

Iran's Troubled Modernity

Ahmad Fardid (1910–94), the “anti-Western” philosopher known to many as the Iranian Heidegger, became the self-proclaimed philosophical spokesperson for the Islamic Republic, famously coining the term “Westoxication.” Using new materials about Fardid’s intellectual biography and interviews with thirteen individuals, Ali Mirsepassi pieces together the striking story of Fardid’s life and intellectual legacy. Each interview in turn sheds light on Iran’s twentieth-century intellectual and political self-construction and highlights Fardid’s important role and influence in the creation of Iranian modernity. The Fardid phenomenon was unique to the Iranian story, and yet contributed to a broader twentieth-century Heideggerian tradition that marked the political destiny of other countries under a similar ideological sway. Through these accounts, Mirsepassi cuts to the nerve of how deadly political “authenticity movements” take hold of modern societies and spread their ideology. Combining a sociological framework with the realities of lived experience, he examines Iran’s recent and astonishing upheavals, experiments, and mass mobilizations.

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Debating Ahmad Fardid's Legacy

ALI MIRSEPASSI
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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://society.foriranianstudies.org/journal/transliteration>), with the following exceptions:

- *Consonants with the same sound are not differentiated. So, both ghayn and ghaf are represented by gh and hamza and ayn are represented by '.*
- *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 some 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.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my deepest personal appreciation to those individuals who generously agreed to be interviewed for this book. They have provided a wealth of information and thoughtful commentary about Ahmad Fardid's life and thought. Even more, their insightful ideas on the cultural and political history of Iran have made this book a unique reading on contemporary Iranian intellectual history. I dedicate this book to them. All interviews were conducted in Persian, and subsequently translated into English. In this way, they resemble oral histories rather than written and scholarly texts. I hope readers will appreciate the open and spontaneous quality of the interviews. My goal was to retain the their living and colloquial atmosphere, suggesting the birth of ideas out of popular experiences, hopes, and memories.

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