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978-1-107-18729-0 — Transnationalism in Iranian Political Thought: The Life and Times of Ahmad Fardid

Ali Mirsepassi

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## *Transnationalism in Iranian Political Thought*

*The Life and Times of Ahmad Fardid*

During the Iranian Revolution of 1978/9, the influence of public intellectuals was widespread. Many espoused a vision of Iran freed from the influences of “Westoxification,” inspired by Heideggerian concepts of anti-Western nativism.

By following the intellectual journey of the Iranian philosopher Ahmad Fardid, Ali Mirsepassi offers in this book an account of the rise of Political Islam in modern Iran. Through his controversial persona and numerous public and private appearances before, during, and particularly after the revolution, Fardid popularized an Islamist vision militantly hostile to the modern world that remains a fundamental part of the political philosophy of the Islamic Republic to this day.

By also bringing in elements of Fardid’s post-revolutionary thought, as well as a critical analysis of Foucault’s writings on “the politics of spirituality,” Mirsepassi offers an essential read for all those studying the evolution of political thought and philosophy in modern Iran and beyond.

ALI MIRSEPASSI is Professor of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies at NYU. He is also Director of the Iranian Studies Initiative at NYU. He is the co-author, with Tadd Fernée, of *Islam, Democracy and Cosmopolitanism: At Home and in the World* (Cambridge University Press, 2014), the author of *Political Islam, Iran and Enlightenment: Philosophies of Hope and Despair* (Cambridge University Press, 2011), *Democracy in Modern Iran* (2010), and *Intellectual Discourses and the Politics of Modernization: Negotiating Modernity in Iran* (Cambridge University Press, 2000).

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ALI MIRSEPASSI  
*New York University*



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## *Note on Transliteration*

The transliteration of Persian words and names follows the system suggested by the *Iranian Studies Journal* (available from <http://societyforiranianstudies.org/journal/transliteration>), with the following exceptions:

- Consonants with the same sound are not differentiated. So both *ghayn* and *ghaf* are represented by *gh*.
- Current Persian pronunciation has been followed, except for Arabic words in an Arabic context (for instance, in reciting the Qur'an). In such cases the *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* transliteration rules were followed.
- For individuals' names, their own preferred transliteration was used if it was accessible. If not, the most common transliteration was used. In cases where the same name is transliterated in different forms, one form was chosen for the text of the book (but not the bibliography and citation), for consistency. In general, omission of 'ayn and hamza was preferred, when a name is commonly transliterated without the signs.

### **Dates**

In many cases, two dates are used to cite Persian materials (e.g. 1395/2016). In such cases, the first date is based on the solar *hijri* calendar, which is currently used in Iran, and the second one is its equivalent Common Era date.

## *Chronology of Ahmad Fardid's Life and Work*

- |                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| 1910 (September 24) | Born in the city of Yazd (his father, Seyyed Ali Marvi, was a small-scale farmer).   |
| 1922 (age 12)       | Enrolls in Islamic and secular schools in Yazd. Begins learning Arabic and French (his father hires a tutor to teach him French).    |
| 1924 (age 14)       | Starts learning philosophy and mathematics in his hometown of Yazd.  |
| 1926 (age 16)       | Moves to Tehran and starts middle school at Soltani High School.   |
| 1926 (age 16)       | Attends study meetings with scholars of Islamic studies.   |
| 1928 (age 18)       | Starts high school at Dar al-Fonun High School in Tehran.  |
| 1928 (age 18)       | Finishes high school and enters Tehran Teachers' College (Danesh-Sara-ye Ali).   |
| 1935 (age 25)       | Graduates from Tehran Teachers' College with a degree in philosophy and education. <sup>1</sup>                                      |
| 1935 (age 25)       | Publishes his first article in <i>Shafagh-e Sorkh</i> magazine (unavailable).  |
| 1938 (age 28)       | Publishes "Bergson and Bergsonian Philosophy: I," <i>Mehr</i> magazine, February.  |
| 1938 (age 28)       | Publishes "Bergson and Bergsonian Philosophy: II," <i>Mehr</i> magazine, April.  |
| Unknown             | Translates Gustave Le Bon's <i>The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind</i> . Eghbal, Tehran. Publisher and date unknown. <sup>2</sup> |

<sup>1</sup> According to his undergraduate diploma, Fardid was born in Tehran in 1904.

<sup>2</sup> Gustave Le Bon (1841–1931) was a French social psychologist and an anthropologist who is best known for his study of the psychological characteristics of crowds. His most popular book, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind*, was translated by Ahmad Fardid. It seems that Le Bon's work was popular among Iranian intellectuals at the time and some of his other works were also translated into Persian.

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- 1939 (age 29) Publishes “The American John Dewey: A Brief Review of His Philosophical and Educational Thoughts,” *Educational Monthly*, June.
- 1939 (age 29) Changes his name from Ahmad Mahini Yazdi to Ahmad Fardid.
- 1945 (age 35) Publishes “From Kant to Heidegger: I,” *Sokhan* monthly, March, pp. 193–201.
- 1945 (age 35) Publishes “From Kant to Heidegger: II,” *Sokhan* monthly, May, pp. 370–373.
- 1946 (age 36) Translates Henry Corbin, *Les Motifs zoroastriens dans la philosophie de Sohrawardî*, with Hamid Golshan, Institute for Iranian Studies, Tehran.
- 1946 (age 36) Leaves Iran for France on a state scholarship to study at the University of Paris, Sorbonne.
- 1948 (age 38) Marries an Austrian woman in France.
- 1949 (age 39) His first child, a daughter, is born.
- 1951 (age 41) Leaves Paris for Heidelberg University in Germany.
- 1955 (age 44) Returns to Iran and teaches at Tehran University.
- 1959 (age 49) Marries Badri Mortazavi (presently living in California).
- 1960 (age 50) His son, Ahmad Reza, is born; he is presently a manager at Cisco Systems, California.
- 1961 (age 51) Participates in meetings of the council of the goals of education in Iran and coins the term *Gharbzadegi* (Westoxification).
- 1963 (age 53) His daughter, Farideh, is born; she currently lives in northern California.
- 1967 (age 57) Presents a paper at the Congress of Orientalists, University of Michigan.
- 1968 (age 58) Moves from the Faculty of Theology to the Faculty of Literature and Humanities at Tehran University.
- 1969 (age 59) Publishes “The Ideas of Hedayat” (written by Katirai) as a book chapter.
- 1971 (age 61) Television discussion on “Introduction to Transcendental Philosophy.”
- 1972 (age 62) Retires from Tehran University.

- 1975 (age 65) Gives a radio lecture on Marx and participates in a debate on the anniversary of the Constitutional Revolution.
- 1976 (age 66) Interview with Alireza Meybodi, *Rastakhiz* newspaper.
- 1977 (age 67) Participates in a television panel discussion on “Beyond This [east] and the Other [west] Side of Time [world].”
- 1977 (age 67) Participates in a television debate on “Oriental and Occidental Man.”
- 1977 (age 68) Participates in a panel discussion on “Freedom,” *Rastakhiz* newspaper.
- 1978 (age 68) His wife, son, and daughter leave Iran for the US (Arizona?).
- 1979 (age 69) Runs for the Council of Experts election and loses (he has 201 votes).
- 1979 (age 69) Runs for the *Majles* (parliament), is endorsed by Khalkhali's group, *Fada'iyān-e Eslām*, and loses the election (under 6,000 votes).
- 1979 (age 69) Gives a series of lectures at the Faculty of Literature and Humanities, University of Tehran.
- 1980 (age 70) His lectures are moved to the Institute for Study of Philosophy.
- 1981 (age 71) His lectures are moved to Farhang Hall, Tehran.
- 1986 (age 76) Lecture on “A Study on the Zionist Phenomenon,” Foreign Ministry, Tehran.
- 1989 (age 79) Lecture on “the World of Islam and the West,” Faculty of Literature and Humanities, Tehran University.
- 1990 (age 80) Lecture on Jalal Al-e Ahmad's thought.
- 1992 (age 82) Stops all of his public meetings.
- 1994 (age 84) Dies in Tehran.