

CONTEMPORARY DEBATES IN ISLAM

AN ANTHOLOGY OF MODERNIST
AND FUNDAMENTALIST THOUGHT

Edited by

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and

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TO MARJAN, CHRISTINE,
ARJANG, PAYVAND, AND ARMIN

CONTEMPORARY DEBATES IN ISLAM

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believe in their God to prayer (...). The true believer, hearing the muezzin, is filled with humility, orders his thoughts which have wandered in the labyrinth of the matter of human life, remembers his Lord with deference and respect and makes himself accomplish the hatred that has been imposed on him in his religion. This writer, expressing the hatred that the marks of Islam inspire in him, would like the minarets to be destroyed and leveled until no trace of them remains, and so that he won't have to suffer from seeing them, like the devil suffers when he hears the voice of the muezzins, and since they are the mark of Islam and there is no Islam in him. This writer calls himself Kateb Yacine and this weekly is called *Algérie Actualité*. There appeared an article in it entitled "the Dogs of Douar" (Dogs of the Camps) (...). Who are these dogs of Douar in his eyes? They are the muezzin who call the faithful to accomplish the duty of prayer (...). Added to this ironic headline are [pictures depicting] a minaret and two American rockets in the process of taking off from their launch pads. The caption says concerning the minaret: "A rocket that does not take off from its launch pad." The review that has this headline and these photos is sold in Algeria under the eyes of the authorities. It has not been banned or confiscated (...) the way foreign magazines containing photographs full of impudence and license have (...). For as such they don't touch politics and they meet no objections from the government, even if they mock religion and the beliefs of the Umma. To this atheistic writer and to the many like him, we say that the minaret is the sign of the mosque and that, in Islam, [it] is [not only] the place where God the creator is adored, but also a place of education, of culture, of teaching, but he undoubtedly ignores all that. How many great men have left the mosque, who illuminated the path of those who walked through the labyrinths of life, who guided them to the safeguard and salvation, such as Emir Abdel kader, the Sheikh Abdel Hamid ben Hadis, and others, whose equal the universities have not been able to produce. ... (...) The rocket of Islam, this minaret which you mock, has destroyed the palaces of the unjust and overthrown the thrones of gigantic tyrants ... if only you knew ... But where would you have learned, you who have been nursed on the milk of the adversaries of Islam?¹

NOTE

1. *Al-Marzdaqia bia Asl al-Ichtrakia* (Mazdaqia is the Base of Socialism), Morocco: n.a., 1975, p. 33.

CHAPTER 32

WESTOXICATION

Jalal Al-i Ahmad

Jalal Al-i Ahmad. *Plagued by the West (Gharbzadegi)*. Translated from the Persian by Paul Sprachman Delmar. NY: Caravan Books Modern Persian Literature Series No. 4, 1982.

I. AN OUTLINE OF THE ILLNESS

I SPEAK OF BEING AFFLICTED WITH "WESTITIS" THE WAY I would speak of being afflicted with cholera. If this is not palatable let us say it is akin to being stricken by heat or by cold. But it is not that either. It is something more on the order of being attacked by tongue worm. Have you ever seen how wheat rots? From within. The husk remains whole, but it is only an empty shell like the discarded chrysalis of a butterfly hanging from a tree. In any case, we are dealing with a sickness, a disease imported from abroad, and developed in an environment receptive to it. Let us discover the characteristics of this illness and its cause or causes and, if possible, find a cure.

Being stricken by the West has two sides: one is the West and the other, we who are afflicted by West. "We" meaning a corner of the East. In place of two "sides" let us say two poles or two ends, since we are dealing in fact with two ends of a graduated scale or rather two opposite ends of the world. In place of the "West," we can say almost all of Europe and Soviet Russia and of North America. Or let us say all of the advanced or developed countries or industrialized countries or all of the countries which, with the aid of machines, are capable of converting raw materials into something more complex and marketing it in the form of manufactured goods. These raw materials are not just iron ore or oil or gut or cotton or tragacanth. They are also myths, principles of belief, music, and transcendental realities.

In place of "we" who are a part of the other pole, let us say Asia and Africa or the backward or developing or the nonindustrialized countries or all of the countries that are the users of Western manufactured products. The raw materials for

these products—those which I enumerated—have been taken from this side of the world, i.e., from the developing countries! Oil from the shores of the Persian Gulf; jute and spices from India; jazz from Africa; silk and opium from China; anthropology from the islands of Oceania; sociology from Africa. The last two from South America as well—from the Aztecs and Incas who were the victims of the advent of Christianity. In any case, something from somewhere. We are caught in the middle of all this; however, we share more points of comparison with this last group than degrees of distinction and difference.

It is not in the scope of this essay to define these two poles, these two extremes, from the point of view of economics or politics or sociology or psychology or civilization. That is an exacting task, a task for the experts. But you will notice that occasionally, out of necessity, we will call upon a general knowledge of these different areas for help. The only thing that can be said here along these lines is that, in my view, "East" and "West" are not two geographical concepts. For an American or a European, "West" means Europe and America and "East" means Soviet Russia, China, and the eastern European countries. But for me, "West" and "East" have neither political nor geographical meaning. Instead they are two economic concepts. "West" means the well-fed countries and "East" means the hungry countries. For me the state of South Africa is a piece of the "West," even though it forms the southern tip of Africa. Most of the countries of Latin America are part of the "East," even though they are on the other side of the globe. In any event, although it is correct that the exact nature of an earthquake must be learned from a seismographer in a university, before anything can be recorded, a farmer's horse (even if he is not a thoroughbred) will have escaped the area and fled to the safety of the fields. With more awareness than a sheep dog, and with vision more farsighted than a crow's, I would like to see something that others, because their eyes are closed or because they see no advantage or profit for themselves in presenting it, have overlooked and decided not to see.

Let us define, therefore, the countries of the first group with the following general characteristics (arranged in no particular order): high wages, low mortality rate, low birth rates, well organized social services, sufficient food (at least 3000 calories per day), an average annual income of more than 3000 *roubles*,¹ all the trappings of democracy, and a liberal inheritance from the French revolution.

The countries of the second group have the following characteristics (presented in neat little rhetorical bundles): low wages, high mortality rates, an even higher birth rate, no social services or the pretense of social services, malnutrition (at most 1000 calories per day), an annual per capita income of less than 500 *roubles*, no inkling of democracy, and an inheritance going back to the very beginnings of colonialism.

It is obvious that we belong to this second group, to the group of hungry nations. The first group, to use the phrase of Josue de Castro in his book *The Geography of Hunger*,² comprises all the well-fed nations. You see that between these two extremes not only is there a huge gap, but also, in the words of Tibor Mende,³ an unfillable chasm which grows deeper and wider day-by-day in such a way that wealth and poverty, power and impotence, knowledge and ignorance, prosperity and desolation, civilization and savagery have become global extremes. One pole

belongs to the well-fed, the rich, the powerful, the producers and exporters of manufactured products; whereas the other pole is that of the hungry, the poor, the weak, and the consumers and importers. The pulse of progress beats on that side of the world of ascendance and the throb of decline on this side of a world petering out. The difference does not merely arise out of temporal or spatial dimensions, nor is it measurable in terms of quantity—it is a qualitative difference. The two poles are estranged from one another. They are inclined toward mutual remoteness. On that side is a world that is frightened of its own dynamism and on this side is our world, which has not yet been able to find a way to channel its undirected and therefore wasted energies. Both of these worlds are in motion, each in a different direction.

Now, with this way of looking at things, the time when we could divide the world into two "blocks" has passed—into the two blocks "East" and "West," either communist or noncommunist. Although the first article of the constitution of most of the world's countries is still the same old dodge of the twentieth century, the way in which America and Russia (the two supposedly unchallenged head croupiers of the two blocks) gambled with each other over the Suez canal issue and Cuba shows that the headmen of two neighboring villages can still easily manage to come to terms. And of course in the wake of that, consider the nuclear test ban treaty and the other cases of cooperation. Our age, therefore, in addition to not being one of confrontation between the rich and poor classes within national boundaries, nor one of national revolutions, is also not an age of confrontations between "isms" and ideologies. Behind every disturbance or every coup d'état or revolution in Zanzibar or Syria or Uruguay one must find the colonial company or state, secretly backing the conspiracy. The local wars of our age can no longer be defined as wars of differing ideologies, not even on the surface. These days every schoolchild knows that the Second World War was just a pretext for the spread and expansion of the mechanized industries of both sides; but also, even in the Cuban crisis, the Congo, the Suez Canal, or Algeria he sees the struggle for sugar, diamonds, and oil respectively. One can see in the bloodshed in Cyprus, Zanzibar, Aden, and Vietnam the struggle to gain a bridgehead to defend the avenues of trade, which are the primary factors in determining a state's policy.

Our age is no longer one in which people in the "West" can be made to fear "Communism" and people in the "East" made to fear the bourgeoisie and liberalism. Nowadays even kings can appear revolutionary on the surface and use suspicious, i.e., "leftist" [?] language, and Khrushchev can buy wheat from America. Today all of the "isms" and ideologies have become paths leading to the exalted throne of "mechanism" and mechanization. In this respect, the most interesting development is the deviation to the far east of the political compasses of leftists and quasi-leftists all over the world; i.e., the ninety degree turn away from Moscow toward Peking. Soviet Russia is no longer "the leader of world revolution," instead it is one of the leading competitors in the nuclear arms race. Direct telegraph communications have been set up between the Kremlin and the White House, a sign that even British mediation between the two powers is no longer necessary. Even the leaders of our country are aware that the danger of Soviet Russia has decreased. At one time, the Soviet Union was grazing on the meager

pastures of desolation left in the wake of World War I. Now it is the era of de-Stalinization, and Radio Moscow has actually come out in support of the Referendum of the Sixth of Bahman!⁴ In any case, Communist China has taken the place of the Soviet Union, because like Russia in 1930 it calls upon all the world's hungry peoples to unite in the hope of reaching the heaven of tomorrow. The Soviet Union in those years had a population of a little over 100 million; whereas China now has 750 million people. Just as Marx pointed out about his age, we today have two worlds in a state of conflict. But these two worlds have attained dimensions much wider than those of his time, and the conflict has taken on more complexity than the conflict between worker and boss. Ours is a world of confrontation between rich and poor, extending over the entire globe. Our age is one of two worlds: one engaged in making, operating, and exporting machines; the other involved in consuming, wearing down, and importing them. The arena of that conflict is the world marketplace. Its weapons are in addition to tanks, artillery, bombers, and missile launchers, which themselves are the products of the Western world, UNESCO, FAO, the United Nations, ECAFE, and other so-called international agencies, all appearing to be communal and global. But, as a matter of fact, they are the same little Western dodges that, dressed in new clothes, are used in the colonization of South America, Asia, Africa. The basis of the "Westitis" of all these non-Western countries lies here. We are not talking about the abolition of machines or their rejection, i.e., what supporters of utopian societies in the beginning of the nineteenth century fancied. Never! The world is caught up in the machine of historical determinism. Our discussion, rather, is on the way we deal with machines and technology.

The point is that we of the developing nations—the people of the second group of countries I defined—are not makers of machines. But, forced by economics, politics, and that global confrontation between poverty and wealth, we must be polite and servile consumers of the products of Western industry, or at best we must be satisfied, subservient, and low-paid repairmen for whatever comes from the West. It is this last that necessitates that we reshape ourselves, our government, our culture, and our everyday lives into some semblance of a machine. Everything of ours must meet machine specifications. And if the makers of machines, after a gradual process of change of some 200 years, have slowly become used to this new god, its heaven and its hell, what about the Kuwaitis who only yesterday found access to machines, or the Congolese or we Iranians? In what manner can we bridge this 300-year historical gap? Let us forget about the others and concentrate on ourselves. The basic point of this book is that we have not been able to preserve our "cultural-historical" personality in the face of the machine and its unavoidable onslaught. Rather we have been crushed by events.⁵ The point is that we have not been able to maintain a well-thought-out and considered position vis-à-vis this monster of the modern age. The fact is that until we have actually grasped the essence, basis, and philosophy of Western civilization and no longer superficially mimic the West in our consumption of Western products, we shall be just like the ass who wore a lion skin. And we know what happened to him. While the machine-makers of today are themselves complaining and suffering, we do not complain, not even now that we are dressed up like the machine's servants—we even

try to look good in our new uniforms! In any case, it is now some 200 years that we are crows acting like partridges.⁶ From all that we have outlined so far, one obvious fact emerges. As long as we are solely consumers, as long as we do not manufacture machines, we shall be afflicted with the West. And the ironic part is that as soon as we are able to make machines, we shall become machine-stricken! We will be like people of the West whose cries about self-willed technology and machines are heard everywhere.⁷

Let us admit that we did not even have the will to be like Japan, which came to grips with the machine some 100 years ago. From that time, it began to rival the West in its machine-mania. It defeated the Czar in 1905 and America in 1941,⁸ and, even before that, was able to take away Western markets. In the end it was destroyed with the atomic bomb as an object lesson. Now, if the "free countries" of the West have opened up a corner of the world's marketplace to Japanese goods, it is because they have invested in every Japanese industry, and also because they intend to cover all of the military expenses of defending those islands whose leaders have, since World War II, come to their senses, i.e., in matters of weaponry, troops, and military alliances, they have become total know-nothings. Or perhaps the average American wants to ease his conscience about what caused the pilot of that hellish plane to go mad.⁹ The story of 'Ad and Thannud¹⁰ was repeated in Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

There is another obvious point here. The "West" began to call us (everyone from the eastern shores of the Mediterranean to India) "The East," as soon as it awoke from its medieval hibernation, and came in search of sun, spices, silk, and other goods. At first Westerners came in the guise of pilgrims, visiting the Christian holy places (Bethlehem, Nazareth, etc.), then as warriors in the Crusades, later as merchants sheltered by the guns of ships loaded with goods, then as Christian missionaries, and finally as missionaries of urbanization and civilization. This last mission seems to have been almost preordained; after all, the word *estimar* ("colonization") is from the same root as the word *amran* ("building up, settling"), and if one wants to "settle" one has to be involved with "cities."

The interesting thing is that of all the places that were settled under the boots of colonial masters, Africa was the most receptive and most promising. Do you know why? Because in addition to the natural resources, which it had in abundance—gold, diamonds, copper, ivory, and many other natural resources—its natives never had a tradition of urban settlement, nor did they have a widespread unifying faith. Each tribe had its own god, chief, customs, and language. And how diffuse! And, as a result, how receptive to domination! More important than all of this, however, was that all the natives of Africa went around naked. Wearing clothes is impossible in that heat. When Stanley, the comparatively humane English traveler, returned with this last piece of good news from the Congo, there was jubilation and thanksgiving in Manchester. After all, each year three meters of cloth for every person (just one shirt which the women and men of the Congo would wear to become civilized, and participate in Church ceremonies) translated into about 320 million yards of cloth yearly from the mills of Manchester.¹¹ We know that the advance scouts of colonialism were Christian missionaries, and that beside every trading post all over the world a church was constructed. The natives

would be lured into them with various ploys. Now, with the withdrawal of colonialism from these areas, for each colonial agency boarded up, a church also closed.

For the colonists, Africa was also more receptive and more promising because the natives themselves represented raw materials for every kind of Western laboratory. The principles of anthropology, sociology, ethnography, dialectology, and a thousand other "ologies" could be recorded based on fieldwork carried out in Africa and Australia. The professors at Cambridge, the Sorbonne, and Leiden, by using these same "ologies," could become established in their university chairs, and see the other side of the coin of their own urbanization in the primitive areas of Africa.

But as for us easterners of the Middle East, we were neither as receptive nor as promising as the Africans. Why? If we want to be more intimate, i.e., "keep the discussion between ourselves," I must ask, rather: why were we Muslim easterners not as receptive? You see that the answer is contained in the question. Apparently within the Islamic totality itself we were not considered a subject suitable for investigation. For the same reason, the West, in its dealing with us, not only struggled against this Islamic totality (in the case of the bloody instigation of Shi'ism of Safavid times, in the creation of friction between us and the Ottomans, in the promoting of Baha'i activities in the middle of the Qajar period, in the crushing of the Ottomans after World War I, and finally in the opposition to the Shi'ite clergy during the Constitutional Revolution and afterwards . . .), but it also tried, as quickly as possible, to tear apart that unity which was fragmented from within and which only appeared whole on the surface. They tried first to turn us into raw material, as they did the natives in Africa, and afterwards bring us to their laboratories. It was because of this that among the many encyclopedias produced in the West, the *Encyclopedia of Islam* is the most important. We are still asleep but the Westerner in this encyclopedia has brought us to his laboratory. India was almost the same as Africa, with its "confusion of tongues," and the diversity of its races and religions. Then again, South America was completely converted to Christianity under the swords of the Spanish, and Oceania was a collection of islands, i.e., the best geography for sowing division. It was our lot then to be the only ones, both in the guise and the reality of an Islamic totality, to stand in the way of the advance of European civilization (read: colonialism; Christianity), i.e., in the way of the drive to the market of Western industry. The stopping of Ottoman artillery outside of the gates of Vienna in the nineteenth century was the end of a prolonged event that had begun in 732 in Spain (Andalus).¹² How can we view these 12 centuries of struggle and competition between East and West as anything but a struggle between Islam and Christianity? In any event—in the age we live in—I, the Asian remnant of that Islamic totality, shall be accepted by the civilized (!) nations of the West and the makers of machines just as much (to the same extent) as the African and Australian survivor of primitive culture or savagery, if I, like them, agree to be satisfied with life as a museum exhibit, satisfied with being only a thing, an object suitable for investigation in a museum or a laboratory. And nothing more. God help you if you tamper with this raw material! Today the issue is not whether they want the oil of Khuzestan or that of Qatar, or whether the diamonds

of Katanga are cut or the chromite ore of Kerman is processed. It is, rather, that I, the Asian and African, must even preserve my literature, my culture, my music, my religion, and everything else I possess exactly as if they were freshly unearthed antiquities, so that these civilized gentlemen can come, dig, take them away, and place them in museums and say, "Yes, here we have another primitive culture!"¹³

After these introductory remarks, allow me as an Easterner with one foot in tradition and eager to jump some 200 or 300 years into the future, forced to make up for all the backwardness and stagnation and anchored in that fragmented Islamic whole, allow me to define "Westitis" this way: a complex of circumstances that come about in the life, culture, civilization, and way of thinking of a people in one spot on the globe without any kind of supporting cultural context or historical continuity, or any evolving method of integration, coming about only as a result of the charity of machines. Having defined Westitis this way, it is clear that we are among those afflicted with the disease. Since the subject of this book relates in the first place to the geographical, linguistic, traditional, and religious environment of its author, it is even clearer that if we say that once we have machines, i.e., once we make our own machines, then there will be no need for their presents or their charity, nor, as a result, will there be a need for all those things that come before and along with them.

Westitis, therefore, is a characteristic of the age in our history in which we still have not mastered machines, and in which we do not know the secret of their organization and structure; in which we still have not become familiar with the basics of machines and with the new sciences and technology; though we, forced by the market place, economics, and the flow of oil, find ourselves buying and using machines.

How did this age come about? How is it that, while we were totally isolated from the development of the machine, others made and operated them and developed, and we, when we finally woke up, saw that every oil rig was a nail driven into our coffin? How did we become West-stricken?

IV. THE FIRST SIGNS OF DECAY

It was thus, that at the same time the Renaissance dawned in the West, the mania of a medieval inquisition reared its head and the cauldron of religious disputes and wars was stirred in the Middle East. We have seen how this part of the world was emptied of rich caravans, and for this reason was forced to crawl into impoverished isolation and pseudo-mysticism. Thus, in the words of Dr. Fardid, we began right where the West left off. As the West rose we fell; the West woke up during its industrial renaissance, while we fell into a prolonged hibernation. Let us admit that we play the same kinds of ideological games in our present period of "enlightenment" that the West began in the eighteenth century. While we had our constitutional movement in the beginning of this century, Europe was gravitating toward socialism and the leading ideological currents in economics, politics, and culture.

Pick up and leaf through the travelers' accounts of all of those people who, throughout the Safavid period, came here as tourists, merchants, ambassadors, or

military advisers (mostly Jesuit)¹⁴ and see what encouraging and patient witnesses they were to the settlement of the tribes! How they welcomed the great slaughter carried out by Shah 'abbas or how they reveled in Sultan Hosayn's lack of spunk! It is exactly from that time onwards that we began to crave the praise of foreign spectators who were in fact the primary instructors of our military and our men of state, during these last 300 years. And all of their praises and bravos are like the fairy tales told to tired old night watchmen so that they will sleep while thieves are busy robbing their caravans.

These are the basic sources of the flood of Westitis. Unfortunately our ears are still tuned to the conniving cries and praise of the agents of foreign governments who, once every several years, come here in the guise of orientalists, ambassadors, or advisers, and turn out debilitating decrees confirming our courage and resolution. And we are the same people who, from the time of Anushirvan, had had delusions of grandeur and had become infatuated with polite formalities. It was as a result of this new type of tourism that foreigners became acquainted with our nature and habits and learned just how to keep us impoverished and how to make loans to us and, later, to take control of our customs houses. Or how to break the Safavid monopoly on silk with the competition of their own markets and later, after they had gotten a foothold here, how, by means of the Afghan tribes, to relieve themselves of the aged Safavid warrior who was beginning to frighten people as much as a scarecrow. Next it was Nader [Shah]'s turn. He blindly attacked India just at the time when the East India Company (that is, Western imperialism) was about to set up shop in the southern part of the continent and it became necessary for the court of Muhammad Shah in northern India to be kept busy. The affair of Turkomanчай¹⁵ (1243 A.H./1828 C.E.) which was the last roar of this ambushed paper tiger followed Nader's destruction. Then came the saga of Herat Wars (1273 A.H./1857 C.E.), the coup de grace of which was the siege of Bushire. This is how they finally threw the corpse of this warrior to the ground. In the last 50 or 60 years oil showed up on our horizon and we again found something to justify our existence. As a direct result of our recent quiescent history, the fate of our politics, economy, and culture went directly into the hands of the companies and Western nations that backed them. From the time of the Constitutional Revolution our clergy, who were the last line of defense against the foreign onslaught, had retreated so deeply into their shells in the face of the preliminary wave of mechanization and had shut out the outside world to such an extent and had woven cocoons around themselves so well, that only the Day of Judgment could rouse them. They kept on retreating, step by step.

The hanging of the spiritual leader who favored "the rule of the *Shari'at*" in the Constitutional movement was in itself an indication of this retreat.¹⁶ I agree with Dr. Tondar Kiya who wrote that Shaikh Nuri was not hanged as an opponent of the Constitutional movement (for in the beginning he was in fact a defender of it), but as a proponent of "the rule of the *Shari'at*"¹⁷ and, I will add, as a defender of the integrity of Shi'ism. It was for this reason that in the wake of his death everyone was waiting for a writ to be issued from Najaf. And this was going on at a time when the leader of our West-stricken intelligentsia, Malkom Khan,¹⁸ was a Christian and Talebof¹⁹ was a social democrat from the Caucasus. In any case, from that

day on we were marked with the brand of Westitis. I consider the corpse of that great man [Nuri], hanging from the gallows, to be a banner bearing the emblem of the final victory of Westitis over this country after 200 years of struggle.

Today we stand under that banner, a people alienated from themselves; in our clothing, shelter, food, literature, and press. And more dangerous than all, in our culture. We educate pseudo-Westerners and we try to find solutions to every problem like pseudo-Westerners.²⁰

If, at the onset of the Constitutional Period, the danger was imminent, it has now become part of our very beings. From the villager who escaped to the city and would not return to his village because his local, itinerant barber does not have the right kind of shampoo or the village is without a cinema or he cannot buy a sandwich there—to the cabinet minister who is sensitive to dirt and grime and therefore travels 12 months out of the year to every corner of the world. And why have things reached such a state? Because the two or three generations of Iranians who came after the events of the Constitutional Period have now entered the limelight and have become teachers, cabinet ministers, lawyers, director generals, and, except for the doctors, not one of them is skilled in any trade at all. All of them, even if they were not completely relying on the foppish antics of their youth, which they spent in Paris and London and Berlin, were, at least, only harkening to the three epistles of Agha Khan Kermani²¹ addressed to Jalal al-Dawla and to the other types of Westitis at the beginning of the Constitutional Period by Malkom Khan, Talebof, and others.²² As far as I call tell these Iranian "Montesquises" had their own solutions to the problem. Although they all probably agreed on this one point, and willy-nilly realized that the basic structure of our society and traditions would not be able to withstand the unavoidable onslaught of the machine and technology, they all accepted the wrong notion of "adopting Western civilization without Iranian modification."²³ Yet beyond this general, unsubstantiated formula, each one, in order to find a cure for the disease, followed a different path. One group offered his services to foreign embassies as sources of cultural nourishment. Another, trying to imitate the West, felt that a new Lutheranism was in order and that the old faith could gain new life through religious reform. The third called for Islamic unity at a time when the Ottomans were disgracing themselves before the world with their massacres of Armenians and Kurds. (You will pardon my discretion here; this is not the place for complete candor.)

At the outset of the Constitutional Period, the basic defect in the actions of our leaders (both those for and against the movement) was the fact that Islam, i.e., the rule of the *Shari'at*, still provided the comprehensive totality that could act as a protector or a dam against the influence of machines and the West. It was for this reason that some rose up to defend religion and others attacked it. For the same reason "Constitutional Law" and "the rule of the *Shari'at*" came to represent the two contrary notions of "religion" and "irreligion." I feel therefore that these men all approached the problem from the wrong end. Although, had we been living in those times, we would probably have repeated the idiocies of the two factions and would not be around today to judge them so harshly. Those men, after all, lived closer to the time when Mirza Bozorg Shirazi could, with a simple writ, seal the fate of the British tobacco concession and demonstrate how much of a power base

and a threat the clergy was. At the beginning of the Constitutional Movement, in any case, all of those fine men were unaware that years before in Europe the god Knowhow had taken its lofty seat above the stock exchanges and banks. It had proclaimed its sovereignty and would never tolerate another God. It merely laughed at all the world's customs and ideologies. This then was the way that the Constitutional Movement, as the advance guard of mechanization, destroyed the clergy. Thereafter theological schools were (in the 20-year period) banished to one or two cities in the country. The clergy's influence on the workings of the judicial system and in parish record-keeping, was diminished, and wearing ecclesiastic robes was forbidden. The clergy, on the other hand, in the face of all this pressure not only remained silent, but continued to be wrapped up in the petty details of prayer, or the problems of ritual purity or continued to be paralyzed by nagging doubts: Did they perform the right number of prostrations or not? The only thing they accomplished was to proscriber radio and television, which had found such a wide audience that nothing could stand in their way. In fact they could have and should have been trying to arm themselves with their enemies' weapons and from their own transmitters in Qom and Mashhad (Vatican-style) challenge the Westitis of the official and semi-official media. Confidentially, if the clergy had known what a gold mine of revolutionary opposition to the rule of the "tyrannous and unrighteous" they kept alive in people with the principle "no constraint to obey those in authority"; if they were able to show the true nature of "those in authority" to the people with the media (newspapers, radio, television, film, etc.) and specifically document their general charges; and if they were able, through contact with international councils of clergy, to give their cause a certain amount of dynamism, then they would never have been so preoccupied with petty details. This only resulted in their being totally uninformed and their remaining on the sidelines of political life.²⁴ Let me go on. Allow me to mention, for example, the role that just one oil company has played in our politics and society during the last 60 years and then abandon these historical discussions.

The oil concession was given in the first year of the twentieth century by the Qajar king to William Knox D'Arcy, who later sold his rights to the famous company. We were embroiled in the Constitutional Revolution from 1906 on! And where was the territory covered by the contract? The southwestern foothills of the Bakhtiari mountains. The remains of the first oil well can still be found in Masjed-e Solayman. It was necessary to keep the southwestern edge of the Bakhtiari Mountains clear of the winter migrations of the Bakhtiari tribe, so that they could drill the first oil well easily and dig into the mountains and plains of Masjed-e Solayman. This caused the Bakhtiari tribe²⁵ to move so that they, with the help of freedom fighters from Tabriz and Rasht, could march on Tehran. And if our Constitutional Revolution is half-baked, it is because the "khans" rose up in support of a revolutionary movement which in essence undermines the rule of khans. We were thus embroiled in the issues of the constitution and tyranny until World War I broke out. But meanwhile, the company had reached its oil, and the British Admiralty, which became the official concessionaire, was now assured of an oil supply. You see that I am not writing history, I am extrapolating from it; and very hastily too. You will have to look up the actual events in the history books yourself.

Later, around the year 1300 (1920 C.E.), the war had ended and the owners of the company were now the victors and the engines of war had run out of steam. Consequently, the international consumption of oil was down, and the company was forced to find customers locally. It became necessary for a strong central government to be in power to make the roads safe and clear of impediments so that the oil trucks could travel easily to Quchan, Khoy, and Makran. In every little hamlet, a gas station had to be built. And more important than these developments was the fact that, since the concessionaire was now the British Admiralty, there was no tolerance for internal disputes and for bargaining with the khans, the parliament, and the press; it only wanted to deal with one man. Hence we had the coup d'état of 1299 [1920 C.E.], military government followed by dictatorship, the forced settlement of the Kurds, the suppression of "Semitic"²⁶ and the elimination of Shaikh Khaz'al who, had he behaved a bit more intelligently, could have become like one of the Shaikhs of the Persian Gulf Emirates.

In 1311 (1932 C.E.), the D'Arcy concession was more than half over and was slowly starting to run out. The principal concessionaire, the British Admiralty (i.e., the British government) had to use the existing centralized power, where one man spoke for everything from the parliament and the cabinet to the army and the gendarmerie, in order to renew the concession while the iron was hot. Taqizadeh²⁷ once again assumed his role as a "puppet" and the parliament went through the charade of first voting to cancel the D'Arcy concession and then moving to reinstate it. They did this with such fanfare that even the elders of the nation did not suspect that there was something going on. Or if they did suspect, they did not say anything about it. For we did not see any of them even lamenting what was happening and thereby removing the stain of history's condemnation from their records. Except afterwards, after matters settled down and in the years following the Shahrivar of 1941 when every ass of a person was called to account. Of course such an ugly truth had to be decorated with camouflage in style with the times. That means the reality had to be covered up. How? By threatening people with beatings, they forced them to dress the same, removing the pressed felt hats from the men and the veils from the women. This was done in the name of the latest development in civilization! They constructed a nationwide rail network, not with oil revenues but with revenues from the tax on sugar! What is more, the biggest reason for his railway was to get help behind the Stalingrad front during World War II.

Then came the year 1320 (1941 C.E.) and Europe was again at war. There was the danger of Rashid 'Ali Gilani²⁸ and the government's flirtation with the Axis powers as it tried to demonstrate maturity, but actually succeeded in betraying its senility. After all, even if they cannot stand each other, cows kept in the same barn eventually begin to smell alike. Of course this is no longer a laughing matter. We have all seen what kind of situation came next. All of the authority, majesty, military power, the security forces, and gendarmerie [of Reza Shah] fell apart one day. Of course, if Napoleon was satisfied with being exiled on Sainte-Helene, it is obvious that an Iranian emperor could put up with the Mauritius. After the Allies, it was America's turn; America, which long before World War I had sprung to life and was "compelled" to have its gunboats refuel in the Persian Gulf. If you were in their place would you pay for fueling ships involved in the victory over Fascism

(i.e., the salvation of Russia and England) with dollars out of your own pockets? Paid to British Petroleum at that! The context for American intervention in the matter of the southern oil fields comes into being right here; especially in the Azerbaijan affair. It was American political clout that eventually prodded the United Nations into action and forced the Soviet Russians to evacuate. Inevitably there was unrest again, cries for liberty, and talk of a northern oil concession as well. In a way, these were scarecrows, guarding fiefs that the British did not want to hand over to America. And this brief liberty lasted until 1329 (1954 C.E.).

This is what is called cooperation in politics and economics, i.e., following the directives of the oil companies and the Western countries. This is the ultimate symptom of Westitis in our time. In this way Western industry plunders us, rules us, and determines our fate. It is obvious that when national economic and political autonomy is given to foreign companies they determine what to sell and what not to sell. Of course the best thing for these companies, which want to be permanent sellers of their goods, is to make sure that consumers are never able to do without them. God keep the oil flowing! They get the oil and, in return, they give you whatever you desire, from pigeon's milk to human souls—even wheat. This mandatory exchange of goods occurs also on a cultural level in language and literature. Pick up and thumb through any of our so-called serious literary journals. Where is there anything about this part of the world? Or about the East as a whole? About India or Japan or China? They are all filled with reports about the Nobel prizes, about the Papal elections, about Françoise Sagan, the Cannes film prizes, the latest Broadway play, and the newest film from Hollywood. As for the illustrated weeklies, what can I say? And if this is not Westitis, what is it?

NOTES

1. In the mid-1950s, worth about \$370.00.
2. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1952.
3. Tibor Mende, *Reflexions sur l'histoire d'aujourd'hui: Entre le peur et l'espoir*. Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1958. The author is paraphrasing material from this book.
4. January 27, 1964, known as the "Day of the Revolution of the Shah and the People," when, according to government figures, 5,598,711 people voted for the six principles of the White Revolution.
5. I have illustrated this very issue in *Jazira-ye kharq* (Tehran: Danesh, 1960).
6. If we take for granted the identity of crows and partridges.
7. For example see *La France contre les robots* by George Bernanos (Paris: Plon, 1970).
8. This is not exactly accurate, even though Japan initially caused great damage to the American navy.
9. The name of the pilot was Claude R. Eatherly. See the book *Avoir détruit Hiroshima*, ed. Robert Laffont (Paris). Claude R. Eatherly was not the pilot of the Enola Gay, he was the pilot of the advance plane, the Straight Flush.
10. The pre-Islamic Arabian tribes all traces of which were wiped out.
11. *Du Zambèze au Tanganyika, 1858-1872: par Livingston et Stanley*, Paris, 1958.
12. I am referring to the defeat of 'abd al-Rahman Omavi (the head of the Caliphate of Andalus) at the hands of Charles Martel, the French commander, at Poitiers and to

the halt of the expansion of the Western Islamic caliphate. Note that "Martel" is today the name of a well-known cognac.

13. My respected friend Thaminra Baghchaban, the music scholar, writes the following in unpublished notes on the Tehran Congress of Music in January 1961: For D. L. (the French delegate) there would be nothing more fascinating than if we Iranians were living in the age of the Sassanian kings and were the proper subjects of study for him. He would then come from the heart of the twentieth century with sensitive instruments and latest in tape recordings to the Sassanian court to record the performances of minstrels like Barbad and Nakisa and would return directly to Paris on an Air France jet from the airport near the Sassanian capital constructed especially for orientalists and authorities on poetry and music.
14. Their names are listed in a *tumar* (document), and the best source for information on all of them is *Zendagi-e Shah 'abbas* [The Life of Shah 'abbas] by Nasrallah Falsafi which was published in three volumes. The interesting thing is that the primary and biggest sources of Orientalist knowledge are these same travelers accounts and most orientalists were themselves the disciples of the narrators of these accounts! Read Falsafi's book and you will know what I am talking about.
15. This treaty ended a war with Russia which started when Iran attacked Russian possessions in Transcaucasia. As part of the Treaty of Turkomanchay, Russia secured part of Armenia and Iran recognized Russia's exclusive right to have a navy on the Caspian Sea and granted Russia commercial concessions.
16. Al-e Ahmad is referring to Shaikh Fazlallah Nuri (hanged July 31, 1909). According to E. G. Browne (*Persian Revolution*, Cambridge, 1966, p. 148), Shaikh Nuri denounced the constitutionalists as "atheists, free thinkers, Babis, etc." His opposition was responsible for stirring up reactionary mobs against attempts at constitutional reform.
17. I am quoting freely from the *Biography of Shaikh Nuri* by Tondar Kiya. See the introduction to the latest issue of *Shabih* (Tehran, 1335), pp. 319-21.
18. Mirza Malkom Khan was an opponent of the Qajar king Naser al-Din Shah and oversaw the publication of an anti-Qajar newspaper *Qanun* (Law) while in exile in London. Some writers contend that Malkom Khan's close ties with the British and his religion (Armenian Christian) make his calls for local reform seem suspect.
19. Mirza 'abd al-Rahim Talebof Tabrizi was educated in Tiflis and was one of the first Iranian writers to use a simplified literary Persian in translations and original works. He was a prolific antimonarchist who called for constitutional government in Iran in many of his writings.
20. See the article "Taskhir-e tamaddon-e Farhangi" [The Domination of Foreign Civilization] by Sayyed Fakhr al-Din Shadman (Tehran, 1326). The author is a far better writer than I and, years before the writing of these pages, tried to find a cure for "Westernization" [fokoli-mabi, lit., "being like the faux col wearers"]. He suggested a serious education in our mother tongue and the translation of philosophical, scientific, and literary works of the West. Even though he was well-acquainted with the disease, his prescription proved ineffective, because thousands of foreign books have been translated from that time until now, and we have read each one of these as a mine of Western information, but [the fact that] we still grow more like "faux col wearing" [people] or as I call [them, "prisses"], is itself a clear symptom of a larger ailment, which is West-strickenness. Perhaps the person who, before all others, pointed the way to the basic cause of the problem was Dr. Muhammad Baqer Hush-yar who, although known as a Baha'i, in 1327 [1948] wrote the following: Through a crack in the door, you have seen how all Europeans are literate, but you do not see

how well-entrenched their traditional culture is, and you do not know that their entire educational establishment from the primary grades to the university is based on the Church. You have by means of the Western intelligentsia and in your overzealousness destroyed this foundation in your own country. From the article "Amuzesh-e hamagani va rayegan" [Free Public Education] in *Amuzesh va Parvarash* (Tehran, 1327).

21. Mirza Aqa Khan Kermani is known as a liberal reformer who was active in the last part of the reign of Naser al-Din Shah (ruled 1848–96). It is also known that he openly doubted the usefulness of the clergy in a constitutional revolution. The text reads "seh maktub," "three letters of Kermani" instead of "epistles."
22. Read the treatises *Islam*, *Akhond va Hafez al-Gheib*, *Hafad o do Mellat*, *Resaleye yak kabina*, *Siyasat Talehi*, and *Siyahatnama-ye Ebrabim Baeg*, as well as most of the [works of] missionaries of Westernism and destroyers of superstition in the name of religion. In my opinion, they were the ones who smoothed the way for Westitis. [Alal al-Dawla was a Qajar prince who opposed the monarchy during the first part of this century.]
23. These are the very words of Malkom Khan from his collected works edited by Molut Tabataba'i (Tehran, 1327). See also *Fikr-e Azadi* [The Idea of Freedom] by Feridun Adanuvat (Tehran, 1340) in which he, with that special skill of his, condemns one group of Freemasons and exonerates another. In my opinion, the Freemasons are all cut from the same cloth.
24. In the interval between the first and second printing of this volume, a book was published with the title, *Marja'iyat va rawhaniyyat* [Religious Authority and the Clergy] (Tehran, 1341). It contains all the accustomed verbosity of the clergy, but it also reveals a relatively good appreciation of these problems and responsibilities and of possible solutions. See especially the articles of M. Bazargan, professor at the University, and Sayyed Mahmud Talaqani, the Imam of the Hedayat Mosque, both of whom proposed, in place of one source of religious authority, a kind of holy writ-issuing council. And if we accept that his volume with all of its faults was a kind of presager of the events of the 15th of Khordad 1342 [the bloody Moharram riots of the summer of 1963], I can now, one year later, find the boldness to inform the leaders of the religious establishment that:

- A. If the clergy continued to ignore their own principles (one of which I mentioned);
- B. If they remain satisfied with the minutiae of religious life, proscribing this or that tiling or person; and
- C. If they continue to forget that Shi'ism with its principles of ijtehad [application of judgment in religious matters] and issuing writs is much better able to deal with new developments than Sunnism (in spite of the fact that the writ concerning women's freedom was issued by Shaikh Muhammad Shaltut, the head of al-Azhar, not Shi'ite divines)—in any case if the clergy, taking into account the conditions of the time, cannot break out of those early Constitutional Period cocoons, we have no choice but to accept the fact that this last barricade against West-strickenness has lost its vitality and turned into some fossilized remain which belongs in a museum, or, at best, has become the last refuge of the country's reactionary forces.

25. Remember that among the stockholders in the British Petroleum Company were the chief, Asa'd Bakhtiari, as well as Moshir al-Dawla (Nasrallah Khan). And if they rubbed out this Sardar Asa'd in the time of Reza Shah, do you not think that he, like

Shaikh Khaz'al who had territorial claims in Khuzestan, had claims in the oil-rich winter grounds of the Bakhtiari and was causing problems for the government? Again it is just like the case of the Hayat Davudis [a people living on the Persian Gulf] who had claims on Kharg Island and were executed because of this. To find out more about these matters see *Talaye Siab ya balaye Iran* [Black Gold or the Bane of Iran] by Abu al-Fazl Lesani.

26. Esma'il Semitqu was the leader of a group of Kurds who rebelled in western Azerbaijan, and was killed by government forces in 1929.
27. Sayyed Hasan Taqizada, a noted scholar, was the first member of the constitutional assembly from Tabriz. After Reza Shah's abdication, he became Iran's ambassador to England.
28. In 1941 Rashid 'Ali (Gilan) was the pro-German leader of an independent government in Kordestan. He was later exiled.