

# ALI PAYA

## Brief Bio-sketch

### **Academic Affiliation:**

National Research Institute for Science Policy (Iran)

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### **Most Recent and Forthcoming Publications**

*Iranian Intellectuals and Western Men of Ideas*, London: Ashgate, 2007.

*Iraq, Democracy and the Future of Muslim World*, Edited by Ali Paya & John Esposito, London: Oxford University Press, 2007.

*Transition to Democracy: An Anthology*, edited by Ali Paya & Hossein Raghfar, English and Persian editions, Tehran: Institute for Management and Planning Studies, 2007.

“Open System-Closed System Distinction, Ethical Particularism, and Dancy’s Progress”, *Hekmat va Falsafeh (Wisdom and Philosophy)*, the Academic Journal of Philosophy Department, Allameh Tabatabaee University, Vol. 3, No. 1. 2007.

*Habermas and Iranian Intellectuals*, Edited by Ali Paya and Mohammad Ghaneirad, Tehran: Tarh-e Nou, 2007.

“Secular Democracy – Theologizing Politics?” *Learning for Democracy*, Vol. 1, No. 2, Autumn 2006.

*University, Scientific Thinking, Innovation, and the Public Sphere*, Tehran: Institute for Cultural Studies, Ministry of Science, Research and Technology, September 2006.

“Recent Developments in Shi’i Thought” in *Islamic Democratic Discourse: Theory, Debates, and Philosophical Perspectives* ed. By M.A. Muqtedar Khan, New York and Oxford: Lexington Books, 2006, pp.123-148 .

“The Philosopher and the Revolutionary State: How Karl Popper’s Ideas Shaped the Views of Iranian Intellectuals,” Ali Paya and Mohammad Ghanei-rad, *International Studies in the Philosophy of Science*, Vol. 20, No. 2, July 2006

“Quantum Physics: A Case for Anti-Realism?” *Hekmat va Falsafeh (Wisdom and Philosophy)*, the Academic Journal of Philosophy Department, Allameh Tabatabaee University, Vol. 2, No. 2. July 2006.

“Clarifying Situational Logic” (Part II), *Nameh-e Ulum-e Ejtemaee (Social Sciences Letters)* 27 (2006): 1-25.

Paya, Ali. “Popper in Iran,” in *Karl Popper: A Centenary Assessment*. edited by Ian Jarvie, Karl Milford, David Miller, London: Ashgate, 2006.

Paper

## Reciprocal Knowledge: How far have we traveled since Montesquieu 's *Persian Letters*?

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### **Abstract**

Almost three centuries ago, the French great political theorist, Montesquieu, published an influential book, *Persian Letters*, which set the tone for many other works in which windows have been opened between cultures for reciprocal understanding. Montesquieu's book was a multi-layered work with various messages for a variety of recipients. At one level it was a critical description of what was considered as 'the East' in the early eighteenth century. At one other level it was a biting criticism of French society and mores as seen through the eyes of some visiting "Persians". Still at a third level the book provided an excellent historical document of the degree of true reciprocal understanding existed between Europe and the Orient in the first half of the eighteenth century. In my paper, I shall try to assess the changes which have occurred in mutual understanding between the Westerners and the Easterners since Montesquieu's seminal work. Given the scope of such a study and space limitation of the paper, I shall mostly concentrate on a number of novels and travel books by Iranian and European writers as my main source of information. The upshot of the argument of the paper is that despite all the progress in the means of communication and notwithstanding the huge increase in the amount of information available to the people of various cultures for better understanding of 'the other', still lots need to be done for producing genuine 'reciprocal knowledge' across cultures and nations.