



IN THE NAME OF GOD  
ABDOLKARIM SOROUSH

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Abdolkarim Soroush (born in 1945) – I completed my high school education at Alavi Secondary School in Tehran. In 1963, I entered the University of Tehran’s College of Pharmacology, obtaining my doctorate in 1969. During these same years, I was also studying Islamic Philosophy. In 1972, I went to London and obtained an M.Sc. in Analytical Chemistry and then studied the History and Philosophy of Science at Chelsea College for five years. I returned to Iran in 1980, which was the first year after the victory of the Islamic Revolution. I immediately established a course on “Islamic Culture” at the Teacher Training University and began my lecturing career. In 1981, Iran witnessed a “Cultural Revolution” and Imam Khomeini, the leader of the revolution, appointed me a member of the “Cultural Revolution Headquarters”. Our brief was to rewrite universities’ curriculum. I worked in the HQ for four years and then resigned from all government posts and devoted myself to academic life. The main courses that I taught during this time were on the Philosophy of Science and the Philosophy of Religion and Islamic Mysticism. During these years, I managed to write 23 books on these two subjects. I also corrected and edited the *Masnawi*, the seminal work of Rumi, the mystic, and gave talks on various public issues. I also spent some time as a visiting professor and researcher at the universities of Harvard, Yale and Princeton. – Address: Academy for Philosophy, 6 Nezami Alley, France St., Tehran, Iran.

My second stay at Berlin’s Wissenschaftskolleg (2005–06) was like a heaven-sent gift. During this second year, in addition to attending the weekly talks, I took part in the meetings of a group that met once every fortnight to hold discussions under the banner of “Religion

and Contingency”. The group’s other members were José Casanova and Hans Joas (sociologists of religion); Charles Taylor (philosopher of modernity); Ingolf Dalferth (Protestant theologian); Horst Dreier (jurist); and Astrid Reuter (theologian); all leading opinion holders in their own fields.

The discussions at these fortnightly meetings revolved around religion and modernity. They ultimately led to a three-day seminar on the subject of secularism and secularization that brought together many people from all over the world. One interesting point that merits mentioning here is that, at the end of the roundtable discussion on philosophical secularism, Charles Taylor expressed the following very memorable phrase: “I suggest that we shouldn’t use the term ‘secularism’ any more because it now embraces such a multitude of different and conflicting meanings that it is unable to render any service to learning.”

Another of my occupations was translating *The Cloud of Unknowing* into Persian – a task that I am still working on – and I presented a report on this in a talk delivered to the members of the Religion and Modernity group. Fortunately, two of my other books – one a critical edition of *Lobb-e Lobab* (an anthology of poems from the *Mathnawi* that was compiled in Iran and Afghanistan in the 17th century) and, the other, a collection of lectures and articles entitled *The Etiquette of Power and the Etiquette of Justice* – have now been completed. They are in the process of being published in Tehran and should be on the market within the next few months.

The lectures that I delivered in Germany and other countries added further pages to the record of my activities over the past academic year. These included a lecture at the Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin and a lecture at the Anne-Marie Schimmel Forum.

This year, when I am engaged in research at the ISIM in the Netherlands, I will not forget that, close to Amsterdam, there is a paradise in Berlin that hosted me for two years, with the utmost kindness, and which is now hosting the new residents of paradise.