Postmodernism in Iran and its Consequences

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Abstract

Postmodernism is often known as a school of thought and a form of ideology which considers a philosophical criticism on meta-narratives. Our interpretation of this concept is thus similar to that of Fredric Jameson who refers to postmodernism as a “theoretical discourse”. The main purpose of the present article is to identify the typology of the advocates of postmodernism presence in Iran and its consequences. In this regard, the compatible viewpoints and its related characteristics are first investigated, afterwards; the consequences resulting from this process, such as traditionalism and anti-traditionalism, dominance of relativism logic, preservation and negation of the status quo, growth of nihilism and tendency towards Inquiry and contemplation will be described. Through studying the degree and quality of this presence and investigating the ideological foundation of its proponents in Iran, this article is going to find the intellectual-political consequences organized by these advocate trends which have benefited from this school, played an effective role in its supporting and highlighting, and identified themselves in this new status. Accordingly, the following conclusions are resulted:

A. The presence of postmodernism in Iran is incomplete and somehow pseudo-postmodernism due to the selective use of methodological tools by its proponents in achieving their goals.
B. The consequences of this process, regardless of development or decline of the tradition, preservation or negation of the status quo, dominance of relativism and growth of nihilism, which its emergence would not depend on geographical places or intellectual and cultural conditions, could have consequences peculiar to the geography in which it is presented. This appeared in Iran through "returning to reason".

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Keywords: tradition, modernity, postmodernism, relativism, nihilism, west

Introduction

As a concept introduced in the last days of the modern world which reflects its deficiencies and inadequacies, postmodernism tries to show that the period in which the West was trying to shape the world based on its own Prometheus-like passion has come to an end; and now, it is time to regard it with uncertainty and denial and not with the appreciation. In this regard, a return to the past and history is prescribed, without showing the way and

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the form back to it. For this reason, it is important for us to have knowledge about the intellectual and critical tendencies of postmodernism which would help us better and more accurately recognize “tradition” and “modernity” and moving towards the future.

Now, as many other intellectual movements, this trend of thought which has a crucial role in the historical development of the western thought, has found its way to Iran; so that, investigating about modernism and postmodernism has turned to one of the main lines of thought in contemporary Iran. The lots of compiled and translated books, and the countless pages devoted to knowledge, religion, culture and thought show that this issue has become the serious concern of Iranian intellectuals. But like any other issue originated from the West, postmodernism has also found its proponents in Iran. Thus, here we are going to study and discuss about the trends resulted from the presence of postmodernism in Iran, as well as its consequences.

What has been recognized through this research revealed that: firstly, despite the fact that postmodernism emerged and evolved in a different place, this western theory has spread out in the world intentionally or unintentionally. With its distribution in non-western societies, it has turned to the topic of discussion in Iranian academic circles. Thus, when we talk about the status of postmodernism, we are in fact concerned about the status developed pervasively, and led non-western societies to the this situation.

Secondly, in our contemporary society, there are some intellectual movements which have linked themselves to postmodernism in a pseudo–postmodernism format, each of which have applied a selective use of this thought based on their own principals. What is important is that Iranian thinker must face postmodernism thoughts in a moderate, academic, serious manner, without getting emotional. Besides, they should even think about its subsequent future if possible.

Finally, it is obvious that each presence brings about some consequences in the form of opinion and thought and specified to the place in which it emerges. In Iran, the most remarkable effect which postmodernism brought about was making Iranian intellectuals to be more concerned about thinking and thought.

Iran's problem: postmodernism or pseudo-postmodernism?

With the presence of postmodernism in Iran, the first gift for the society in the field of sociology and humanities was the criticism of a kind of insight typical of Foucault archeology, based on the concept that history, thought and development are not the followers of the west. What this status brought about was a turn towards different kinds of social and cultural systems and behaviors (Azad Armaki, 1380, p.18). Now, with the formation of this diversity and pluralistic insight in a period in which the dominance of meta-narratives is being marginalized, each of Iranian intellectual trends moved towards a defective and incomplete use of this line of thought based on their own principals and capacities. In this way, they sought to revive and identify themselves with a reference to postmodernism.\(^1\)

Accordingly, Iranian society encountered postmodern ideology in a pseudo-postmodern format. The reason why I have identified Iranian postmodernists as pseudo-postmodernist is the two main questions raised about those who represent postmodernist trends and their being postmodernist:
1. Do they believe in methodological tool? Consequently, do they believe in the deconstruction as a methodological tool of postmodernism?
2. Do they basically believe in negation of postmodernism's meta-narratives or not? For example, is it possible to achieve a meta-narrative reading of religion through accepting the concept of grand narrative as a component of postmodernism?

\(^1\) The nature of postmodernism allows the instrumental use of it.
To answer these questions one should say that the thought of postmodernism in Iran is more a free calque or loan translation of this thought than being a representative of its original thought. Everybody refers to it based on his own intellectual framework. As a result, instead of being a representative of this ideology, they are more interpreters or pseudo–postmodernists who use it as an instrument based on their own principals.

**Advocates of postmodernism in Iran**

Serious presence of postmodernism in Iran goes back to 40s (1340-1350 Solar Hijri Calendar), the paradoxical decade in Iran, which was the witness of presence of modernism in art and literature from one hand, and foundational confrontation with the west, alienation, and return to the self from the other hand. What is obvious is the evolvement of a negation in the ideal minds of Iranian religious and non-religious intellectuals of the period which strongly affected the emergence of postmodern movement; and played an undeniable role in advent of philosophical postmodernist horizon, to which we refer as "postmodernism" in our country. The negation is formed through highlighting the slogan of "returning to self" in the format of conflict with the west, accomplished by orientalism and mysticism. Accordingly, the following movements evolved in Iran:

1. **The Traditionalist Heideggerian Trend**

   Having a traditional tendency towards Islam, this trend negates modernity as a total integrity. Postmodern thought disputes the dominate narrative of modernity. Furthermore, the traditional approach to Islam considers tradition as a coherent and inviolable whole; and postmodern thought authenticates tradition against modernity. Finally, the traditional approach to Islam does not consider modern reason as being authentic. Postmodern thought also distorts the centrality of reason and the originality of the subject. Accordingly, the existence of such commonalities along with postmodernism's promise of hope, understanding, and tolerance which is its common and union point with Islam (Ahmad, 1380, p.15) provided the motivation and background for the reconstruction of traditional approach towards Islam in Iran.

   This intellectual trend which possessed a profound recognition of the West is the strongest pseudo-modern trend in Iran. Taking a religious, orientalist, mystic approach, and using intellectual principles of philosophers such as Nietzsche and Heidegger and Islamic mysticism, it tries to sustain tradition and bring Islam and postmodernism together, regarding their confrontation with the West.

   **1-1- Ahmad Fardid**

   Ahmad Fardid, the founder of this reconstruction, was the professor of philosophy department at University of Tehran. He was a philosopher and a linguist interested in Heidegger opinions and claimed that they are unanimous. His being unanimous with Heidegger's opinions was as far that he challenged the West, Humanism and the 2500 years old history of metaphysics. He disputed not only with modernity, but also its achievements such as democracy, freedom, and human rights which is raised as a meta-narrative (see: Fardid, 1381, p.54, 125, 317). He denied the West entirely. Preserving his own Islamic thoughts, he declares "I am in agreement with Heidegger regarding his negative attitude and undifferentiated announcement towards the appearance of spirituality period, which is time for inauguration of the sacred realm … but in the field of theosophy and Islamic mysticism, I have discussions in which Heidegger has never entered" (Rajabi, 1373, p.23). Fardid tried to bring the heritage of Islamic mysticism and Heidegger's thought together and interpret them.

   Like Heidegger that opposed philosophy believing that it is merely Greek, Fardid believes that history of philosophy is the history of ignoring the being (Fardid, 1381, p.415). Opposing the philosophy of science, he thinks there is no need to discuss about the principles of mathematics, physics, and humanities (Fardid, 1383, p.3). In his opposition against modern reason, which he calls acquired knowledge, and following Heidegger who believes knowledge does not think, he avoids reason and acquired knowledge and arrives at the knowledge of intuition, which is the same as thinking from heart (Nasri, 1386, p.205).
His reason for rejecting the self-foundationalist human and his achievements as a unique West, is human's inattention towards knowledge of intuition. He considers the crisis arising from science and technology as the consequences of the acquired knowledge (Fardid, 1381, p.215).

Criticizing subject and originality of being which the West desires, Fardid says that modern human "just talks about the originality of being and authenticates humanity" (Nasri, 1386, p.219).

Following Heidegger, he believes that human is historicist and "among the all beings of the world, it is just human who has a history" (Fardid, 1381, p.427).

He also has adapted the thought that says "language is the house of being" from Heidegger. As a result, he thinks it is impossible to understand a lot of truths without concerning the language. Like for postmodernists, language is authentic for him and he believes in a natural relation between language and thought (Fardid, 1381, p.78).

In addition to expansion of postmodern thoughts, through translating books like Ernst Jünger's "Über die Linie (Over the Line)" and discussions about Nietzsche, Søren Kierkegaard and Heidegger, he moved toward being influenced by orientalist insight, negation of the west, and consequently, maturing pseudo-postmodernism in Iran.

1-2- Jalal Al-e-Ahmad

Al-e-Ahmad is another Iranian intellectual who had a direct criticism against the west with an orientalist and "returning to self" tendency; changing his insight about his environment and being affected by the period, in which there was a close attitude towards communism, and finally Islam. His book, Gharbzadegi (Westoxification), is said to be the first oriental writing which clarifies East’s status against the West, because it defines the colonized countries' duties against colonizers (Baraheni, 1348, p.465).

He admired Heidegger's point of view regarding science and technology, and believed it to be the essence of western civilization (Borujerdi, 1387, p.111). Being concerned about downfall of the cultural–historical personality due to the compulsive rush of machinery he declares that:

"So long as we do not comprehend the real essence, basis, and philosophy of Western civilization, only aping the West outwardly and formally– by consuming its machines – we shall be like the ass in the lion's skin." (Al-e-Ahmad, 1373, p.28).

1-3- Mohammad Ali Eslami Nodooshan

Mohammad Ali Eslami Nodooshan is the other remarkable intellectual of 40s (1340-1350 Solar Hijri Calendar). In a less colorful and less identified status, he less or more, thought about a return to one’s own spiritual originality and theoretical – not practical – negation of western modernity. Being affected by Heidegger, and with a moral insight towards modernity, he states that: “modern man is one who is less or more rich, uses technological tools for his own comfort, believes blindly and without the any question in technology, is alone, does not have any peace of mind, and has found intellect as a substitute for the reason” (Islami Nodooshan, 1356, pp.179-202; 296). He criticizes the West and considers "the dommative utilitarian behavior of the industrial world "and" inequality and tyranny in back warded countries” as two huge barriers for development of the world (Islami Nodooshan, 1356, p.179-202; 296).

1-4- Reza Davari Ardakani

As a proponent of Heidegger, Reza Davari Ardakani is one of the well-known students of Seyyed Ahmad Fardid, who like Heidegger, traced westernization back to ancient Greek. Following Fardid, he characterized modern age by the concept of “multiple westernization” which means the whole modern west that its nihilism and atheistic venom is more severe than the Greek one, and comes and wants to dominate all our lives. (Madadpour, 1376, p. 17). Like Fardid, Davari supposes the west as an integrated structure that evil and good is impossible to segregate (Davari, 1386, p.83). The dominant discourse of Davari’s thought about the West is the same as
Heidegger and Fardid’s viewpoints. He has such a great interest towards Heidegger that he calls him “great wise of the age and teacher of the future thought” (Davari, 1374, p.210).
Opposing the modern intellect, he considers the recent 400 years period of the west as the age of acquired knowledge and says that in modernity the modern intellect is the base and center of the life which interferes in all affairs of human. In the new world, the revelation and general intellect is being neglected and considered as being absurd. (Davari, 1374, p.210)

Davari’s attitude toward technic and its authenticity is derived from the Heidegger ideas. He does not consider the science as the base of technic and deliberate the technic intellect as the same as the intellect itself. (Davari, 1386, p. 143)

Like the pessimist postmodernists Referring to the Heidegger, he believes that there is no future for such western civilization (Davari, 1384, p.43, 49) and now this civilization has come to its end. (Ibid, p.6)

In the subject of “the end of history”, like Heidegger, he address to the “end of philosophy” that is metaphysics. But, he never led to the Mysticism and Islamic Sufism; instead he led to a kind of intuition that Heidegger found it in poem:
“I’m not pessimist about the future, but I believe that human’s affair is connected to a hair, but it doesn’t cut …. And even while in his way, he is disappointed and returns, he doesn’t lose his hope. I believe in God’s Kindness and assist; all of us believe in a savior (Davari, 1375, p.29).

2- Corbin-Guenon traditionalist trend

Professors of the philosophy department of University of Tehran or the founders of “Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy and theosophy”, who are more affected by Corbin and Guenon’s thoughts than by Heidegger’s, supported tradition and orientalism.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Dariush Ashoori, Dariush Shayegan and Gholamreza Avani are the Iranian followers of this intellectual trend.

2-1- Dariush Shayegan

Being affected by Corbin and Heidegger, he talks about the confrontation of the East and the West in “Asia against the West”, and “Mental Idols and Eternal Memories”. He writes in negation of the West: “The West has lost its spiritual deposit since 400 years ago … and the West could gradually replace its religious system with a civil one. Westerns have talked about their crises for 200 years … cultural downfall, sunset of gods, death of the myths, spiritual decline has been long the problem of the day” (Shayegan, 1376, p.168).

In this discussion, Shayegan who got familiar with Heidegger’s opinions by his professor, Corbin, accounted for this attitude as the compulsive outcome of the Western thought. Like Heidegger, he believed that science and technology are not a set of neutral tools and techniques, but they represent a typical kind of existential metaphysics which makes man bounded by his own superiority will, through giving him the power to harness the nature (Borujerdi, 1387, p.224).

Following Heidegger, he calls western modern age as “the age of hardship”, the period between the sunset of gods who escaped and the God who is going to come (Shayegan, 1356, p.301). Through focusing on Asian tradition and less criticizing them, he determines this thought as an orientation towards a unique end whose goal is redemption and salvation.

He criticizes the west and believes in a total integrity which is so irresolvable and intertwined that its elements are inseparable to choose the appropriate ones from among (Shayegan, 1383, p.25).

2-2- Seyyed Hossein Nasr

Nasr is among the religious intellectuals who wanted to revive Islam and challenge western thought. He was so intensively affected by Rene Guenon that he wrote an introduction to the Persian translation of his book, “The Crisis of the Modern World” in 1349 (SH).
Borrowing categories such as “crisis of modernity”, “unfortunateness and inefficacy of development” and “tyranny of events” from Guenon, he determines the West commitment to modernity as its greatest sin. Like the other opponents of this movements and focusing on translation, he entirely rejects the West at first:

“The aspect of the modern world which is criticized by tradition is its whole ideology, prerequisites, and principals that are false from the viewpoint of tradition. So if any good is revealed in this (modern) world, it would be an accidental good not an intrinsic one. It can be said that … modern world is intrinsically evil and accidentally good (Nasr, 1380, p.158).

Then he suggests that modern man should change his world and step to the traditional world by reviving it:

“In traditional world, life means breathing in a world in which man is correlated with the reality beyond him; the reality from which he receives the basis of human life …” (Nasr, 1380, p.152).

Like the other intellectuals of 40s, he was also affected by Heidegger. He warned Iranians to be concerned about the nature of western science, philosophy and technology and the dangers they would bring about for the Iranian culture (Nasr, 1361, pp.47-48).

Criticizing the western subjectivism he states:

“… but today, human as a mundane and earthly entity, is recognized to be the criterion of everything and the world. This fact has led to manifestation and prevalence of metaphor – i.e. anthropomorphism, which has dominated every aspect of the modern thought during the past 500 years. Afterwards, human’s reason turned to the only criterion for the affirmation of science” (Nasr, 1384, p.296).

As a result, the science derived from modern reason is negated from nasr’s point of view. Like postmodernists, he states:

“If science is going to be restricted to quantitative relations, it would never accomplish to arrive at the ultimate essence and basis of things. Instead, it has to move in the finite and mental world of different readings created by measuring devices, concepts, and mathematical concepts”.

3- The Trend of Nativists Aggressive toward the West

This trend is not related to the two previous ones. Some sub-thoughts, which are in a native oriented manner and often being affected by Heidegger that move towards negation of the West, can be gathered as the trend of nativist aggressive toward the west. Contrary to Heidegger's traditionalist movement, this one’s negation of the west is not necessarily for supporting tradition. Although their criticism on the West would finally lead to the support of tradition, their main concern is paying attention to self, from a social, cultural and psychological prospect – not a philosophical one.

3-1- Ehsan Naraghi

Naraghi’s pseudo–postmodernist stand points in his book “The Alienation of the West” is a typical kind of this trend. He declares: “machinisme has brought spiritual and cultural poverty for the West” (Naraghi, 1353, pp.173, 174). As a result, he did not believe western dominant tradition so adequate to be offered in the East. So, applying practical researches in the field of sociology, he insisted firmly on nativist.

To support nativist, he wrote 3 books, “The Alienation of the West”, “What Was in its Own Possession” and “Crude Greediness”, by which he moved in a direction that internally controverted the West (Boroujerdi, 1387, p.210).

3-2- Seyed Fakhroddin Shadman

Shadman opposes the dominance of western civilization through adapting a psychologically socio-cultural approach. He believes that the dominance of western civilization in Iran would bring an end to our lives, based on which he applied Iranian identity, the method of confrontation with the West, and considers modernity as the main source and essence for all his works. He believes that similar to Russia and Japan, we should try to possess western civilization, not to act in a way like Algeria to be captured by it. So he thinks we must absorb it
thoughtfully and trustfully (Shadman, 1382, p.19-23). To do that, he thinks it is important and crucial to identify cultural heritage and recognize it critically, gain self-knowledge, focus on intellectual independency, Persian language and Islamic seminaries, and translate western works (see: shadman 1382). Through admiring scientific skepticism and exploring the past and whatever that is beneficial, he moves towards concentrating on postmodernist thoughts.

Of course, some of his standpoints can be interpreted to be weakly supporting tradition, for example focusing on spiritual, religious, mystic training and their importance for achieving perfect national Iranian education (Shadman, 1346, p.290).

4- The Islamic Scholastic trend

Ali Shariati

Shariati is the powerful representative of a religious intellectual generation who was highly affected by Guenon, Heidegger, Jaspers, Husserl, Adorno and Marcuse during his education in Paris in 40s. He combined Fanon and Aimé Césaire’s viewpoints, traditionalist Guenon- Corbin circle, notions of Frankfort school and Marcuse, Adorno, Habermas opinions; and then Heidegger’s thought of “inner-prison” from which a typical kind of mysticism and orientalism has been derived. He created a kind of Iranian critical combined thought, through which he tries to reconstruct the original entity of the East, using Fanon’s psychoanalytical approaches regarding the third world’s revolutionary movements, Louis Massignon’s readings in the field of Islamic medieval mysticism, and Sartre’s existentialism (Boroujerdi, 1387, p.166). This reconstruction and defense of the East, along with the voice of returning to the self which it raises, appears in Iran as an explicit defense of Islam and revival of the original intellectual-cultural values. Achieving pure Islam, he opposes philosophy and defines the entrance of Greek thoughts into Islamic world as a disaster. As a result, he proposes a mystic standpoint against the philosophical one (Nasri, 1386, p.156).

The focus of his critique is based on imperialistic evil-doings and ambitions of the West. He considers cosmopolitanism, anthropocentrism, and the other universal ideas as the great lies of the western. Being affected by Fanon’s opinions, and challenging the west, he writes:

“Oh! Friends! Let’s leave Europe alone. Let’s put an end to this disgusting and monkey–like imitation from Europe. Let’s pass through this Europe which is always talking about humanity but ruins human wherever possible (Shariati, 1378, p.171). Of course in this challenge, he didn’t reject the West as a total integrity; instead, through applying some of the western internal evolutions (such as Martin Luther’s movement, development of social sciences), he took a selective approach towards the West (Boroujerdi, 1387, pp.172, 192). It can be declared that Shiariati wants to refer to the western civilization basically in accordance with our own self-conscious cultural foundations.

After providing the necessary background for evolution in society, he brings two opposing aspects of traditionalism and Shari’a-orientalism together to create a postmodern product for confronting the universal criteria (Madadpoor, 1384, pp.213, 214).

5- Secularist pseudo – postmodernists

This trend has a liberal, secular and nihilistic attitude. The intellectual tendencies of its representatives are more influentially derived from secularism than orientalism and spiritualism. Their attitude has more tendencies towards “Heidegger's with a secular interpretation focusing on logic and its critical thought” comparing to “Heidegger's with a religious and mystic interpretation”. This is obvious in works and writings of Dariush Shayegan, Babak Ahmadi, Morad Farhadpoor, Ramin Jahanbagloo, and Mohammad-Reza Nikfar, who despite theoretical controversies recognize western cultural system as the authoritative status in practice (Boroujerdi, 1387, P.272).

Dariush Shayegan
Shayegan is the well-known figure of this trend. Before Iran's revolution, he had his thoughts on loan from Corbin and Guenon, but suddenly he turned towards admiration of the West and a kind of secularism rooted in orientalism and mysticism in his recent works (Abdolkarimi and Mohammadi, 1384, pp.214, 215).

This is obvious in some of his books, for example "Religious Revolution", "Broken Insight and Cultural Schizophrenia", "Under the Skies of the Universe" and "Modern Bewitched".

Psychologically, he precisely calls himself oriental (Shayegan, 1376, p.81) but the oriental who does not believe in downfall of the West anymore; instead he interprets the West crises as the pause-points and somehow successful mutations (Shayegan, 1376, p.83). He identifies the compulsive direction of the history of all societies towards modernity (Shayegan, 1376, p.87).

Using the criticism of postmodern philosophers like Nietzsche and Heidegger, he then criticizes this modernity and states that "modernity is weak from different aspects. It is spiritless; it does not contain strong emotions which can shake hearts." Returning to his own oriental origin he declares: “Modernity has many vacuums and gaps. For example, where are the mystic allegories of the poets and mystics … in this discourse? Where is this modern structure can we acquire spiritual vision which enliven our internal life (Shayegan, 1381, 9.31)?

He states his secularist aspect in the statement which says he believes in preserving tradition and identifies its status in spiritual system as the status of the environment in the natural system of the earth. But he finds its solution, not in spreading it out in society, but in directing it towards privacy, making it exclusive, and removing it from public territory (Shayegan, 1376, p.91).

With an insight towards truth which was affected by postmodernists, and the existence of different interpretations in understanding truth, he states: "everybody is qualified to interpret different aspects of entity based on his own mental values (Shayegan, 1381, p.14).

Taking a pluralist approach regarding culture and spirituality, he then writes:
"No matter man's spiritual living is earned through Buddhism, Hinduism, or even shamanism of the Indo Americans" (Shayegan, 1376, p.92) the result would be nothing but defeating metanarratives and focusing on subcultures.

6- Discursive Pseudo-Postmodernists
This movement is affected by Michel Foucault's discourse and relation between knowledge and power. Its proponents neither claim a return to tradition nor have any interest in a conjunction between tradition and postmodernism.

6-1- Mehrzad Boroujerdi
The Iranian intellectual, Mehrzad Boroujerdi, penned a book under the name of "Iranian Intellectuals and the West" based on Michel Foucault and Edward Said's postmodern thoughts, regarding the relation between knowledge and power. He states that thought applying Foucault and Said's thoughts, he has tried to show that "modern Iranian intellectuals have got their understanding about the West based on their own minds" he points it out that "recognizing the West and its achievements has been criticized due to the fanatical insights (Boroujerdi, 1377, p.273). Using Foucault genealogy method, he showed his interest in representation; and regarding discourses, non-discourses and neglected events and details he states how an "other" forms in Iranian society in a nativist format and leads finally to an Islamic Shi'ite government.

Like Foucault, he applies methodological basic principles of detachment and separation on dominant narratives of 1978 Iranian revolution, and refers to it through deconstructionism and considering other narratives.

6-2- Hossein Kachooyan
Hossein Kachooyan, a professor of the University of Tehran, is also one of the figures who is considered as a pseudo-modernist affected by Foucault's book, "Foucault and Archaeology of Knowledge". But due to his interest
towards tradition which supports religion, it somehow seems impossible to consider him a discursive pseudo-
modernist. Surveying his books, one can recognize his purpose which is just reading of Foucault's genealogy
from interpreters’ point of view, without adding any new details derived from his own mind. Here, the question is
why he has published a postmodern book in Iranian society. As he claims in its introduction, he identifies his
book as the outcome of his studies performed for his Ph.D. thesis which was about epistemological relation
between religion and sociology of modernity (Kachooyan, 1382, Introduction).

But another purpose can also be mentioned. Talking about destructive aspect of Foucault's thought, which is
interpreted as "success", he writes: "In archaeology of knowledge, Foucault created basic doubts about validity,
value, eternity of knowledge, and understanding modernity. Everybody, even those who don’t believe in
Foucault's thoughts, would think deeply about them after accepting claims of modernity and modern age
knowledge. His criticism, especially in the field of anthropology and raising unconsciousness as a space by which
the conscious doer is surrounded and affected, cannot be simply rejected. He proposes controversies and
uncertainties existing in anthropocentric thoughts of modernity to reveal their basic and unsolvable problems. He
concludes that it is really difficult to be dependent on such modern thoughts (Kachooyan, 1382, p.234).

In this way, he indirectly identifies his main purpose of publishing this book as confrontation with the West and
modernity and their destruction in order to set the scene for tradition, which its ideas is on the way to support
them.

Besides, he believes his book is a proposal for the society of Iranian thinkers to criticize modernity from
Foucault's viewpoint, although he himself would not apply it.

6-3- Hossein Bashiriyeh

Bashiriyeh is another affected figure of this movement who had Marxist tendencies before 1997. After translating
“Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics” in1997, he suddenly turned towards a Focaultian post-Marxist
framework. Following Foucault, he replaced Marxist’s relations of production with power relations. This insight,
which was an upgrade of insight from class analysis to discourse analysis, can also be traced in his two
subsequent books: “Government and Civil Society” and “Sociology of Modernity”.

Like his writings, his translations have also got post-Marxist attitude and refer to poststructuralist Foucault and
Habermas who believed in completing the unfinished project of modernity.

Bashiriyeh’s standpoint in “Government and Civil Society” proposes that the world of society and human is
naturally a formless and meaningless one which gets it’s specific from and meaning regarding the dominant
discourses of the era and is surrounded by them.

In “An Introduction to Sociology of Modernity”, and by criticizing modernity, he says that “Edmund Burke”
reminds some of the unknown aspects of modernity which would be helpful in investigating about its process and
waves in subsequent parts. This statement shows that like Foucault, Bashiriyeh is concerned about the neglected
aspects of modernity.

**Intellectual-Political consequence of postmodernism in Iran**

It was revealed through investigating opponent standpoint of Heideggerian traditional movement, Corbin-Guenon
movement, the trend of nativists aggressive toward the west, Islamic Scholastic movement, secular Pseudo-
modernists, and discursive pseudo-postmodernists that postmodern thought in Iran is more a free borrowing of
this notion than being representative of a pure postmodern thought.

Everybody refers to it according to his own intellectual framework. So, Instead of being the representative of this
thought, these are more commenters or pseudo-postmodernists that give in a voice and use it as a tool. But the
important point is: what are the political-intellectual consequences of postmodernism in Iran.

1- Traditionalism and anti-traditionalism
In a period when those marginalized by self-foundational reason of modernity come to the scene, tradition finds a chance to propose itself and religion, as the most important basis in cultural fields, gets significant. After the dominance of relativism insight and deconstruction of meta-narratives, tradition, as one of the thousands prospective which cannot be rejected, attracts attentions and represents some of its elements. Now, in a society in which separation of tradition and modernity has not been completed yet, and the modern society could not repress any thoughts which are in opposition with modern rationality, postmodern movement provides Iranian society with more relations with its past (Ganji, 1375, p12). It allows Iranian society to sustain tradition in a postmodern format. But it should be considered that how can be the defender of tradition by applying postmodern discussions? (Bashiriyeh, 1374, p. 11-17). Proponents of tradition look at postmodernism regarding its aggressive aspects towards modernity, while they neglected the following facts:

1. Post modernism is not a coherent movement.
2. While postmodernism tries to review tradition, this is misunderstood in Iran. Those who could not confront recent events used this movement as an overlay for their conservatism and recognized it as a return to tradition in its previous style (Gharabaghi, 1380, pp. 79, 82).
3. The most remarkable thinkers of postmodernism cannot be taken as proponents of tradition. For example, in the last years of his life, Michel Foucault believed to be belong to tradition of enlightenment and considered his thought to be a typical kind of critical thinkers like Kant. Practically Jean-François Lyotard has also moved towards criticizing narratives, such as traditional religious thoughts, by proposing “grand narrative” criticism.
4. While looking at the “truth” is the main concern of postmodernism, Iranian traditionalist postmodernists reveal an obvious controversy by neglecting this fact. Because the basis of tradition is finding the truth, when someone follows tradition, he has to look for truth.

2- Logic of relativism

With the appearance of this movement and translating works of its thinkers in Iran, some of the figures like Mohammad Mojtahed Shabestari and Abdulkarim Soroush, who were affected by Heidegger and Gadamer, adapted a hermeneutic attitude towards revelation, such as plurality of readings and interpretations, and became its propagator. By propounding relativism and skepticism in intellectual and philosophical thoughts, they helped the appearance of anarchy of understanding in Iran. For example the assumption that says the discovered qualities and effects of the things are all inside their meanings, and scientific developments and finding their new qualities and effects will consequently cause their meaning to change (Soroush, 1375, p.350) would lead to relativity of the meaning (AliTabar, 1380, p.332).

Mojtahed Shabestari also declares that “during textual interpretations and actually before any other scientific attempt, a researcher has a kind of pre-understanding and pre-knowledge about what he is going to search about. He believes the emergence of new cognition, whether a kind of understanding or explanation, is always based on a pre-understanding or pre-knowledge and begins by applying them and is impossible without them” In this way, he takes steps to confirm the plurality of readings. (Shabestari, 1375, p. 16,17) Soroush has also helped the maturity of this logic by rejecting unique understanding and the unity of the history of Shari’a with accepting diverse understanding of shari’a, provided that they are recorded and methodical (Soroush, 1375, p.305).

3- Preservation and negation of the status quo

Postmodern thought is a hybrid of negative and positive aspects. It seems to be a proper theoretical tool for negating monopoly of the dominant narratives, because it negates any superior narrative. But, as this viewpoint justifies every intellectual-cultural framework and leaves no basis for criticism, it ruins the foundation of its own criticism and legitimizes the dominant narrative as a narrative among numerous possible ones and serves the status quo.
That is why postmodernism cannot get rid of being a stooge of power in political realm and turns to a tool for legitimizing the power which tends to deconstruct. Based on this thought, the insight toward status quo can neither be negative nor positive. So, on the contrary to Frankfurtian thinkers’ viewpoint, this kind of criticism not only does not ruin the foundation of any social act, but also does not have any Idea in its construction. This is the place where has no outcome but absurdity and baselessness.

4- The growth of nihilism

What is meant by nihilism is the negation of transcendental truthful being which as the foundation of the world, unites pluralities, is the meaningful center of the world, human and life, the identifier of content and meaning of knowledge, and accuracy or inaccuracy of cognition and human act. So the death of god and truth doesn’t mean anything but the dominance of nihilism (Abd-al-Karimi, 1387, p.234).

One can accept Husserl and Heidegger’s interpretation of the history of western thought which says nihilism manifested with the emergence of metaphysics and metaphysical thought is always hidden under the shadow of nihilism and through leaving the world of intuition and neglecting presential knowledge, and consequently missing the foundation, truth and meaning of the world. But here it should be confessed that nihilism has not uncovered its face as clearly as the recent decades (Abd-al-Karimi, 1387, p.154, 155).

In a period in which Nietzsche believes nihilism is waiting at the door, and it is impossible to ignore or be immune to the effects of thoughts in the world (Davari Ardakani, 1387, p.25), nihilism is represented and developed by postmodern thoughts – mainly Nietzsche, Heidegger, Derrida and Foucault – in Iranian discourse. Highlighting critical aspects of thought, these thinkers go so far that they think of reason as a power-made tool. Consequently, they claim it is impossible to achieve the truth. This is the point where Iranian postmodernists fail to recognize or don’t consider nihilism hidden in postmodern thought as a consequence of metaphysical notion. Now, if Iranian thinkers do not try to face its problems with a epistemic and philosophical insight -not a practical one –complete dominance of nihilism would be the inevitable fate of Iranian society in a near future. (Abdolkarimi, 1387, p.186, 187)

5- Questioning and desire of Thinking

Postmodernism began with raising question about essence and basis of modernity, and in each discussion, questioning is the main principle of its thought. Its entrance to Iran from one hand, and Iranian’s background in proposing question from the other hand made it an attractive theory for some Iranian thinkers. At the end of their glorious cultural age, and along with most of the orientalists and Muslim orientalists, Iranians lost all their potentiality for questioning (Haghdar, 1382, p.45). Even Iranian thinkers were not theoretically concerned about asking the reason of their backwardness. It is obvious through investigating the works of Iranian authors of the last decades in which asking about the non-existential status of thought and causes and backgrounds of Iranian historical backwardness is among their least important concerns. In this regard, in the last decades, the number of books devoted to this subject from modern viewpoint and based on realities and needs of the contemporary age is not more than two or three works (Haghdar, 1382, p.23).

Having a superficial and imitative look towards the West, along with sharing in its new history, neglecting former thought and spirituality, outbreak of disaster in different aspects of language, literature and social sciences all caused Iranians to leave their thoughts and viewpoints behind more intensively (Davari, 1391, p.15). This background has had an evolutionary effect on some thinkers and caused them to return to questioning which has long been neglected. Raising the desire of Iran’s progress, and regarding postmodernism to bring margins into context, it brought marginalized tendency to propose question into the scene. So, if as Davari says, being
independent from the West and getting rid of its compulsory civilization is a criterion of moving towards thought (see: Haghdar, 1382), it seems talking about an evolution in humanities is a sign of turning to thought. This doesn’t mean we should necessarily put the West away completely. It means we have to create sciences and knowledge adequate to our historical, social and ideological conditions. In other words, we have to complete the knowledge and science, not to make them imperfect.

The other sign of the return to thought is the growth of translations and compiled books in the field of philosophy and humanities and being concerned about events and consequences of the last 200 years of Iranian history. This is done through researches which have been administrated in the field of above mentioned history, and entrance of modernity and modern knowledge into Iran.

The hope to remove all of them, would justify the cover of historical ignorance (Haghdar, 1382, p.9).

Conclusion

Regarding proposed discussions, firstly it is revealed that postmodern movement formed diverse intellectual tendencies among Iranian thinkers. What is obvious is that each of the proponent trends preserved their own principles in their way towards postmodernism using it as a tool. The result of this process was nothing but using postmodernism as a tool for achieving their purposes. Along with proponent approaches, we can talk about a moderate confrontation with postmodernism and not a religious or secular interpretation from Heidegger. What is important is that Iranian thinkers must face postmodern thought in a moderate, academic and serious manner, without getting emotional and even think about its subsequent future. Because addressing the problem of modernity and tradition would be a defective and fruitless act without paying attention to the problem of postmodernism. Secondly, it seems that the consequences of this movement, regardless the the development or decline of the tradition, preservation or negation of the status quo, dominance of relativism and growth of nihilism, which would not depend on geographical places or intellectual and cultural conditions, could have consequences specified to the geography in which it is presented. This appeared in Iran through “returning to reason”.

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