the connection on the issue.

Adamiyat’s source for this passage is Gobineau’s book titled Les Religions et Les Philosophies dans L’Asie Centrale (Religions and Philosophy in Central Asia,) translated to Persian by Farahvashi, Tehran (year unknown). It is worth noting that later during the Pahlavi era, from 1931 to 1941, Mohammad Ali Foroughi (1877-1942) completed one of the most seminal and comprehensive works on the history of Western philosophy.
In the introduction to his history of philosophy, the volume from the antiquity to Descartes (1938), Foroughi notes: “a few years ago, in order to undertake a scholarly work that would also benefit humanity, I embarked upon translating a small treatise, which was the most famous work by Descartes, the renowned French philosopher. On completion, I realized this work, will not serve useful for those who are not aware of European knowledge. Thus, in order to make it useful, I added a preface to it and authored the Course of Philosophy in Europe (Sayy e Falsafeh dar Oroupa), from the antiquity to the time of Descartes. [...] Since it pleased the minds of the knowledge seekers so much that they insisted to know the rest from Descartes to the contemporary times, for this reason, following further editing . . . it became the first volume to the Course of Philosophy in Europe, and included Descartes treatise in it” (Foroughi Seyre Kekmat, Preface).

I am understanding the term “dialogical” here as an integration to achieve a balance, not as what is consistent with what Bakhtin argued for instance.

In 1937, Foroughi translated portions of a principle book by Avicenna “dealing with the philosophy of natural sciences” from Arabic to Persian. He also undertook the project of editing the collective works of Sa’di, who is a celebrated Persian poet, providing advice for a variety of occasions and persons (Amanat 476).

Although, Foroughi’s criticism of Hegel’s Eurocentricism and superior attitude toward other cultures is noteworthy, I do believe he buys into the same dialectic.


Ali Shari’atxi underscores the role of Iqbal in the history of philosophy and mentions his name in the same breath as Bergson and Descartes (Shari’ati 79-80, vol.5, p. 11).
Mohammad Arasi in his article “On the Anniversary of the Separation of India and the Founding of Pakistan” criticizes this action as the “high price paid to create an *ommat* [Islamic nation] in the Indian sub-continent.” Published at armanfoundation.com. Retrieved October 25, 2017.

The Koranic references are: 20:121, 2:29, 6:165 and 33:72. It is worth mentioning that what Iqbal interprets in his take on an introverted individual, is in conflict with the Koran.

I am reminded here of Bergson: “I smell a rose and immediately confused recollections of childhood come back to my memory” (Bergson [1910] 1950, 161).

Iqbal dedicated this book to his son, Javid.

Encyclopædia Iranica’s article on Muhammad Iqbal.


Ibid.

Iqbal’s favorite symbol in flowers is the tulip that is the representative of the blood of the martyr and grows in the wild, unlike the trimmed and well-tended-to rose. This is because he is turning the attention of man within. He also replaces the nightingale, symbol of love and longing with the falcon, as “the symbol for man, soaring high” (ibid).

Nekoorouh 2014. The quote is from Nakhshab’s book *Neza’ Kelissa va Materialist*, in which he argues, “God-worshiping” is predicated on socialism, and if one interprets it correctly, it can lead to freedom for the Iranians.


Nekoorouh argues that Nakhshab had started this way of thinking, before Maleki’s parting ways with and criticism of the Tudeh party, by publishing books such as his *Bashar e Mauddi* (Materialist Human), *Neza’ Kelissa va Materialism* (The Church’s Dispute with Materialism), *Farhang e Vezhe haye Ejtemaei* (The Culture of the Social Terminology), and *Iran dar Astaneh yek Enghelab e Ejtemaei* (Iran in the Threshold of a Social Revolution) (Nekoorouh 2017).

The art object was a ceramic vessel at the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha, with the inscription “[f]oolish is the person who misses his chance and afterwards reproaches fate” (63).

Žižek 2012, 67.

Shari’ati’s writings and role in formulating an Islamic ideology merits a separate study and criticism. For this reason, I have had to limit the extensive information I found.

Jalal Al-e Ahmad, an influential author and a critic, also wrote about this return to a “cultural authenticity,” in his book *Gharbzadegi* (Westoxication). Al-e Ahmad’s work, in the final months of the decade of 1970s, “evolved into a journey of rediscovery for ‘true Islam’. A powerful motif before and during the 1979 revolution, *Gharbzade[h]gi* later rendered a rhetorical tool in the service of the Islamic Republic and its polemists” (Amanat 690).

Shari’ati 1979-80.

Shari’ati is very clear that the Iranians now are not interested in knowing their pre-Islamic past, and are “unmoved by the heroes, geniuses, myths and monuments of these ancient empires” (*Bazgasht* pp. 11-30).


“Alawi” is in reference to the first Shi’ite Imam, Ali.

Shari’ati’s theory aligns with Khomeini’s doctrine of *Velayat e Faqih* and how to follow the path of an Imamate that is active, and not passive (Khomeini 170, 173).

Na’ini had proposed, in the absence of the Hidden Imam, and if the king dies, the *ulama* have the authority to rule, but as pointed out by Momen, this was not a central theme in the writings of Naraqi or Na’ini.

The circumstances under which the Prophet conducted his leadership among his people of the Arabian Peninsula are completely overlooked in Khomeini’s citation, and “historical facts” mentioned are generalized and erroneous.

In this article, Kadivar examines various sources that cite this quote from Khomeini that “the boundaries of the authority of the jurisprudence is as limitless as the divine’s.”


I have explained these theories in chapter three of this study.

This is evident in a letter dated January 1, 1989 that Khomeini wrote to Mikhail Gorbachev. Khomeini invites the “Soviet” leader to consider the mystic interpretations of Islam in order to “solve their problems,” which Khomeini viewed as lack of religious faith.
Foucault’s article was titled “Is it Useless to Revolt?” was printed in Foucault and the Iranian Revolution, 2005, pp. 263-267.

Mottahari notes in his Jahan Bini-e Towhidi (The Monotheistic Worldview), clearly states his Neoplatonic interpretation of Islam (84-86).

Soroush is one of the influential figures since the beginning of the revolution, who was a member of the Cultural Revolution committee.

Mawardi was asked by the Abbasid caliph to develop a theory for the legitimacy of his caliphate, during the time Baghdad had come under attack by the Shi’ite Buyids (Tabatabaei 2015, 148).

Tabatabaei notes contrary to Mawardi’s treatise, which was on “defending of the religio-political and imamate, Iranshahri is idealistic monarchy . . . [in which] the king is chosen, not by previous religious leaders, but by God, and possesses kingly farrah (splendor)” (148).

Doostdar uses the example of an Afghani’s feeling of being an Afghani, or a mother’ feeling of being a mother, or a faithful feeling as if being at the center of their faith (415).

Tabatabaei’s views are influenced by the Hegelian left. Moradi explains that “Marxism in other worlds of thought, including in Iran, which has not yet experienced the awakening breeze from the ‘dogmatic slumber,’ and their philosophical constitution lies in a pre-Kantian world, and epistemologically mind has not become the subject of the mind, experienced another course of development and [and those thoughts] quickly turned into ideology.” This ideology, Moradi argues, includes the principles of dialectic, and of course
the Hegelian “master/slave” that became a favorite of the left, because they could easily “turn it to a political matter.”

655 Foucault 2000, 327.

656 It can be argued that the first Monotheistic religion was Zoroastriansim, dating back to 1500-1000 BCE. (Bekhrad, April 6, 2017). However, there seems to have been a closer and more direct interactions with Monotheism that stems from the Abrahamic religions in the Near East.

657 Agamben 2009, 51.

658 Shari’ati, in describing how to develop a “revolutionary character” argues: “to grow into to a revolutionary individual, as a principle and an essential and an objective, is to perfect one’s own essence of being, which requires participating in the [shaping of the] fate of the people that requires our humanity and perfected being” (Shari’ati vol. 2, 133).

659 The titles given by the monarch saw its height of elaborateness during the Qajars. The titles of “al-Dowleh,” “al-Din,” “al-Saltaneh,” that was tacked onto the person’s job title, such as “Mostashar,” were in use until the time of Foroughi. Similarly, the clergy bestowed upon themselves titles such as “Ayatollah,” meaning sign of the divine, “Hojjatol-Islam,” meaning the proof of Islam, which are still in use and exemplify the ulama’s system of hierarchy.

660 From the Independent, UK. “Egalité! Liberté! Sexualité!: Paris, May 1968. February 23, 2008. http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/egalit-libert-sexualit-paris-may-1968-784703.html#. Other examples that are very much on my mind are the 2009 Iranian uprising, due to the election fall out, and the 2011 Arab Spring, both now suppressed. It remains to be seen what theories or thoughts will follow these experiences.

661 Nancy 2008, 8.


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