

Chapter 15

The Neo-Mutazilites in Contemporary Iran

Two Generations of Muslim Intellectuals

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INTRODUCTION

With the victory of the Iranian Revolution in 1979 and the rise of a particular version of Islam based on Shi'a jurisprudence, Muslim intellectuals were faced with a new ordeal, and the idea of the relationship between Islam and politics was brought to a new predicament. Many Muslims who had advocated a political interpretation of Islam found themselves in a new situation and had to rethink their intellectual foundations in the face of the ruling political power that became theocratic. Some of those who advocated the politicization of Islam soon realized that the politicization of religion and its entry into all spheres of political and social life would lead to the denial of religion as a spiritual pillar of the society and therefore put into question the close association between Islam and politics in the name of Islam.

We mainly focus on two generations of religious intellectuals in Iran¹ and will show the fundamental changes in their conception of religion and, in particular, its relation to politics in comparison to the preceding generation embodied in Shariati, Motahhari, and ayatollah Khomeini. We will use the term “neo-Mutazilite” to name this current in reference to the eight- and ninth-century Mutazilites for whom reference to reason and an exegesis of the Koran as the word of the Prophet (and not God's) were the two major hallmarks. Other qualifying words were used in the last two decades to characterize these intellectuals. They were called “New religious thinkers” (now-andishmandan-e dini) in Iran, or “post-islamist intellectuals” by Farhad Khosrokhavar in two articles, respectively, in 1993 and 1996.² While adhering to a religion, these intellectuals attempted to critique many

of the religion's past beliefs, and they devised a new religiosity, whose most prominent feature was the separation of politics and religion. The title of neo-Mutazilite has also been applied to the new Sunni religious thinkers (Hamed Abuzeid, Mahmud Mohamed Taha, Ali Abderraziq, and so on).

THE FIRST- AND SECOND-GENERATION NEO-MUTAZILITE THEOLOGIANs

The triumph of the Iranian Revolution in 1979 and the establishment of Shiite theocracy in Iran brought a new era of religious thought in Iran. The reign of a theocratic narrative of religion (*Velayat-e Faqih*, the Government of the Islamic Jurist), the rise of the clergy, and the dominance of the jurisprudential narrative (*Fiqh*) of Islam after the establishment of the Islamic Theocracy in Iran raised the thorny question of the relationship of religion and politics in a new fashion. During the first decade of the Islamic regime, Muslim intellectuals were almost silent; the long war initiated by Iraq (1980–1988) and revolutionary turmoil, the overwhelming charisma of ayatollah Khomeyni as the head of the state, and the total devotion of a significant part of the youth to him made impossible critical reflections on religion and politics within the Iranian society. After the death of ayatollah Khomeini (1989), the Iranian intellectuals entered a new era. New religious thinkers emerged or changed their previous perspective and put into question the legitimacy of theocracy in the name of Islam. In particular, they disputed the subordination of politics to religion, questioning the pillar of the Islamic regime, namely the Supremacy of the Islamic Jurist (*Velayat-e Faqih*). Among them, Abdolkarim Soroush, Mojtabeh Shabestari, Mohsen Kadivar, Mostafa Malekian, Hassan Yousefi Eshkevari, and few others were the avant-garde.³ They were close to the circle known as Kian, including Saeed Hajjarian, Alireza Alavi Tabar, Hamidreza Jalaiepour, Mohammad Javad Gholamreza Kashi, and so on. Among them, Abdolkarim Soroush stood out, as one of the most prominent neo-Mutazilite thinkers in postrevolutionary Iran. Soroush, like many others, was a staunch supporter of the Revolution led by ayatollah Khomeyni on the eve of the Revolution. Gradually, he became critical in his writings and conferences toward the theocratic regime. Other Muslim intellectuals such as Shabestari, and later on Kadivar, and Eshkavari also began to criticize the theocratic version of Islam.

The second-generation encompasses people like Arash Naraghi, Abolghassem Fanaee, Soroush Dabbagh, Sedigheh Vasmaqi (one of the few neo-Mutazilite women), Hassan Ferehtian, and some of the first-generation neo-Mutazilites like Mohsen Kadivar in his late thought after he migrated to the United States. The statement is also true about Hasan Yousefi Eshkavari

who changed after his establishment in Europe (he spent six years in prison for having denounced the Islamic regime and was denied by the Islamic regime the right to wear the clerical garb).

THE NEW THEMATICS AMONG THE IRANIAN NEO-MUTAZILITES: RELIGION AND POLITICS, DEMOCRACY AND ITS COMPATIBILITY WITH ISLAM, THE HERMENEUTICS OF THE KORAN

One of the concerns of Iranian neo-Mutazilites was to propose a non-Jihadist, non-maryrist understanding of the Koran and provide an interpretation in agreement with the modern liberal values, particularly within the Islamic regime in Iran, based on the Velayat-e Faqih, a theocracy in which the Supreme Leader (the vali-e faqih) plays an autocratic role.

Intellectuals such as Abdolkarim Soroush, Mojtabeh Shabestari, Hassan Yousefi Eshkevari, Mostafa Malekian, Mohsen Kadivar, and Habibollah Peyman, among the first generation of neo-Mutazilites,⁴ and among the second generation, Arash Naraghi, Abolghasem Fanaei, Soroush Dabbagh, and Hassan Ferechtian sought to propose a new interpretation of the Koran as well as the Prophet's mission in opposition to the Islamic theocracy.

Soroush

Among the religious scholars of the postrevolutionary period, the writings of Abdul Karim Soroush, and especially his theory of "contraction and expansion" (*qabz o bast*) of religion,⁵ have been of crucial importance. This book can be considered as the manifesto of religious neo-Mutazilism in postrevolutionary Iran. Soroush believes that religious knowledge is human knowledge and has no sacredness. Another point is the impact of the evolution of science and its role in the understanding of the sacred texts, which means that the understanding of human beings is from the modern text.

Later on, Soroush developed further his view by writing "Expanding the Prophetic Experience"⁶ and interpreting it in a way that further denies sacredness to the Koranic text. He shows that along with the divine aspects of the Koran and the Prophet's personality, his human aspects must also be emphasized. Soroush believes in the gradual prophetic experience of the Prophet and claims that the religion we know in the name of Islam did not descend upon the Prophet once and for all, but gradually, and it evolved during that time. In following reformist intellectuals, Soroush claims that some of the verses of the Koran concern the daily life of the Prophet, for example, if Aisha had not been slandered about an illicit relationship with another

man, the early verses of the Surat Noor might not have been revealed in that fashion. One can distinguish between the inner experience of the Prophet and its external manifestation, and in Medina the latter was instrumental in wars. While accepting the sacredness of the Koran, Soroush claimed that Muhammad was the creator of the Koran and regarded the experience of the Prophet as a kind of poetic experience (in that case, following sound logic one should deny sacredness to the Koran, but Soroush refuses to go that far). He believes that Muhammad's personality was influential in shaping the Koran because he was not a passive receptor of revelation. Soroush's comments can be summarized in the following points:

First, to understand the message of the Koran one has to distinguish between the essence of a religion and its manifestations (this is the classical distinction between the essence and the accidents in Aristotelian and Islamic philosophy). He has provided a number of criteria for distinguishing between the essentials of Koranic passages: Arabic language, Arabic culture, Islamic lexical apparatus, Arabia's geography, events in Islamic history, and so on. The second point in the theory of "Revelation as the Word of Muhammad" emphasizes the comparison between the experience of the Prophet and the experience of the poet. Third, the Prophet is the creator and producer of the Koran. The Koran was revealed by God, but it came from the mouth of Muhammad to his followers, and in so doing the Prophet was by no means inactive (this was also the position of the Mutazilites in the eighth and ninth centuries). Fourth, the conditions governing the life of the Prophet played an crucial role in producing the Koran. And finally, understanding the essence of the Koran over the accidents is the mission of Muslim scholars.

Soroush published a series of articles abroad last year, revisiting the issue. These articles have been published under the title "Prophetic Dreams of the Prophet" (*ro'ya-ye rasulane-ye payaambar*).⁷ In these articles, Soroush comes up with a new interpretation of the Revelation in relation to Muhammad. To understand the Prophet's message and to understand the Revelation of the verses and its "confused order" they should be treated as dreamed by the Prophet. One must now, therefore, apply the science of interpreting sleep. In other words, as much as an oral revelation, one should pay attention to the dreamlike visual revelation.

On democracy, Soroush's ideas were initially published under the heading of "Religious Democratic Governance" in *Kian* magazine⁸ and aroused much controversy.

In confronting religion and ideology, he criticized Shariati's views and defended democracy in the Islamic society. Criticizing official stances on religion, he argued that religions, contrary to ideologies, have not promised paradise on earth (critique of eschatology used by Shariati to give a revolutionary interpretation of Islam), and the role of religion is to provide a system

of values and norms for human social behavior. In essence, in his view, religious governments do not differ from nonreligious ones that are based on rational consultation with the citizens, so the main difference between religious and nonreligious governments is not in their form but the end.

The peak of Soroush's intellectual developments on religion and democracy can be found in his speech in Paris in 2006 in which he criticized the politicization of the clergy in an attempt to show that traditional Shi'ism, especially its jurisprudential and Mahdist narratives, is opposed to democracy and the ruling jurists (and in particular, those supporting the *Velayat-e Faqih*) are anti-democratically minded. Governing through the traditional Fiqh is incompatible with the principles of democracy, and religious democracy can only be achieved by adopting universal values based on human rights. Soroush regards the establishment of democracy based on religion as irrational and impossible. What remains to be done is to prepare Muslims for the acceptance of democratic values. Does the government have the right to make religious laws? Soroush's answer is definite, but with two important restrictions: first, these laws must come from below, the private sphere, to the public sphere through customary processes and not from above, by the state. On top of it, these laws should not conflict with human rights standards.

Mojtahed Shabestari

In 2007, Mojtahed Shabestari, in an interview,⁹ attempted to reveal aspects of his hermeneutical view of the Koran. He is one of the first postrevolutionary religious scholars who both criticized the formal understanding of religion and sought to find a new solution to Muslim life in the modern world in the face of the dilemmas and problems arising from the establishment of Islamic rule in Iran. His answer is to rethink the foundations of Islamic theology, relying on science that has been called hermeneutics in the West. Shortly after the victory of the Revolution, Shabestari became convinced of the inefficiency of Islamic jurisprudence (Fiqh) in answering questions about human rights, liberty, democracy, apostasy, polygamy, and so on. In his view, it is necessary to show that the text of the Koran, while of divine origin, is also expressed in human words, proffered by the Prophet, as stated by the Mutazilites, in the eighth and ninth centuries. In his view, the Koran is the Book of God that came to us through the mouth of Muhammad. In order to understand the Koran, it is necessary to study the environment and the society of that time in Arabia, and to understand that many of those laws promulgated at that time cannot be applied in today's world. Sharia laws' purpose in Islam was to improve the situation of Muslim communities and make it more consistent with God's view. In the modern world, in order to achieve this goal, one has to abandon those religious laws that command physical violence.

The Islamic laws of Talion (*qisas*, an eye for an eye) were promulgated, not for the sake of retribution, not from a punitive view, but in view of pardon, from a moral perspective. In order to understand it, we have to analyze the sociopolitical and economic commandments of Islam in their historical context. This implies that they cannot be applied all the times. In particular, the jurisprudential commandments do not belong to the essence of the religious message of Islam (*zaatiyaat*) but to the nonsacred part of them, dependent of the historical context of the Arab society at those times (*arziyaat*).¹⁰

Shabestari's conception of the compatibility of Islam and democracy has to be analyzed in light of his hermeneutics, in his book *The Human Reading of Religion*.¹¹ He believes that Muslims must turn to human achievements in order to manage their affairs and build upon common sense, not religion. The purpose of the prophets was not the establishment of a state but spreading faith, entrusting the political affairs to the common sense of the people. Of course, religion should morally inspire political action, but it should not be used as the tool by rulers.¹² The Prophet's mission was promoting faith and not establishing a theocratic state. Democracy, according to him, is the most appropriate system for Muslims in the present day, because it is the only political system under which freedom and justice can be achieved. Another aspect of Shabestari's separation of religion and politics is that Islam does not have solutions for all the problems of modern life. Deducing them by analogy (*qias*) or religious legal notice (*fatwa*) does not fundamentally change the situation. The best solution is to disconnect religion from politics and give full autonomy to the latter. In 2007, in an interview with the *Madresseh Magazine*,¹³ Shabestari attempted to make explicit his hermeneutical view of the Koran. For him, the text of the Koran, while having a divine origin, is also a human word (the Prophet's). The Koran is the Book of God that came to us from the mouth of the Prophet Mohammad (in that respect, he is a Mutazilite *stricto sensu*). As for Sharia laws in Islam, Shabestari argues that their purpose and the social role was to change the social realities of the Prophet's contemporaries for the better, replacing group-based punishment by individual ones, avoiding any collective punishment as was practiced at that time. Due to the change in the mores and customs in the modern world, today we should abandon the laws that prompted physical violence in order to tackle the problems arising at the dawn of Islam.

Hassan Yousefi Eshkevari

Hassan Yousefi Eshkevari, a neo-Mutazilite cleric who has been "defrocked" by the Islamic regime in Iran (he was denied the right to wear the religious Shiite garb), has sought to provide an interpretation that is, in his eyes, consistent with the values of the modern world and, in particular, with human rights.

In his writings, he has critically reinterpreted Islamic values. For him, the best type of government is a democracy, based on the vote of the people, and he has tried to show its consistency with Islamic precepts. In his view, absolute rule belongs only to God, who has delegated his power to man. As a result, the government is earthly in its nature, and democracy is the most appropriate type of government, and Muslims have to choose it. Otherwise, living under autocracy, even in the name of religion, means usurping the power of God. Like many neo-Mutazilites, Eshkevari believes that government and power in Islam have not a heavenly but an earthly origin. No one is inherently and unilaterally commissioned by God to rule in the name of Allah (*velayat*), but the government should be based on a representative system (*vekalat*),¹⁴ according to his exegesis of the Koran. He denies in this way the legitimacy to ayatollah Khomeini's *Velayat-e Faqih*, based on the government of the Islamic Jurist in the name of God.

While defending Shariati's views, Eshkavari argues that the Prophet's rule was no longer his prophecy or interpretation. The Prophet's government was not part of his mission, that is, if the Prophet did not come to Medina (where he became a community leader) and had died in Mecca, his prophetic assignment would have been fulfilled. In reference to the verses of the Koran, he points out that there are a small number of verses on government and politics. Out of the 6,600 verses in the Koran, about 500 relate to practical injunctions, including prayer, fasting, zakat (Islamic tax), inheritance laws and penal laws, and so on. Were the 500 verses sufficient for even the administration of the Muslims in Medina at the time of the Prophet? They were certainly not enough. The total population of Medina at that time was probably about 1,000. Accordingly, the phenomenon of power and government is a human and social issue, not a religious one, and it is necessary for the Muslims to distinguish between the Prophet's rule in Medina and his mission as the Messenger of God.¹⁵

Mohsen Kadivar

Mohsen Kadivar is another neo-Mutazilite with a clerical background. He has sought to propose a consistent interpretation of the modern values in the religious texts, an interpretation of Islamic tradition, and the application of sharia in today's world. One can speak of two major periods in Kadivar's thought. "Kadivar I" extended to the first two decades after the 1979 Iranian Revolution and continued until 2001. At this stage, Kadivar, while adhering to the official religious system and accepting Islamic jurisprudential criteria, attempted to show in reference to the standards of the traditional Fiqh that the *Velayat-e Faqih* had no deep foundation in it.¹⁶ In two books, *Theories of State in Shi'a Jurisprudence* and *Velayat-e Faqih*,¹⁷ he highlighted the fact

that *Velayat-e Faqih* was based on relatively recent interpretations of the role of the Islamic ruler in society (which denies its being based on those Hadith that are called Sahih, that is, close to the Origin of Shiism), and second, that this view is by no means sacred. Referring to Mehdi Haeri Yazdi's book *Wisdom and Governance*, Kadivar showed how the latter defended the theory of *Vekalat* (the ruler as the representative of the people, chosen by them) by criticizing the *Velayat* (the ruler as designed by the Sharia, beyond the will of the people). In those years, Kadivar still adhered to the traditional Fiqh. The essay "From Historical Islam to Spiritual Islam"¹⁸ was a turning point in his theological leanings and a break with his former jurisprudential views. Accepting the significant changes that Islamic societies have gone through, he stated that transformation within Islamic societies is possible by means of the critique of fundamentalist Islam, which calls for the application of Sharia laws at all times and places. He imposes on the Fiqh a criterion of validity based on fairness (justice) and rationality. All those religious laws that do not subscribe to these norms are to be rejected in his view. More generally, no religious injunction can go beyond the criteria of rationality and justice and one cannot refer to any infallible religious law in absolute terms. In other words, being just (moral view) and rational (reason as the decisive criteria) determine the religious laws and they take precedence over any claim to sacredness or infallibility. In this respect, the second Kadivar (Kadivar II) is a neo-Mutazilite in so far as he imposes rationality as the foundation of any religious law.

Mostafa Malekian

Neo-Mutazilite theologians reflect on the relationship between the modern world and the religious thought; a Malekian has attempted to provide a typology of Islam in order to propose his own answer. He has distinguished three conceptions of Islam:

- Islam I, exclusively based on sacred religious texts we call the Book (the Koran) and the Tradition (Sunnat).
- Islam II, encompassing the commentaries, interpretations, and explanations that include the works of theologians, jurists, scholars, philosophers, and mystics.
- -Finally, Islam III meaning a historical realization and a set of actions and reactions enacted by Muslims in the last 1,400 years, and the effects of those actions and reactions on Islam. According to him, depending of the version of Islam we choose, the answer to the question of the relationship between Islam and modernity, liberalism, or Islam and violence would be different.¹⁹

Like many intellectuals in the Muslim world, Malekian has neither offered a specific interpretation theory of the Koran nor interpreted the Koranic verses in a unified approach. In some of his writings, however, he has commented on the Koran and its interpretation. He has identified several ways to understand the Koran. First, he contends that the Koran has no internal consistency. Second, the Koran is in conflicts at least with parts of today's sciences and thoughts. Third, in the Koran, the beliefs attributed to the Jews and the Christians are contested by the believers of those religions. Fourth, the value system of the Koran is in conflicts with those of the modern world (Human rights, and so on). For example, it is difficult to accept the law of talion (*qisas*, an eye for an eye), violence, women's rights, and apostasy as treated in the Koran. Fifth, the Koran is not the word of God but the word of Muhammad. In an interview with *Faraa-Raah* magazine,²⁰ Malekian has attempted to express his view of hermeneutics and the conflict between modern rationality and Revelation (*vah'y*). He argues that we should abandon the literalist view of the Koran and grasp the spirit of the Sacred Text rather than its literal sense. However, the hermeneutics of the Koran is not an easy task for many Muslims, because they believe that the Koran is the word of God and it has been inspired to the Prophet in a manner that has not been influenced by his psychology or culture. In this view, chronology and, more generally, history play no role.

Another controversial issue in the Muslim world is the interpretation of the Koran, which is traditionally forbidden by Muslims. They believe that it can be done through the consensus of the ulama, but this consensus does not exist, and it is at best a wishful thinking. Malekian believes that the literalist interpretation of the Koran is unacceptable to the modern man; believing everything in the Koran and being convinced that it has an answer for all the problems of modern life makes us think that in the past there was some knowledge that is inaccessible to modern man: it has been forgotten or lost sight of (which is unacceptable). The third assessment is to renounce referring to the Koran for all the problems encountered in our world. Religion has no answer to all the problems of modern life and we should recognize it as an insuperable fact. The Koran brings spiritual answers and modern man needs rationality and spirituality, and none can be sacrificed to the other. Malekian's answer is ambivalent, he does not offer a global hermeneutics of the Sacred Text, but he puts into question holistic views of religion and rejects fundamentalism and those understandings that "resolve" the hermeneutic circle in a simplistic way. For Malekian, the purpose of rationality and spirituality is to prepare people for an ideal life. For him, the main features of this ideal life are goodness and joy and a life worth living, those criteria being autonomous toward religion.²¹ He believes that these components help us seek the best pleasure and least suffering for ourselves, on the one hand, and alleviate the

suffering of the others, on the other. For him, spirituality does not necessarily imply religion, and a religious person is not necessarily spiritual, the reverse being also true: a spiritual person is not necessarily religious. This opens the way for the recognition of a secular spirituality, independently of any religion. The fundamentalist view of religion embodied in *Velayat-e Faqih* denies “spirituality” to those who do not consider themselves as Muslims. Malekian introduces a kind of spirituality that is autonomous toward religion and, in so doing, rehabilitates secular views that are denied legitimacy by traditional and radical Islam.

Arash Naraghi

Among the second-generation neo-Mutazilites, Arash Naraghi is a seminal figure. He dared rise the issues like the gay rights within Islam. After leaving Iran and teaching in the United States, he wrote Persian articles dealing with Islamic mysticism (Sufism) and Iranian poets. The book *Mirror of Life* (ayeneh-ye jan), written about Rumi’s thoughts and ideas, discusses his spiritual development and in the final chapter of his book “Thinking about Death and Nothing,”²² he compared Rumi, Hafiz, and Khayyam. Naraghi has attempted to present a new paradigm by criticizing religious modernism and traditionalism. He bases his claims on the Koran in order to examine the relationship between religion and the modern world. The Islamic legal system is based on inequality between human beings, Muslims and non-Muslims, believers and nonbelievers. This has to be put into question. For him, the Koran is not a book of law but a book of spiritual guidance. Second, the sources of Islamic narrative must also be critically assessed. Third, in understanding the Koranic commandments and the prophetic traditions, one should not overlook the historical context of those commandments. Historical contextualization of the Koran is what characterizes Arash Naraghi and some other neo-Mutazilites. Like Kadivar, he makes the exegesis of the Sharia contingent on the following conditions:

First, the legal and religious system should not be incompatible with the general living conditions of the religious community. One cannot ask a whole community’s death in order to preserve religion (martyrdom as an ideal for the genuine believers could be of that type of stipulation). Second, religious legitimacy must be dependent on moral legitimacy and not the opposite. Fundamentalists and the supporters of the *Velayat-e Faqih* believe that morals are subordinated to religion. Neo-Mutazilites invert this relationship and proclaim the absolute supremacy of ethics over faith.

Third, a legitimate and ethical religious system is to be respected by the voluntary followers of that religion and should not be imposed to the others, who should not be coerced into it. Here too, contrary to the Islamic regimes

that impose their norms to the others (also to nonbelievers and non-Muslims), neo-Mutazilites in general interpret religion as being personal, and therefore, not to be imposed against the will of the individual.

In his essay “The Sacred Text and the Hermeneutic Exegesis,”²³ Naraghi attempted to present his own understanding of the Koran. Naraghi believes that the Scripture consists of two worlds: the first, the world of the Revelation, and the second, the meanings contained in the Text, which are the primary purpose of God in revealing the Book. From the Naraghi’s point of view, the First World has no sacredness, and Koranic vocabulary has a purely instrumental role and is a bridge that leads the reader into the world of the deep meaning of the Text. The second world is the recognition of the deep spirit of the Revelation through the Book. Modern man is confronted with a mystery in the face of the sacred text, which he calls the “hermeneutical dilemma,” which is the profound epistemic divide that has taken place between the reader and the sacred Book’s original world. In the premodern world, the two worlds were largely identical. But in the modern world, there is “an epistemic rift” between the first and second worlds, and the modern reader faces difficult questions on gender issues (the juridical inequality of men and women in the Koran), the slavery (tolerated by the Koran in its literalist interpretation), the scientific and cosmological theories, and the human rights issues. Modern man is now confronted with the sacred text and how this hermeneutic rift must be handled. In Naraghi’s view, modern interpreters of the Koran must first distinguish between Arabic and Koranic culture, noting that obsolete Arab culture in the Age of Revelation does not mean obsolete Koranic message. Second, modern audiences have to understand that their end should be to enter the second world of the Text (its spiritual meaning), and therefore, by necessity, they should adopt a critical attitude toward the original Arab culture within which the Revelation was made. The Koranic message should be separated from the former Arab culture and be inserted into the present cultural horizon of modern culture. This goes against the Salafist and the theocratic views that prevail in many Muslim societies. He underlines the primacy of spirituality (the deep meaning of the Koran) over the literary understanding of the Koran.

Abolghassem Fanaee

Fanaee’s project, like many neo-Mutazilite Muslim religious intellectuals and theologians, revolves around the relationship between religion and modernity, the place of faith in a secularized world, the relationship between religion and ethics, the place of Sharia in modern Muslim societies, the relationship between religion and politics and, in particular, the type of rationality that could be compatible with spirituality, which is, according to him, at the heart

of the Muslim religion, as Soroush and Shabestari have already asserted it. His work focuses on the relationship between religion and ethics as it is clearly stated in his first book, "Religion in the balance of ethics. Research on the relationship between religious ethics and secular ethics".²⁴ For him, religion must remain within the limits of ethics while recognizing that the first can participate in the enrichment of the second. Fanaee's purpose is to find a reasonable and satisfactory way to resolve the conflict between Islamic ethics (Fiqh) and secular ethics. Subsequently, he radicalizes his point of view and engages in a critique of Islamic law (Fiqh) and the methods used by the doctors of Islamic law. For him, the Fiqh is confronted today with the challenge of the modern world and in this context the religious sciences, as they are taught in the traditional Shiite theological schools (howzeh), are not able to provide adequate answers to the issues raised by the contemporary condition of man. He focuses in particular on the problematic of rationality by distinguishing Fiqh-based rationality (*aghlaniaté féghi*) and secular rationality (*aghlaaniaté orfi*). The first is to justify religion while modern reason is a tool for organizing life in society. In particular, he considers following Soroush the necessary "shrinking" (*ghabz*, "contraction") of Islamic law in the modern world.

The hard core of Fanaï's thesis is the priority of ethics over religion. This does not mean the ethicization of religion but rather the ethicization of religious knowledge. In other words, his project is to question the legitimacy of those who affirm the primacy of Islam over secular ethics.

To defend a secular morality a literal and static vision of sharia, he introduces certain number of distinctions, aiming to show what differentiates an ethical vision from a maximalist conception of Islam that claims to have an answer to all questions posed to the modern man.

The first distinction is between the applied Fiqh (*Fiqhé karbordi*) and the normative Fiqh (*Feqhé hanjâri*). The second is to raise all the religious norms for which there are acceptable reasons in the fundamental texts of Islam. According to Fanaee, following Shabestari, to establish norms in human societies with the sole reference to the founding texts of Islam is not possible. After the death of the Prophet of Islam, given the diversity of human societies and the emergence of new problems, religious laws were no longer sufficient to organize the believers' existence in society. The purpose of the applied Fiqh was to seek answers not only in the founding texts but especially in the sciences of the time, Fiqh not being able to answer on its own all the legal questions in more and more complex societies. It would, therefore, be urgent to inject a dose of ethics and rationality into the existing Fiqh.

One solution is to resort to *Ijtihad*, that is, the theologian's personal effort to propose solutions to the problems encountered by the believers in the legal field. Fanaee introduces a distinction between what he calls "traditional *ijtihad*" practiced by a majority of theologians and "modern *ijtihad*" based

on secular human reason, in relation to the reference to the prophetic model, actualized in light of modernity. In traditional *ijtihad* the central element is the religious law and the necessity to apply it in all contexts, whereas in modern *ijtihad* the central element is the reference the motivations of the Prophet in promulgating religious prescriptions, taking account of the world evolution since then. Traditional *ijtihad* does not understand the modern world and relies on a set of legal commands that have become irrelevant. It denies legitimacy to the evolution of human societies and the diversity of cultures and practices, the *Fiqh* being decreed eternally valid. Contemporary *ijtihad* takes prophetic experience as a model to inspire believers by its intentionality rather than blindly applying it to the modern world. Fanaee enlarges the question and asks: how to remain a believer and modern in a world where religion has become more or less marginal in citizens' life? The solution for him is to reconcile religious spirituality, which remains a fundamental need of the man, with secular rationality. This reconciliation is obviously problematic, and Fanaee distinguishes three stances regarding the conflict between religious spirituality and secular rationality. The first, supported by the traditionalists, is to claim that there is no possibility of reconciliation or compatibility between the two, the traditionalists opting for Islam and rejecting secular reason. The second position supports the idea of a secular spirituality articulated with an updated mysticism. In this perspective, lay people can recover spirituality, which would be close to a "spirituality without God" or a form of secular spirituality, proposed by modern secularized thinkers of Christian inspiration. These two solutions do not satisfy Fanaee. He proposes a new conception of spirituality that is not in contradiction with rationality, while being respectful of religion. He proposes the concept of "sacral spirituality" (*ma'naviate ghodsi*). For him, faith is the fundamental element of religiosity; it has been forgotten and marginalized by modern man. "Sacred spirituality" is an attempt to reconcile faith and rationality. His interpretation of spirituality rests on three characteristics: it is religious, it is theocentric (*khoda mehvar*), and it conforms to a rational framework (*charchub-e aghlaani*). Spirituality and rationality are two indispensable elements in constructing the identity of the believing individual in the modern world. One cannot sacrifice neither of them; it is necessary to rearticulate them. Sacred rationality is an interpretation of religion so that it is not in conflict with reason, science, or morality. At the same time, it is meant to be a return to the Golden Age of faith, that is to say, the time when believers felt connected to a present and living God, a living and present Prophet, and a living Koran. It was also a time when religion was a way of life and was not transformed into a set of beliefs, attitudes, and habits. We often talk about God, but what is important is talking *with* God. Our relationship with the absent God is between I and He while it should be between I and You, in other words, a relationship with

a present God. The relation between the I and the He is monological, while between I and you is dialogical. Fanaee draws inspiration here from various modern Christian theological currents, in which the existential dimension of the faith is emphasized.²⁵

One can establish the same kind of attitude toward the Prophet. To speak of the Prophet is different from speaking *to* the Prophet. The same observation is valid in relation to the Koran. Knowing the Koran is different from living with the Koran: it is the book of life and for life, of practice and action, and not a book of science, of history.

The Prophet, in his perfection, made a synthesis of rationality and revelation according to the society of his time. By entering a living dialogue with him, we must apply what is right in our world and time. What is rational is to be privileged nowadays, just as in the time of the Prophet, with his presence and his relationship to God in the form of revelation. The dialogical relationship with the Prophet, the Koran, and God induces a hiero-subjectivity in which reason and ethics take precedence over tradition and its dead religiosity. Fanaee thus privileges reason in an imaginary relationship to God and the Prophet, as well as to the Koranic text, according to intuition and interpellation. He rejects what history has sedimented in the form of Muslim law (Fiqh) and, more generally, religion through a religious tradition (Sharia). Only in this way can we achieve the “sacred spirituality” that reconciles modern rationality and the originary Prophetic experience.

Fanaee tackles the gender issue, ignored by many first-generation neo-Mutazilites. For the question of women in general and inheritance in particular (for the traditional Fiqh women’s inheritance is half of men’s), Fanaee considers that one should not follow the Prophet in his laws but rather follow the model he has proposed. For him in the context of fourteen centuries ago, when women had no rights, Islam’s proposals were a step toward justice and the reduction of inequalities. In today’s world, we must not reproduce the laws that the Prophet put in place, but follow his inspiration to reduce gender inequality. He proposes a kind of *ijtihad* inspired by the model of the Prophet, which will aim at just laws, true to the requirements of the modern world. He thinks the Prophet would behave differently if he lived today and would have approved human rights-based laws and gender equality.

Soroush Dabbagh

Soroush Dabbagh has attempted to formulate his approach to religion on the basis of the existential concerns of man and the pursuit of meaning (issues such as sorrow, pain, death). In this context, he is influenced by the works

of Gabriel Marcel, Kierkegaard, Wittgenstein, and the theological reflections of Abdul Karim Soroush, his father, and, in particular, Mojtaba Shabestari.

A modern approach to mysticism in today's disenchanted world is one of his significant tendencies. He has devoted an important part of his intellectual work in recent years to contemplating mystical conduct in the modern world. His acquaintance with the modern Iranian painter and poet Sohrab Sepehri has made Dabbagh realize that Sepihri's life and works are a reflection of the existential concerns of modern humans and the need for a mystical view in a world without gods.

The place of ethics in the modern world. Like many neo-Mutazilite intellectuals, Dabbagh has attempted to examine the relation of religion to ethics and the importance of a moral approach in many issues of Muslim life. He believes like many second-generation neo-Mutazilites in the primacy of ethics over religion and, especially, over jurisprudential Islam (Fiqh), and he has applied such an approach to issues such as hijab and apostasy in Islam.

He defends the freedom of women to wear or lift the veil,²⁶ tackling frontally an issue that had been at best marginal, like other gender issues, among the first-generation Mutazilites.

To defend women's right toward the veil, he refers to the minimalist theory of divine command based on the supremacy of ethics over religious prescriptions and the work of some Iranian scholars like Amir Hossein Turkashvand,²⁷ Ahmad Ghaleb,²⁸ Mohsen Kadivar, and Abdolali Bazargan. Dabbagh believes that rulings such as those on hijab have a rather humane and ethical nature, and concludes that wearing it in modern time is not compulsory, and at the same time, not wearing does not imply defecting God's command and purpose ignoring the Koranic injunctions.

After the Iranian Revolution and the establishment of the Islamic state, the issue of apostasy was raised again in the field of theology. Ayatollah Montazeri and Abdul Karim Soroush debated the matter. While defending the principle of apostate punishment, Montazeri believed that the Islamic state's duty was to provide a ground for nonreligious conversion. Soroush believed that in the modern world, one could not be killed because of a change of opinion. Dabbagh argues that anyone who abandons some of his beliefs and even his religion has committed no moral offense and is not entitled to any judicial punishment.

Although Dabbagh considers himself indebted to the first-generation neo-Mutazilites, his writing is a turning point in the religious intellectual tradition. By introducing poetry and literature into a new project of religiosity, he has attempted to transform the mystical tradition and to draw upon some philosophers, psychoanalysts, poets, and novelists in order to develop a kind

of mystical conduct in a new and different form. The construction of concepts such as “modern seeker” (*saalek-e modern*), “wishful faith” (*imaan-e aaezu-mandaaneh*), and “blindness to death” (*kur margi*) suggests this shift.

Sedigheh Vasmaghi

Sedigheh Vasmaghi is one of the rare Shia theologians who defend women's rights in the name of Islam. She has published several books, one of which is about women and Islamic law (Fiqh). Her competence in Islamic law was institutionally recognized not only by her PhD but also by her teaching at the University of Tehran. She has made several publications in Persian, including her recent book on the rereading of Shari'a but also a text on the reinterpretation of the law of Islamic retribution (Qisas, Talion) where she refutes the point of view that Qisas in Islam aimed primarily at punishing. According to her, this law sought above all to weight the punishment by putting it at the maximum level harm suffered by the victim, the preferred path suggested by several Koranic verses being forgiveness and clemency. Her book on women's rights challenges the inequality between man and woman according to the Koran, attributing most inequalities to a patriarchal tradition that has nothing Koranic about it. As for certain gender-unequal Koranic prescriptions, they intended to alleviate a much more flagrant gender inequality at the time of the Prophet. According to Vasmaghi, we must dissociate the legal commandments from the essence of the Islamic faith and reinterpret all the legal commandments in the light of modernity. Many of the judicial practices that claim to be Islam, she notes, are linked to ossified traditions, among them, stoning (it has no Koranic base) or apostasy or so-called “Spreading corruption on earth” (*fisad fil ardh*). An example that she willingly develops in her interviews is that of the death sentence for consumers and drug traffickers that are made in reference to this notion. She shows the undue extension of this concept to modern transgressions that should not have been logically entailed death sentence. She distinguishes the specific punishments mentioned in the Koran or the Sunna (the Hadiths) and all of the *hudud* and those, which are like a deduction or an extension of the first (*ta'zir*), the latter never having to be harsher than the first. The undue application of notions derived from Islamic jurisprudence or the Koran without a consequent reflection on their adaptation to the modern world leads to a fixed Islamic law that has only traditional legitimacy, while it is largely devoid of authentic Islamic legitimacy. This same type of prescription about women introduces inequalities that have no Islamic justification according to her, in reference to the spirit of Islam.

The case of Vasmaghi is one of the rare examples where a woman, competent in Islamic jurisprudence, stands against the hegemony of unequal and

cruel law entailing the execution of several hundred drug smugglers and even addicts a year (many addicts, by necessity, become drug dealers).

THE IDEOLOGICAL RUPTURE BETWEEN NEO-MUTAZILITES AND REVOLUTIONARY ISLAMIC INTELLECTUALS

There is a major rupture among the neo-Mutazilites and the former generation of religious intellectuals like Shariati, Motahhari, and, more generally, Third-Worldist Iranian intellectuals. One can summarize them as follows:

- Whereas, religious (Shariati) or secular (Jalal Ale-Ahmad), Third-Worldist Iranian intellectuals believed in revolution, the neo-Mutazilites are prone to a nonrevolutionary, reformist attitude toward social issues. Major Iranian Third-Worldist intellectuals accepted the fusion of politics and religion in the name of the forthcoming revolution that would promote the anti-imperialist proletariat (although Iran was devoid of a significant working class); Shariati thought that genuine Shiism was “Ali’s Shiism” (*tashayyo-e alavi*), against the quietist and passive “Safavid Shiism” (*tashayyo-e safavi*). For the neo-Mutazilites, the blending of politics and religion is denounced by the neo-Mutazilites as a harmful confusion that ends up in autocracy and engenders distrust toward religion among religious-minded people, thus weakening Islam rather than strengthening it.
- Third-Worldist intellectuals, religious or secular, believed mostly in an eschatology (Marxist eschatology of classless society or chiliastic ideology of the end of times embodied in the twelfth occulted Imam), whereas neo-Mutazilites reject wild utopias like classless society or paradise on earth visions or the end of time imaginaries; in this respect, a major anthropological change has occurred: whereas Shariati insisted on eschatological awaiting (*entezar*²⁹), the neo-Mutazilites simply ignore it and eschatology, be it religious or Marxist, has become invisible in their religiosity.
- Third-Worldist intellectuals rejected democracy as a fake by-product of imperialism, whereas neo-Mutazilites are prone to it in the name of the people’s sovereignty in matters related to civil society and politics.
- Third-Worldist intellectuals, secular (like Jalal Ale-Ahmad) or religious (like Shariati), viewed revolutionary violence as not only legitimate but also desirable. The leitmotiv by Shariati, “Martyrdom is an invitation in all the eras and all the generations: if you can put to death (jihad) and if you cannot, die (martyrdom).”³⁰

Some Reformists, following the neo-Mutazilites, inverted that leitmotiv: “Neither die nor kill (*na bemir, na bemiraan*).”

Neo-Mutazilites reject the romantic view of violence and promote a non-violent civil society vision that has found its social expression in the Green Movement in July 2009.

- Third-Worldist intellectuals, be they religious or secular, promoted a heroic individualism: one should sacrifice oneself in the name of martyrdom (Shariati’s “red Shiism” (*tashayyo-e sorkh*) against “black Shiism” (*tashayyo-e siaah*)) or for the sake of the anti-imperialist class struggle. In contrast to them, for neo-Mutazilites martyrdom becomes at best a marginal topic (often ignored in their writings), and normal citizenship gains the upper hand. They promote a life-centered individualism, whereas death-centered individualism was the ideal of Shariati and Marxist revolutionaries like Golsorkhi and the leftist Mujahedeen of the People.
- Iranian Third-Worldists subordinated ethics, human right’s issues, and all nonpolitical considerations to their revolutionary view of society; neo-Mutazilites proclaim the supremacy of ethics and in particular human rights over any religious claim in an unambiguous manner among their second generation.
- New topics like civil sphere, democracy, nonpolitical spirituality, and a “peaceful” citizenship based on nonviolence replace the warrior-like vision of the major Iranian Third-Worldist intellectuals who believed in wild utopias in the name of the indefatigable fight against imperialism or, as Shariati put it, *estekbar*, imperialist “arrogance.”
- Neo-Mutazilite thinkers have paved the way to a mutual understanding with secular intellectuals in Iran. By declaring the autonomy of the politics toward religion in an ambiguous (first-generation neo-Mutazilites) and unambiguous manner (second-generation neo-Mutazilites), they have overcome the major stumbling block toward secular government. The divide is henceforth between the religious fundamentalists and the neo-Mutazilites within the religious sphere, rather than the latter and the secular thinkers in Iran.

Common Features between the First- and Second-Generation Neo-Mutazilites

These intellectuals share few basic features:

Their questioning of the Islamic regime through the critique of Islamic theocracy (*Velayat-e Faqih*).

Their attempts at separating politics and religion in different fashions (Soroush and Shabestari refer to Islamic mysticism [Sufism], Kadivar through historical analysis, Eshkavari through a critical reading of Shariati, and so on).

Breaking away from a militant, heroic, and revolutionary conception of Shiism, embodied in the cult of martyrdom. If Shariati's writings were focused on martyrdom, the first generation of neo-Mutazilites marginalized it and made prominent notions like Islamic civil society (*djame'eye madanie dini*), and focused, instead, on spirituality (Soroush, Shabestari), democracy, and a peaceful secularization instead of a revolutionary change (Shariati).

Declaring autonomous the realm of politics, religion having to be "restricted" to the spiritual realm, its "expansion" after the 1979 revolution has led to its distortion, according to Soroush and Shabestari.³¹ This indirectly contributes to democracy, in so far as the citizens' vote determines politics and not theocratic rule.

Proclaiming the preponderance of ethics toward the Sharia and, in particular, the explicit subordination of Islamic jurisprudence to the universal ethics, mainly based on human rights and the right to be religiously-minded or agnostic, believer or non-believer, the freedom to change religion (*ertedad*) or even to reject it (a new word, not derogatory as the word *molhed* is coined by them (*degār andishan-e dini*, differently-thinkers in religious matters). The criticism of Shariati's theories by Soroush and the challenge of Shariati's theory of Ummah and Imam³² and the subordination of religion to ethics in Malikian's and the late Kadivar's views provide the basis for a "peaceful" religious individualism, in contrast to Shariati's "effervescent" one.

Proclaiming the autonomy of the social and political life toward religion: Eshkevari³³ believes that people in society have the right to organize themselves as they please, and to create any kind of government and political system they wish, and no one, nor any authority—religious or not—can put it into question. He goes so far as to state that the right to be a human being is separate and superior to one's religion, race, class, and sex, and this right is only dependent on one's humanity.

The disappearance, total or partial, of the Imams as inspiring models of "extraordinary" behavior. Shariati referred to the third Imam, Hossein, for heroic attitudes toward death as a martyr. He referred to Ali, the first Imam and fourth Caliph, for inflexible justice; the twelfth Imam was the paragon of the Final Fight against the illegitimate rulers. Other seminal figures of Islam, like Balal the Ethiopian, Fatemeh the daughter of the Prophet and the wife of Ali, Talhe and Zobeir as deviant disciples, Abu Zar as the inflexible follower of the Prophet rejecting the luxury of the newborn empire, and so on, were mobilized in order to propose a model of courageous, even intrepid conduct to the believers who should not fear death. Neo-Mutazilites have a much more detached attitude toward the Imams: they sometimes criticize them (as did Soroush toward Ali, the first Imam, for his misogyny³⁴). The second generation even goes further: religion is for them somehow autonomous toward the traditionally seminal figures of the Imams. Shariati made many Imams

revolutionaries; Soroush and Shabestari referred mainly to the mystical Iranian poets (Rumi, Hafez, and so on) rather than the Imams; the second-generation neo-Mutazilites build up a religiosity that is not tied to the Imams. In a way, they put into question the “Imamology” and the role of the Imams within Shiism, as mediators between God and human beings. Henri Corbin’s assessment³⁵ as to the supreme role of the Imams within Shiism that distinguishes the latter from Sunnism is fading among the neo-Mutazilite figures, particularly in the second generation. On the whole, the way neo-Mutazilites look at Shiism brings it much closer to Sunnism than before. They either ignore or greatly reduce the role of the Imams in Shiism.

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES BETWEEN THE FIRST- AND SECOND-GENERATION NEO-MUTAZILITES: GENDER, APOSTASY, HOMOSEXUALITY, THE RIGHT TO BE A NONBELIEVER

First-generation neo-Mutazilites in Iran introduced a major intellectual rupture with the former, Third-Worldist generation, particularly the religious ones, among whom the figure of Shariati was paramount. The first- and second-generation neo-Mutazilites have many common features as described above. But between them, there are also major differences.

The first one is the fact that many first-generation neo-Mutazilites avoided to bring up some topics that were almost taboo. The gender question was not usually raised (very few references in Soroush or Mojtaba Shabestari, gender being occulted by them, and its treatment being at best marginal among them).

Second-generation neo-Mutazilites do not have the same attitude. Many have raised the gender issue and what it entails, namely the veil, the inheritance, the gender equality, among others. According to Soroush Dabbagh, one of the prominent second-generation neo-Mutazilites who has devoted many articles to this issue, not covering the hair by a veil is not transgressive of the norms of good behavior for Muslim women in the contemporary world. The Koranic verses are not explicit on veiling and the verses that concern it do not belong to those for which there is a clear prescription (*mansous*), according to Dabbagh.³⁶

Arash Naraghi but also Sedigheh Vasmaqi have extensively discussed the gender issue.

The first generation did not mention topics like apostasy, homosexuality, or the problem of nonrecognized religions like Bahaism, new forms of religiosity and, in particular, Buddhism or Pentecostalism (different from the Christian tradition in Iran among the Assyrians and Armenians, making

adepts among Muslims). These topics became subjects of debate among the second-generation neo-Mutazilites like Naraghi, Soroush Dabbagh (son of Abdolkarim Soroush), Fanaee, and the others.

The second feature is their insistence on ethics and human rights as determining the place of religion in society. The first generation presented this view, but it was put within a framework that either belittled the role of ethics or made it more ambiguous. The new generation asserts explicitly the preponderant role of ethics in religion, the second being subordinated to the first.

Another feature of the second generation toward the first is the full assumption of secularization and its consequences. The generation of Shariati justified secularization in terms of heroic and death-prone attitudes: everyday was supposed to be Ashura (the day Hossein was martyred by the Yazid army) and everywhere was supposed to be Karbela (the venue of the martyrdom of Hossein in today's Iraq), according to a slogan after Shariati's slogans. Young men pursued the goal of resembling Hossein through martyrdom; they became secularized not in normal life, but in pursuance of sacred death.³⁷ First-generation neo-Mutazilites assumed an ambivalent attitude toward secular societies. Soroush rejected Islamic fundamentalism but he did not unequivocally recognize the legitimacy of a secular order. He assumed a type of attitude that was ambivalent toward secularization and its consequences (no formal recognition for religion). The new generation of neo-Mutazilites (the second Kadivar, the late Eshkavari, Naraghi, Soroush Dabbagh, and so on) unambiguously endorse secular society's rule and place religion on the private sphere, with no claim toward any legitimacy other than the subjective identification of the believers to their faith.

CONCLUSION

Neo-Mutazilite intellectuals and theologians have played a significant role in modernizing Shiism and, beyond it, Islam. Due to the crisis in Muslim societies, their influence is still more or less marginal in many fields, but they have proposed a whole new framework against the radicalized view of Islam (jihadism, Islamic fundamentalism, Salafism in its pietistic or violent versions, and so on). They have humanized and modernized many Islamic tenets, but their problem is to connect to Muslim societies, and not to be cloistered in ivory towers. Their success in Iran among the new generations is undeniable, but they are at pains to open up the Islamic institutional gates (in Iran the Howzeh-ye elmiyeh, the theological schools based in Qom and other major cities). They have been able to deconstruct the theological-juridical foundations of Shiite theocracy and propose a tolerant, "modest" version of Islam.

NOTES

1. This article synthesizes parts of our common book, to be published in French; Farhad Khosrokhavar and Mohsen Mottaghi, *L'islam et le christianisme: le défi des théologies* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 2020).

2. See Farhad Khosrokhavar, Les intellectuels post-islamistes en Iran, *Awal*, n° 11, 1993, pp. 47–59; Les intellectuels post-islamistes en Iran revisités, *Trimestre du Monde*, 1st quarter, 1996, pp. 53–62.

3. See Mohsen Mottaghi, *La pensée chiite contemporaine à l'épreuve de la révolution iranienne* (Paris: L'Harmattan Publishers, 2012).

4. There is a vast literature on the first-generation Iranian neo-Mutazilites, but very few on the second generation. We can mention for the first generation Mehrzad Broujerdi, *Iranian Intellectuals and the West: The Tormented Triumph of Navitism* (New York, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1996); Ali Gheissari, *Iranian Intellectuals in the Twentieth Century* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1997); Liloyd Ridgeon, ed., *Iranian Intellectuals: 1997–2007* (Routledge, 2008).

5. Abdolkarim Soroush, *Ghabz o bast-e teorik-e shariat* (Theoretical Contraction and Expansion of Religion), Eighth edition (Tehran: Sarat Publishers, 1372 (1993)).

6. Abdolkarim Soroush, *Bast-e tajrobeh-ye nabavi* (Expansion of the Prophetic Experience) (Tehran: Sarat Publishers, 1378, (2009)).

7. Abdolkarim Soroush, Mohammad Sal-Allah: raavi-ye ro'yaa-haye rasulaaneh (Mohammad, Peace Upon Him, the Counter of the Prophetic Dreams), *Soroush Website*.

8. Ibid.

9. Mojtabeh Shabestari, *Journal, dar jostaju-ye ma'naaye ma'naa-haa* (Looking for the Meaning of the Meanings), second year, sixth issue, 1386 (2007).

10. Mojtabeh Shabestari, *Naqdi bar qara'at-e rasmi az deen* (A Critique of the Official Understanding of Religion) (Tehran: Tarhe Now, 1379 (2000)).

11. Mojtabeh Shabestari, *Ta'amolaati dar qara'at-e ensaani az deen* (Reflections on the Human Understanding of Religion), Second edition (Tehran: Tarhe Now, 1384 (2005)).

12. Shabestari, *Naqdi*, op.cit.

13. Shabestari, *Madresseh*, op.cit.

14. Hasan Yusefi Eshkavari, *kherad dar ziyafat-e deen* (Reason in the Symposium of Religion), Third edition (Qassideh Publishers, 1380 (2001)).

15. Hasan Yusefi Eshkavari, Hoquq-e bashar va ahkam-e ejtema'i-ye eslam (Human Rights in the social Commandments of Islam, *Eshkavari's Website*, 1389 (2010); Tarikh-mandi-ye vahye va nabovvat (The Historicity of Revelation and Prophethood), *Jaras Website*, 1390 (2011).

16. Mohsen Kadivar, *Nazariyeh-haye dowlat dar feqh-e shi'eh* (The Theories of Government in the Shiite Fiqh) (Tehran: Nashr Ney, 1376 (1997)).

17. Mohsen Kadivar, *Haq ol naas, eslam va hoquq-e bashar* (The Right of the People, Islam and the Human Rights) (Tehran: Kavir Publishers, 1378 (1999)).

18. Ibid., op.cit.

19. Mostafa Malekian, *Baayasteh-haa-ye pajuheshi-ye qor'ani, raahi beh rahaa'i-ye jostaar-haa-ee dar aqlaaniyat va ma'naviyat* (Normativity in the Koranic Research ...) (Tehran: Nashr Mo'aser, 1381 (2002)).

20. Ibid.
21. Ibid.
22. Arash Naraghi, *Sonnat gara'i-ye enteqadi dar qalamro-e deen* (Critical Traditionalism in the Realm of Religion), in *Sonnat va ofoq haa-ye goshudeh* (Tradition and the Opened Horizons) (Negah Mo'aser, 1395 (2016)).
23. Arash Naraghi, *Hadisse hazer va ghayeb* (The Story of the Present and the Absent ...) (Tehran: Nashr Negahe Mo'aser, 1390 (2011)).
24. Abolghassem Fanaee, *Akhlaaq-e deen shenaasi-ye pajooreshi dar mabaani-ye ma'refati va akhlaaqi-ye feqh* (The Ethics of Scholarly Theology in the Field of Gnoseology and Ethics of Fiqh), Second edition (Negah Mo'aser Publishers, 1392 (2013)); Abolghassem Fanaee, *deen dar taraazu-ye akhlaaq* (Religion in the Balance of Ethics), Fourth edition (Sarat Publishers, 1395 (2016)).
25. See Khorokhavar and Mottaghi, *L'islam et le christianisme*, op.cit.
26. Soroush Dabbagh Hejaab dar Tarazool, *Hijab on the Balance* (London: H&S Media, 1396 (2017)).
27. Amir Hossein Turkashvand, *hejaab-e shar'i dar asre payaambar* (The Religious Hijab in the Era of the Prophet) (Electronic Publisher, 1390 (2011)).
28. Ahmad Ghabel, *ahkaam-e baanovaani dar shari'at-e mohamadi* (The Commandments on Women in the Mohamedan Religion), in *Collective Works*, vol. 9 (Electronic Publishers, 1392 (2013)).
29. Ali Shariati, *entezaar* (Expectations, Awaiting), <https://storefiles.ir/downloads/>.
30. Ali Shariati, *Collective Works*, 19, Hossein va ares-e aadam (Hossein, the Heir to Adam), *The Conference Shahaadat* (Martyrdom) (Qalam Publishers, 1361 (1982)), p. 195.
31. Soroush's main work (on the restriction and expansion of religion) dates back to more than two decades ago.
32. Ali Shariati, *Ommat va Emaamat*, Made of a *Series of Conferences* on 11th, 12th, 13th and 14th Farvardin 1348 (April 1969) in Hosseinieh Ershad, Tehran.
33. Eshkavari, *kherad dar ziafat-e deen*, op.cit.
34. Abdolkarim Soroush, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oeKbcyyv11Q>.
35. Henry Corbin, *En islam iranien: aspects spirituels et philosophiques*, Seconde édition (Paris: Gallimard, 1978).
36. Soroush Dabbagh, *hejab dar taraazu-ye akhlaq* (The Veil on the Scale of Ethics), op.cit.
- Mas'ale-ye hejab va fahm-e ravesh-mand az ghor'an (The Issue of Veil and Methodological Understanding of the Koran), in *hejab dar taraazu*, op.cit.
37. See Farhad Khosrokhavar, *Inside Jihadism: Understanding Jihadi Movements Worldwide* (Yale Cultural Sociology Series) (Paradigm Publishers, 2009).

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