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978-0-521-65997-0 - Intellectual Discourse and the Politics of Modernization: Negotiating
Modernity in Iran

Ali Mirsepassi

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In this thought-provoking study, Ali Mirsepassi explores the concept of modernity, exposing the Eurocentric prejudices and hostility to non-Western culture that have characterized its development. Focussing on the Iranian experience of modernity, he charts its political and intellectual history and develops a new interpretation of Islamic Fundamentalism through the detailed analysis of the ideas of key Islamic intellectuals. The author argues that the Iranian Revolution was not a simple clash between modernity and tradition but an attempt to accommodate modernity within a sense of authentic Islamic identity, culture and historical experience. He concludes by assessing the future of secularism and democracy in the Middle East in general, and in Iran in particular. A significant contribution to the literature on modernity, social change and Islamic Studies, this book will be essential reading for scholars and students of social theory and change, Middle Eastern Studies, Cultural Studies and many related areas.

Ali Mirsepassi is professor of Sociology and Near Eastern Studies and dean for Multicultural Education at Hampshire College, Amherst. He has published extensively in journals such as *Contemporary Sociology*, *Radical History* and *Social Text*.

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To the memory of my father

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Acknowledgments

As soon as I completed my Ph.D. dissertation in 1985, I knew I had to begin writing a different book. My dissertation project was an attempt to come up with a “new” and more complex structural approach in understanding the Iranian Revolution. Soon after I completed that project, I realized it is not enough to acknowledge that culture matters or that ideas can change society. Ideas, ideologies, and cultural imageries produce social realities, which deserve the attention of scholars and merit the focus of their analysis. This book is the result of my desire to go beyond a merely structural explanation of social and cultural analysis and to take ideas, discourses, and cultural imagination seriously.

The concept and organization of this book reflect my intellectual concerns and interests. However, the project is truly the result of a collective effort. Many of the my students and colleagues have contributed to the writing of this book in many different ways. I would like to thank them and express my deep appreciation for their work and support of this project. Hampshire College supported me while I was working on this book – I would like to thank the President’s Office, the Dean of Faculty Office, and the School of Social Sciences for their intellectual and financial support without which I could not have completed this project.

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