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POLITICS AND PHILOSOPHY IN CONTEMPORARY IRAN

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Abstract

The focus of this study centers on the intersection of philosophy and politics within modern-day Iran. Its aim is to scrutinize how philosophical thought influences political dynamics and explores how the ruling religious authorities have conceptualized the structure of government and state through a philosophical lens. This endeavor is geared toward buttressing their governance by employing such philosophies in political discourse to justify military positions and sanctify institutional frameworks. The primary objective is to provide an accurate portrayal of the current state of affairs in Iran, comprehensively grasping both its strengths and weaknesses in theoretical contexts, engaging in and scrutinizing critical discourse. Consequently, the study aims to address several inquiries regarding the role of philosophical teachings in political theory, the repercussions of such teachings, and the ideological disparities between the "reformist" and "hardliner" factions, particularly those aligned with Wilayat al-Faqih.

Keywords: Philosophy, Iran, Mulla Sadra, Tabatabaei, Khomeini, Shariati, Soroush, Transcendent Theosophy, Ghazali

Introduction

Philosophical discourse in Iran has maintained a close association with political endeavors, influencing the formation of ideological frameworks within religious contexts and strengthening the intellectual foundation of political elites. Since 1979 and continuing to the present day, much of the debate within Iranian religious and political spheres can be traced back to philosophical disparities among various parties. This philosophical discourse is not a recent phenomenon emerging solely after the Iranian revolution; rather, its roots extend deep into Persian history, predating even the Safavid era when Twelver Shiism became the state religion. There exists an ancient Persian philosophical tradition that predates Islam, which some have endeavored to revive and synthesize with other philosophical schools under scrutiny in this study. Notably, Reza Hakimi, credited as a progenitor of modern deconstructionism,[1] drew from elements of Mulla Sadra's philosophy. The philosophical landscape in Persia was diverse, characterized by numerous schools and currents that experienced periods of activity and dormancy throughout history.

Therefore, this study aims to explore the impact of philosophy on politics, specifically how contemporary Iranian philosophical discourse influences the entire political landscape. Philosophy has become intricately linked with the Iranian state, where the religious elite predominantly adheres to the principles of Mulla Sadra. This philosophical foundation has played a significant role in defining the state's identity, ideology, and sectarian justifications. However, the current philosophical discourse in Iran is not confined to the school of transcendent theosophy endorsed by the Velayat-e Faqih[2]. There are other significant trends that have sparked a philosophical and political movement, utilizing their opposition to transcendent theosophy as a means to challenge the Iranian government. Consequently, philosophy has become a component of the political tension within the country. This phenomenon necessitates a thorough examination to elucidate its diverse and multifaceted aspects.

The Hawza and the Nature of Philosophy

Religious institutions across various sects encompass internal factions, some of which advocate for reformist philosophical approaches, while others denounce philosophy as heretical or objectionable. The term "philosophy" here denotes the entire realm of philosophical inquiry, not solely theological matters. Among those engaged in philosophical discourse, there are critics who specifically target its theological dimension. One notable example is Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, who authored *Tahafut al-Falasifah* (The Incoherence of the Philosophers), prompting a response from Ibn Rushd in *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut* (The Incoherence of the Incoherence). Ghazali's philosophical contentions were only related to theological issues, "When I saw this vein of folly pulsating among these idiots, I decided to write this book in order to refute the ancient philosophers. It will expose the

incoherence of their beliefs and the inconsistency of their metaphysical theories."[3] He argues that there are certain factors differentiating a true philosopher from others which can be broadly classified into three categories:

- ■ "The dispute is centered upon a mere word."
- ■ "Those things in which the philosophers believe, and which do not come into conflict with any religious principle."
- ■ "There are philosophical theories which come into violent conflict with the fundamental principles of religion."

Ghazali advocates for a nuanced approach. He deems the first two categories as non-contentious, emphasizing the need to defend them rather than engage in dispute. Regarding the second category, he emphatically argues that anyone attempting to invalidate a portion of religious doctrine through debate commits a grave offense against religion.[4] However, when addressing disputes related to fundamental religious principles, Ghazali asserts that criticism should be directed solely at the philosophical doctrines that challenge these principles, not at unrelated matters.[5] This stance echoes his assertion in *Maqasid al-Falasifah* (The Aims of the Philosophers) where he clarifies his intention to solely address philosophical issues pertaining to theology and metaphysics.[6] Despite Ghazali's critique of philosophy and philosophers, Iranian philosophers like Mulla Sadra and later figures like Soroush acknowledged his contributions and were influenced by him, indicating their comprehension of his intent behind criticizing philosophers on specific issues.

The ongoing debate between jurists and philosophers, started by Ghazali and continuing to the present day, remains evident among Iranian philosophers, particularly when faced with allegations of heresy and atheism from their jurist adversaries. Upon closer examination of the majority of these disputes, a common thread emerges: either a political backdrop exists, or the influence of political authority is discernible. However, it is inaccurate to attribute the critique of metaphysical philosophy[7] solely to Ghazali. Criticism of metaphysical philosophy has historical roots, with both ancient and contemporary philosophers, including Western thinkers, engaging in various forms of critique, albeit with differing methods and objectives. Nonetheless, the underlying principle of criticism against metaphysical philosophy remains consistent across these diverse contexts.[8]

It would be erroneous to attribute the demise of philosophy solely to Ghazali or any single individual, for philosophy, as a dynamic process of inquiry and reflection, cannot be extinguished or eradicated through mere critique or opposition; to do so would contradict the essence of philosophy itself. Similarly, Ibn Sina (Avicenna), despite his criticisms of certain philosophers whom he labeled as atheists (a criticism that could have ironically applied to him),[9] cannot be considered as having terminated the philosophical enterprise. Instead, such critiques are integral to the ongoing discourse within philosophy. Moreover, while Ghazali is renowned for his confrontations with philosophers, particularly

concerning theological matters, his political philosophy remains a significant but often overlooked aspect of his intellectual legacy. Interestingly, this facet of his work did not garner as much attention as his philosophical disputes, and it did not exert a direct influence on subsequent Sunni and Shiite philosophers.

Shiite philosophers, notably Mulla Sadra, were significantly influenced by Ghazali, evident in Sadra's reverential depiction of him as "the luminous sea, acclaimed by people as the imam and the proof of Islam."[10] This admiration underscores Mulla Sadra's recognition of Ghazali's profound impact on Islamic thought. It appears that Mulla Sadra found in Ghazali's Sufi teachings a congruence with his own mystical inclinations, which he interwove with philosophy and theology, a synthesis reminiscent of Ghazali's multifaceted approach. Although Ghazali embodies the roles of theologian, Sufi and philosopher, a deep sectarian discord persists between him and Mulla Sadra due to the former's affiliation with the Ash'ari school, which criticizes certain philosophical trends. This sectarian divergence engenders complex and ambiguous areas, necessitating thorough examination and reflection.

Each philosopher or philosophical school of thought espouses its own distinct political doctrine, which complements its epistemological framework. Abu Nasr Muhammad al-Farabi, as the pioneering Muslim philosopher in this regard, established a foundation that influenced subsequent thinkers. Notably, his focus was not on governance as a practical art, nor did he engage in contemporary political critique; rather, his concern lay in elucidating humanity's ultimate purpose. Farabi's discourse delved into the conceptualization of ideal cities and the formulation of laws, defining the "virtuous city" as one where collaborative effort leads to the realization of felicity.[11] He advocated for a leader, akin to a household head or guardian, to be well-versed in theoretical sciences, emphasizing his role in guiding individuals toward seeking their best interests, whether voluntarily or not. This resonates notably in later instances, such as Khomeini's appointment of religious figures as guardians over the populace. Ibn Sina, meanwhile, condensed the responsibilities of a leader within Sunni legislative theory, blending Islamic principles with Platonic virtues. For Ibn Sina, the leader must embody fundamental Islamic tenets and possess comprehensive knowledge of Sharia, surpassing even a philosopher himself in this context.[12] The profound philosophical insights of Farabi and Ibn Sina reverberated through subsequent Iranian philosophical developments, notably influencing figures like Tusi and concepts such as *al-hikmat al-muta'āliyah* (the transcendent theosophy) that ensued.

Iranian Heritage: Philosophical and Political Domains

In Persia, the tradition of *'irfān*, denoting gnosis or intuitive mystical understanding, boasts a lengthy lineage deeply intertwined with wisdom. One of the earliest figures in this tradition was Shihab al-Din Umar al-Suhrawardy, whose life met a tragic end in 1191 AD (587 AH). He is credited with the significant contribution

of integrating Sufism into the realm of philosophical discourse.[13] Suhrawardy engaged deeply with Ibn Sina's philosophy, often referred to as "the Peripatetic philosophy," and is believed to have pursued his studies in Isfahan, although the specifics of his intellectual journey prior to settling in Damascus remain elusive. In addition to his exploration of Ibn Sina's thought, he delved into Platonism, skillfully synthesizing elements from both traditions to form what eventually became known as "Illuminationist philosophy," a distinctive school of thought in its own right. Post-classical Islamic philosophy, as posited by John Walbridge, finds its origins in three foundational streams: Aristotelianism championed by Ibn Sina, Platonism advocated by Suhrawardy, and Monism expounded by Ibn Arabi. Iranian philosophers framed this intellectual landscape as a discourse centered on the dispute between proponents of the primacy of essence, epitomized by Suhrawardy, and advocates of the primacy of existence, exemplified by Ibn Arabi. Alongside these debates, remnants of earlier philosophical traditions persist, including influences from the Peripatetic school.[14] By examining key and significant stages, one can swiftly delineate the central developments in Iranian philosophical inquiry during the Safavid period and preceding eras.

Tusi and Political Confusion

Before the Safavid era, Nasir al-Din al-Tusi (d. 1273 AD/672 AH) resided in the Nizariyya Ismaili fortresses in Persia for approximately three decades, sparking debates among researchers regarding his religious affiliation. Some speculate whether he was a Twelver Shiite or an Ismaili. Certain scholars argue that while he may have been a Twelver Shiite, he practiced *taqiyya* (precautionary dissimulation) during his time in Nizari Persia, compiling Ismaili writings to demonstrate allegiance to Ismailism and safeguard his life. Conversely, others contend that although he was initially raised as a Twelver Shiite, his prolonged exposure to Ismaili communities led to his conversion to Ismailism during his significant tenure among the Ismaili fortresses in Persia.[15]

During his stay among the Ismailis in Persia, Tusi authored several major philosophical works, including *Akhlaq-i Nasirii*, *Akhlaq-i Muhtashami*, and *Sharh al-Isharat*, a commentary on Ibn Sina's books. However, following the downfall of the Nizari state due to Mongol invasions, Tusi aligned himself with Hulagu's entourage and embraced Twelver Shiism once again. He then focused his scholarly endeavors on Imami theology, producing significant works such as *Kitab Qawa'id al-'aqa'id* and *Tajrīd al-I'tiqād*. Farhad Daftari suggests that Tusi stands out as one of the rare figures who seamlessly integrated philosophy and theology, perhaps even being among the first Shiite Twelver scholars to achieve such synthesis.[16]

The debate surrounding Tusi's doctrinal allegiance often overlooks the personal and pragmatic dimensions of his actions. It is plausible that he prioritized personal interests and ambitions over doctrinal adherence, or perhaps he strategically maneuvered to carve out spaces for himself to pursue his

projects. In this context, he might have employed *taqiyya*, with various groups. This could explain his apparent alignment with the ideology and doctrine of the Nizaris while residing in their fortresses, fully embracing their beliefs and practices. However, upon the collapse of their state and the conclusion of his association with them, he shifted his allegiance and penned works extolling the doctrine of the Twelvers.

The distinction between Tusi's alignment with Ismaili and Twelver doctrines warrants examination, particularly given the absence of Twelver political power during his time. The Twelvers, characterized as the quietest sect, abstained from political engagement, awaiting the reappearance of the Infallible Imam before actively involving themselves in political affairs. Conversely, the Ismailis held sway over the state, with their ideas permeating society and posing a persistent threat to rival states. Upon the demise of the Ismaili state, Tusi opted to align himself with the quietist Twelver sect, which maintained its stance even in the absence of political authority. By eschewing direct political involvement, even in anticipation of the Infallible Imam's reappearance, Tusi garnered favor with the Mongol rulers, who trusted his loyalty and refrained from monitoring his actions. The transition in Tusi's allegiances — from a purported Twelver Shiite at the outset of his life to a reaffirmed adherence to the Twelver doctrine — raises significant questions, particularly concerning his service to Hulagu and the Mongols. Traditional Shiite jurisprudence typically advocates patience and awaiting the Infallible Imam's reappearance, presenting a dilemma regarding Tusi's cooperation with non-Shiite rulers. However, one could attribute his cooperation to various factors, including Tusi's belief in the permissibility of serving the sultan, his antipathy toward Sunni Abbasids, his desire for prestige and influence, or a combination of these factors.

Mulla Sadra and Shunning Politics

Sadr al-Din al-Shirazi, often referred to as "The Third Teacher," holds a significant place in the Isfahan School of philosophy, following in the footsteps of his mentor Mir Muhammad Baqir al-Istarabadi, also known as Mir Damad; his title "Damad" stems from his father's relation to the influential Sheikh al-Karaki, who served as a prominent figure in Isfahan, assuming the position of Sheikh al-Islam. He enriched the philosophical landscape by building upon the Peripatetic tradition, synthesizing Aristotelian and Neoplatonic philosophies with Islamic doctrines, drawing inspiration from the works of Farabi and Ibn Sina. Additionally, Mir Damad incorporated elements from the Illuminationist legacy of Shihab al-Din al-Suhrawardy and the Sufi mysticism of Ibn Arabi, blending these diverse influences with Twelver Shiism. A distinctive aspect of Mir Damad's philosophy, and that of the Isfahan School, lies in their endeavor to purify the Neoplatonic elements within the Persian philosophical tradition while emphasizing the Neoplatonic aspects in the works of Farabi and Ibn Sina, thereby refining the philosophical heritage inherited from ancient Persia and delineating it from the

Greek Peripatetic tradition. Among Mir Damad's most notable students is Mulla Sadra,[17] renowned as the most eminent Iranian philosopher and the progenitor of the School of Transcendent Theosophy.

Sadr al-Din al-Shirazi, also known as Akhund (d. 1640 AD/1050 AH), came of age during the reign of Shah Abbas the Great (d. 1629 AD/1038 AH), a period marked by the Safavid ruler's efforts to forge alliances with European Catholics and the West. Shah Abbas's court became a hub for European merchants and diplomats, with the monarch pursuing policies aimed at fostering material prosperity, opulence, and urban development. However, it is reported that Mullah Sadra, as Shirazi was sometimes called, voiced skepticism regarding Shah Abbas's close ties to European Catholics. Consequently, he retreated from Isfahan to a secluded town, dedicating himself to worship and introspection. Hence, Sadr al-Din al-Shirazi vehemently criticized in his writings the practice of scholars who incessantly sought favor at the gates of rulers, enduring humiliation and disgraceful treatment in pursuit of ill-gotten gains funded by illicit money.[18] This stance signifies his opposition to the authoritarian rule of Shah Abbas, renowned for his strict and often ruthless governance. Sadr al-Din al-Shirazi received his education under the tutelage of Mir Damad, whom he regarded as his most influential teacher, and also studied under the guidance of the esteemed Baha'i Sheikh, Baha al-Din al-Amili (d. 1621 AD/1030 AH), a key figure in the Isfahan School. His scholarly lineage includes notable figures such as Abd al-Razzaq Lahiji (1661 AD/1072 AH) and Mohsen Fayz Kashani (d. 1680 AD/1091 AH), from whom he gained valuable insights and knowledge.

In his philosophical endeavors, Mulla Sadra undertook a synthesis of various philosophical, mystical, and theological traditions. He amalgamated the theological, Peripatetic, Illuminationist and mystical schools of thought, notably incorporating elements from the Sufism of Ibn Arabi, into an esoteric Shiite framework which he termed Transcendent Theosophy. His objective was to harmonize reason, revelation and *kashf* (inner inspiration) within a unified philosophical framework.

Some scholars posit that the Isfahan School, within which Mulla Sadra operated, may have been influenced by the philosophical discourse propagated by Ismaili preachers during the era of the Fatimid state.[19] These influences likely permeated Iran and contributed to the intellectual milieu in which Mulla Sadra and his contemporaries mingled.

Shirazi's approach reflects a preference for keeping a distance from authority, opting not to directly challenge it in a manner that would endanger his safety or academic pursuits. Instead, he chose a path of isolation and critique, particularly targeting scholars closely aligned with the ruling authority. This approach, however, may have contributed to the persecution faced by philosophers associated with the Isfahan School later on. In the late 17th century AD, the Isfahan School of philosophy and Sufism encountered persecution, orchestrated by Twelver Shiite jurists who formed an alliance with the Safavid court against

philosophers and rationalists. Despite the adversity faced by the school, it persevered, thanks to the efforts of eminent philosophers who emerged to revive its teachings. Foremost among these figures was Mulla Hadi al-Sabzwari (d. 1873 AD), known as "Al-Hajj" and "Asrar." Sabzwari maintained amicable relations with jurists and traditionalists, such as Sahib al-Jawahir (Muhammad Hasan al-Najafi) and Murtada al-Ansari, demonstrating an ability to navigate the complexities of his time while upholding the philosophical tradition of the Isfahan School.[20]

The prevailing philosophical school during the Safavid era was characterized by Transcendent Theosophy, prominently championed by Sadr al-Din al-Shirazi. Despite keeping a distance from governmental affairs during his time, this philosophical tradition remained influential even decades after the downfall of the Safavid state, exerting its impact from within the corridors of power. Regarding the theory of the imamate according to Mulla Sadra, it closely aligns with the traditional Shiite doctrine. He firmly upholds the concept of divine investiture and the infallible status of the imams, a position that distinguishes him from ancient philosophers such as Farabi and Ibn Sina.

Tabatabai and the Legacy of Mulla Sadra: Shura and 'Irfān

The study of Iranian philosophy experienced a period of decline until the emergence of Muhammad Hussein Tabatabai (d. 1981 AD/1402 AH), renowned for his monumental work Tafsir al-Mizan. Tabatabai's revival of philosophical inquiry reinstated its centrality, particularly within a traditionalist hawza that emphasized the study of jurisprudence and elevated the status of jurists. Throughout Shiite history, jurists have often monopolized the position of supreme marja, regardless of the stature of philosophers or theologians. This dominance of jurisprudence has had a significant impact on other disciplines within the intellectual landscape.

Tabatabai and the Revival of the Philosophical Lesson

Allama Tabatabai is credited as the pioneer in reviving philosophical discourse in contemporary Iran. However, when Tabatabai sought to elucidate philosophical concepts, particularly those found in the works of Mulla Sadra such as *Hikmat al-muta'aliya fi-l-asfar al-'aqliyya al-arba'a* (The Transcendent Philosophy of the Four Journeys of the Intellect), during his hawza lessons, he encountered significant resistance from within the hawza itself. This opposition, notably from Ayatollah Boroujerdi, the preeminent Shiite authority of the time, stemmed from the traditionalist and conservative orientation of the official hawza, which harbored skepticism and hostility toward philosophical inquiry.

This stance persists in contemporary times, particularly within the Najaf hawza and certain factions within the Qom seminary. In Qom, various groups such as the Shirazi faction, the Hojjatieh, the deconstructionist movement, and proponents of the Akbari school, alongside some Usulis, exhibit disdain for philosophical studies and express antagonism toward them, despite their

nuanced differences. The seminary environment, thus, proved inhospitable to the integration of philosophical study due to several factors, most prominently the predominance of jurisprudence as a discipline necessary for *ijtihad* and jurisprudential mastery and leadership. After mastering *ijtihad,* the *mujtahid* will gain a significant scholarly position. This is in addition to financial benefits derived from *khoms* taxes and the endorsement of *marja-e taqlid* (general emulators), among other considerations.

The predominance of jurisprudence not only hindered the advancement of philosophical studies but also impeded the progress of other disciplines, including Quranic studies. Despite the rich tradition of Quranic studies among Sunnis, contemporary efforts to systematize this field have been relatively recent. One notable example is the comprehensive encyclopedia on Quranic sciences compiled by the scholar Mohammad-Hadi Ma'refat, representing a significant milestone in the development of Quranic studies. This emphasis on jurisprudence also impacted the scholarly pursuits of prominent figures within the Shiite tradition. For instance, Ayatollah al-Khoei did not complete his Quranic exegesis, prioritizing the composition of practical treatises and works on jurisprudence instead. This preference reflects the overarching centrality of jurists within the Shiite world, whether in Iran — often characterized by "jurisprudential Islam" — or in Najaf, renowned as the bastion of Shiite traditionalism. Mortada Motahhari lamented the diminishing emphasis on the Quran within the hawza, critiquing the departure from Quranic studies in favor of jurisprudence. "We've forsaken the Qur'an, and it's crucial for the new generation to embrace it. Let me demonstrate how neglected the Qur'an is among us. If someone truly understands it, delving deep into its meaning and interpretation, how many of us would truly value and respect them?"[21] Hence, Tabatabai did not ascend to the position of marja due to his focus on philosophy and exegesis rather than jurisprudence, a prerequisite for holding such a title. This limitation of the marja position to jurisprudence prompted Shiite scholars to explore ways to expand its scope, suggesting additional criteria beyond traditional scholarly jurisprudential knowledge, such as comprehension of reality, proficiency in exegesis, and philosophical acumen. Tabatabai himself seemed aware of this predicament and lamented his marginalized status within the Shiite community. He reminded them of the earlier definition of a jurist in Islam, emphasizing mastery of all religious sciences, including u ūl (principles), *furu''* (branches), and morality, rather than solely jurisprudence.[22] Despite his challenges, Tabatabai played a pivotal role in reintroducing philosophical discourse to Qom, establishing it as a bastion for mystical philosophical thought. He formed a philosophical circle akin to the Vienna Group or the Frankfurt School, comprising his prominent students such as Morteza Motahhari, Hossein Montazeri, Beheshti, Musa al-Sadr, Ebrahim Amini, Ja'far Sobhani, Mehdi Haeri, and Javad Amoli. In Tehran, weekly gatherings convened with Henry Corbin in attendance, alongside Tabatabai, where Shariati vividly depicted

Tabatabai's presence as reminiscent of Socrates surrounded by his students.[23] Tabatabai and his school primarily focused on teaching and revitalizing the school of Transcendent Theosophy rather than introducing novel philosophical concepts. However, philosophical developments and debates ensued among his students, particularly following the emergence of philosophical groups and political movements grounded in ideologies distinct from Transcendent Theosophy, such as the prevalent deconstructionist movement in present-day Iran. If Tabatabai asserted that Mulla Sadra revived philosophy after its decline, a similar assertion holds true for Tabatabai himself, who revived the Mulla Sadra school following its decline. When Tabatabai sought to teach Sadr al-Shirazi's *The Transcendent Philosophy of the Four Journeys of the Intellect* in Qom, Ayatollah Boroujerdi objected and advised him against it. Boroujerdi suggested Tabatabai either retract this decision or conduct the teachings discreetly if he insisted. He explicitly stated, "The public study of the Asfar in the official hawza is not valid in any way and must be abandoned."[24]

The Theory of Governance and State Structure

Tabatabai is renowned for his stance on Shura (collective consultation). He asserted that during the era of Occultation (Ghayba), the ruler's governance must be "based on Shura."[25] This aligns him with the Constitutional jurists, though he distanced himself from active politics, similar to the founder of his school, Mulla Sadra, and focused on rejecting the concept of absolute guardianship of the jurist (Wilayat al-Faqih) in favor of Shura. However, some of his students, such as Javad Amoli and Mesbah Yazdi, later became leading proponents of Wilayat al-Faqih in Iran, implementing Khomeini's vision of absolute juristic guardianship since 1988. When Tabatabai elaborated on the structure of the state in Islam, he differentiated it from modern democratic systems. He argued that Islam sets itself apart from democracy by distinguishing between two types of rulings or laws: fixed and changing. In democratic societies, there are similarly fixed elements, such as constitutions that are not easily altered, and variable laws that can be amended through legislative bodies like the National Assembly and the Senate, provided these laws align with constitutional principles. The fundamental difference between Islamic governance and democratic systems lies in the source of unchanging principles. In Islam, these principles are divine, as sovereignty belongs exclusively to God (rule belongs only to God), unlike democratic principles which are human made. Changing laws in modern democratic systems is subject to the majority's opinion (half plus one). In contrast, in Islam, changing rulings is based on Shura and real rights and interests, not merely the majority's opinion.[26]

Tabatabai contends that the well-established, unchanging principles of Islam and what is known by *darurah* (necessity) in religion, leave no room for democracy or Shura. However, he acknowledges that the changing principles and assumptions are areas where Shura and democracy could be applied. Despite this concession, he diverges significantly from Western democratic

principles, particularly in his rejection of the majority rule (half plus one). Tabatabai does not see the Islamic approach to governance as compatible with democracy, especially concerning the principle of majority rule. He remains silent, however, on the matter of the elite group within the Shura who have the authority to override the majority opinion and make final decisions based on their judgment.

In another context, Tabatabai emphasizes that *wilayah* (guardianship) should pertain specifically to the *faqih* (jurist) rather than to other individuals of probity, or the broader Muslim community. He then addresses the issue of guardianship when there are multiple jurists, posing the question of whether each jurist's actions should be effective according to his ability, or if guardianship should be assigned to the most knowledgeable among them. However, he refrains from providing a definitive answer, stating that the resolution of this issue is tied to jurisprudential knowledge. This implies that the matter is grounded in *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) and subject to discussion and debate. Tabatabai outlines a general criterion for the individual who should hold guardianship, stating that this person must be "the most pious among others, in addition to being superior in competence, good management, and awareness and knowledge of the circumstances of his age."[27] Tabatabai raises another issue regarding the form of government in the context of the contemporary Islamic world, characterized by numerous societies spread over a vast geographical area with diverse languages and ethnicities. He questions whether each society should operate within its own jurisdiction and government, or if there should be local national governments united under a single central government. Tabatabai responds by stating that this is a conjectural issue not definitively addressed by Islam. He explains that Islam, as a "fixed law," does not mandate a specific framework of governance as obligatory. Instead, the law consists of fixed religious principles, while the framework and form of governance are considered variable issues. These aspects are subject to change in future societies in accordance with their civilizational evolution.[28]

What is peculiar about Tabatabai's approach is that he does not establish a framework for external oversight and political accountability of the government. Instead, he relies solely on internal checks, such as the piety and justice of the rulers, and adherence to the life and Sunnah of the Prophet. He supports this with Quranic verses, such as "There has certainly been for you in the Messenger of Allah an excellent pattern for anyone whose hope is in Allah and the Last Day and [who] remembers Allah often."[29] Regarding his stance on Shura, Tabatabai states that any rulings related to the central state and government must be made through Shura, provided that the interests of Islam and Muslims are upheld. However, he does not make Shura binding on the government and jurist, nor does he elaborate on its methods, resources, or the nature of the elite that should be consulted. He also omits the existence of Shura bodies such as the Parliament or elected constitutional institutions. This omission leaves significant

room for manipulating the political process and deviates from traditional concepts of Islamic Shura. By relying solely on internal (personal) checks and not establishing constitutional oversight and advisory bodies, Tabatabai's framework lacks mechanisms for external accountability and counsel.

In the Revolutionary Era: The Absolute Guardianship of the Jurist

Throughout Shiite history, Iranian philosophers largely distanced themselves from politics, engaging only during a few critical periods. For instance, Sadr al-Din al-Shirazi (Mulla Sadra) maintained a separation from political affairs and the ruling court because he adhered to the Shiite tradition of awaiting the reappearance of the Mahdi (quietism) and perceived the Safavid rulers as unjust, thus unable to lend them further legitimacy. Similarly, Sabzwari, also refrained from political involvement. In the modern era, Tabatabai continued this tradition by keeping away from politics, focusing entirely on his philosophical endeavors without delving deeply into political philosophy. This detachment persisted until the significant shift brought by Khomeini, who profoundly incorporated mystical philosophy into his political theorizing. Khomeini justified his political vision and the theory of Wilayat al-Faqih through philosophy and theology, transforming it from a marginal theory within the doctrine to a central tenet. However, despite his philosophical justifications, Khomeini cannot be classified as a philosopher in the same vein as Tabatabai, nor does he compare to the classical sages such as Mir Damad and Mulla Sadra.

Khomeini's Philosophy Between 'Irfān, and Transcendent Theosophy

Khomeini did not favor the Peripatetic school of philosophy; instead, he leaned more toward the Illuminationist school. Mahdi al-Haeri remarks on Khomeini's philosophical preferences: "He did not give much importance to Peripatetic philosophy, but he loved the Illuminationist theosophy of Suhrawardy. He interpreted the Transcendent Theosophy with a mystical taste. The Imam was interested in ancient naturalism and science, modern astronomy, and considered ancient astronomy to be falsehood."[30] Although Khomeini did not admire the Peripatetic strand of philosophy, he held great reverence for Ibn Sina. Ashtiani quotes him as saying, "There are many problems with Sheikh [Ibn Sina] regarding divine theosophy, and yet among the masters of research and vindication, there is no one equal to him."[31] Khomeini denied that the school of Transcendent Theosophy originated from Greek philosophy, describing such belief as pure ignorance. However, he simultaneously acknowledged the significance of Greek philosophy, considering it "of great importance per se."[32] Khomeini's view appears to categorize the Peripatetic school as fundamentally Greek in origin and thought. This perspective has become well-known and is often reiterated among contemporary philosophers. For instance, Taha Abd al-Rahman posits that Islamic philosophy's problems originated from Greek sources, claiming that these issues "were transferred from the Greek language in a mistranslation."[33]

However, a contemporary of Khomeini from Al-Azhar, Sheikh Abdel-Halim Mahmoud (1910-1978), vehemently denies and criticizes Khomeini's assertion, arguing that "philosophical problems were raised in the Islamic environment before the era of translation."[34] This critique highlights the historical depth of Islamic philosophical inquiry independent of Greek influence. Khomeini's denial of the Greek origins of Transcendent Theosophy, as opposed to the Greek influence on the Peripatetic strand, can be interpreted from another perspective. He might have aimed to establish the authenticity of Shiite philosophical discourse, distinguishing it from other traditions like Peripatetic, Ismaili and Sunni philosophies, which he believed were influenced by or derived from Greek ideas. Regardless of the acceptance of its Greek roots, it is clear that philosophical discussions took place within an Islamic context among Muslim philosophers.

Khomeini and his school transitioned from the conciliatory and coexistent mystical gnosis of Hafez al-Shirazi to a distinct model of *irfān*, which can be termed the Qizilbashi gnosis. This model recalls the Qizilbashi during the Safavid era, characterized by a revolutionary *irfān*, that Khomeini embraced. It has been suggested that this form of *irfān*,, rather than his textual theories, was the primary driving force behind the revolution. Farhad Daftari discusses this complex and difficult-to-understand synthesis in the context of the Safavid period. He explores how Ibn Arabi's Sufi thought, which sometimes conflicted with philosophical and theological ideas, was merged with the doctrines of Aristotelians like Ibn Sina, and Illuminists like Shihab al-Din al-Suhrawardy. Figures like Mir Damad and Mulla Sadra attempted to reconcile these contradictions and develop a coherent philosophical framework. Although their efforts were successful to some extent, they faced significant opposition from jurists. Khomeini inherited this intricate combination characteristic of the school of Transcendent Theosophy. Notably, even though Khomeini engaged deeply with philosophy, he also remained a traditionalist jurist, firmly rooted in the Shiite jurisprudential tradition, unlike many other philosophers who often rebelled against traditional jurisprudence. This resulted in another synthesis: the integration of jurisprudence, philosophy, and mysticism — elements that are typically seen as contradictory and challenging to reconcile.

Some researchers have attempted to amplify Khomeini's philosophical contributions, with Hamid Parsia asserting that Khomeini was "the first pioneer on the path to reviving the rational disciplines, or what is called the school of Transcendent Theosophy, which is a mixture of philosophy and mysticism." Parsia claims that Khomeini, recognizing the hawza's dire need for these disciplines despite society's longstanding reluctance and neglect, taught philosophical and mystical subjects in the Qom seminary. He was subsequently followed by Tabatabai, who continued the movement initiated by Khomeini.[35] We will not engage in a debate with Parsia about the relative statuses of Khomeini and Tabatabai during that period, or which of them had the more established philosophy, as such questions tend to be fraught with ideological

polemics. However, it is clear that all contemporary philosophical efforts in Iran, including related works, students and circles, were primarily under the supervision of Tabatabai, not Khomeini. Even when Khomeini returned to Qom after the revolution, he did not focus on authoring philosophical works to the extent that Tabatabai did. Indeed, Tabatabai is renowned for founding the Qom Philosophical Circle. While cities like Isfahan and Khorasan had historical reputations for philosophical studies, Qom only gained such a reputation through the efforts of Tabatabai.[36]

In conclusion, it cannot be asserted that Khomeini established a philosophical movement distinct from that of Tabatabai. Both figures are undeniably part of the same intellectual tradition, specifically the school of Transcendent Theosophy. This mystical school reinterpreted and reshaped Shiite knowledge in a complex manner that is challenging to comprehend. The difficulty arises because, while the school is traditionalist in its jurisprudential aspect and adheres to traditional rules in hawza (seminary) studies, it simultaneously embodies a fundamentally mystical character. This leads to the intriguing question of how the historical and heritage-based tensions between jurists and Sufis were resolved. How did jurists transition into mystics? Historically, the relationship between jurists and Sufis was often fraught with tension and scholarly disputes.[37] Khomeini was an adherent of Ibn Arabi, which facilitated a synthesis of mystical, philosophical, and jurisprudential elements. This synthesis allowed for significant flexibility in interpreting certain aspects of the jurisprudential tradition, albeit within specific constraints. Such flexibility was confined to the domain of the guardian jurist. Unlike the ordinary jurist, who does not have the authority to rationalize Islam or expand on unrestricted and hypothetical interests, these tasks are the exclusive purview of the guardian jurist. Consequently, the arguments for absolute guardianship are predominantly philosophical and rational.

Wilayat al-Faqih and Political Philosophy

If Tabatabai engaged in philosophical theorization to substantiate *the Wilayat al-Faqih* (the guardian jurist) during the occultation, with the condition of Shura (consultation), Khomeini viewed the guardianship of the jurist as self-evident, requiring no proof for anyone familiar with Islamic rulings and beliefs, and did not include the condition of Shura. Khomeini argued for the necessity of establishing a government even during the Occultation, stating, "It has been proven by the necessity of Sharia and reason that what was necessary in the days of the Messenger (PBUH) and in the era of Imam Ali (PBUH) of the existence of a government, is still necessary to this day."[38] He rejected the notion of majority rule, asserting that the Islamic government adheres to the Quran and Sunna (Prophetic traditions), rather than to the opinion of the majority.[39] Khomeini stipulated two conditions for the ruler in addition to the general requirements of reason, maturity, and good administration: probity and knowledge of Islamic law. Therefore, if the jurists are the most knowledgeable about Islamic law, then the

real rulers are the jurists, with the sultans merely acting as their subordinates.[40]

During the time of Occultation, guardianship belongs exclusively to the jurist, and the government should be his alone. The desired guardianship encompasses the governance of the people, state administration, implementation of Sharia stipulations, and national policy. Khomeini likened the jurist's guardianship over the people to a guardian's role over children and girls, asserting it as a comprehensive and unlimited guardianship.[41] Khomeini also did not neglect to establish his mystical philosophy, elevating the imams above angels, prophets, and messengers: "One of the pillars of our doctrine is that our Imams have a position that neither a close angel nor a sent prophet can reach." He even asserted that the Messenger and the Infallible Imam existed as lights before this world, gazing upon God's Throne.[42]

Morteza Motahhari and the Philosophy of Doubt

Morteza Motahhari (d. 1979 AD/1399 AH) is recognized as one of the prominent students of both Tabatabai and Khomeini. Motahhari straddled both the seminary and the university, making him one of the most significant Shiite philosophers and seminary figures of the 20th century, and indeed, one of the most important in Shiite history. He endeavored to establish the philosophy of "doubt" within the religious seminary, a context that traditionally treats religious texts and doctrinal manifestations as sacred and infallible, and thus beyond criticism or attack. According to Motahhari, doubt and skepticism serve to illuminate the truth more effectively. He viewed doubt as the precursor to certainty and skepticism as the ladder of search and exploration in the pursuit of truth. In grounding the issue of doubt, he frequently cited Ghazali's *Mizan al-Amal*: "And even if the only outcome of these words is to instill doubt in your inherited beliefs, this would still be valuable. Such doubt compels you to seek further, as it is through doubt that one is led to the truth."[43]

There is an underlying nuance in this reasoning, as despite Motahhari's critique of Ash'arism, he shares a commonality with Ghazali and the Ash'ari imams: mysticism and Sufism. Ghazali, like Motahhari, is not among the Akbaris but is considered a significant traditionalist and one of their theorists, whereas Motahhari harbors a negative view of Shiite Akbaris.[44] However, the differences between them are substantial. Motahhari held a critical stance toward the Ash'aris and Mu'tazilites, in addition to the confessional differences between the two scholars. Thus, Motahhari's reference to Ghazali's theory of doubt was likely an attempt to root his own theory in an Islamic context, avoiding the impression of being influenced by Cartesian doubt. Motahhari, in many instances, seeks to advance the philosophy of doubt but clarifies that he is not troubled by "raising doubts and casting uncertainties regarding Islamic issues." For him, doubt is not merely a path to truth but a means to affirm the truth: "The value of truth lies in the fact that doubt and skepticism illuminate

it further, as doubt is the precursor to certainty, and skepticism is the stepping stone of search and exploration."[(45)]

After Motahhari discussed philosophy and the role of doubt, emphasizing that doubt is a right for those inquiring and speculating until they reach certainty, he remained firmly aligned with the established Twelver Shiite doctrine in all its aspects. He was highly critical of Ali Shariati, warning Khomeini about him before the revolution, and labeling Shariati as a deviant from Shiite doctrine and tradition. Motahhari opposed any concept of Islamic unity that compromised any part of Twelver Shiite doctrine. In both politics and religion, he rejected the idea of majority opinion as a criterion for truth. He pointed out that many jurists refrained from expressing their views due to fear of public and popular backlash. This led him to the same conclusion as his mentor Tabatabai: the opinion of the majority is marginal and cannot be considered decisive in political matters. Consequently, Motahhari also endorsed the concept of guardianship of the jurist. Although he did not advocate for the absolute guardianship that was implemented after his death, his philosophy of doubt did not detach him from the Shiite tradition or compel him to reassess traditional philosophical ideas, particularly those concerning the issues of imamate and governance.

The Counter Philosophical Theorization: The Alternative Model and Political Reform

Contemporary Iranian philosophical discourse is not confined to the school of Transcendent Theosophy. It encompasses various other schools, including those aligned with liberal and reformist thought, such as the views of Abdul Karim Soroush, which resonate with contemporary Western philosophical lessons. These reformist philosophers remain active in Iranian universities and seminaries, preferring to focus on philosophical discourse and pursue reform through philosophical methods, while largely avoiding political entanglements. A significant factor behind the strength of this modernist movement is its roots in tradition and the seminary. Many of its leading figures were pioneers of traditional movements and were actively involved in the revolution from its inception. They possess a deep understanding and practice of Islamic heritage. This intrinsic connection to tradition has caused concern among the ruling religious elite, leading to attempts to control and restrict the movement. This, in turn, has prompted the movement to advocate for the separation of political authority from cultural and intellectual affairs. Soroush criticizes the government's guardianship over cultural affairs, arguing that such control leads to the justification of violence and the use of oppressive measures. He contends that the government's role should not include the creation and management of social culture, as this not only results in the erosion of democracy by the ruling power but also leads to the stifling and possible obliteration of cultural development.[(46)] Soroush's critique is aimed at the theories proposed by regime philosophers like Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi, who argue that force is necessary to preserve the Islamic government,

even against the will of the majority. Yazdi maintained that the preservation of the government does not depend on the majority's support. Instead, the crucial factor is the backing of a committed group of followers of the Infallible Imam or supporters of the legitimate guardianship of the jurist. He posited that even if only 10% of the population supports the government, it must be preserved by any means necessary.[47] This view justifies the use of violence, including extrajudicial killings, to protect the state's Islamic values.[48] The modernist philosophical movement in Iran, while rooted in tradition, faces significant opposition from the ruling religious elite. Figures like Soroush challenge the government's cultural guardianship, advocating for a separation of powers to prevent the erosion of democracy and the abuse of authority. The contrasting views on the use of force highlight a fundamental tension between the preservation of traditional religious authority and the pursuit of intellectual and cultural autonomy.[49]

However, other philosophical schools in Iran have continued to theorize alternative forms of governance, ranging from democratic government to Islamic Shura, and sometimes advocating for the activation and amendment of the existing Constitution to refine the regime's behavior and discipline the ruling elite. Thus, philosophy in contemporary Iran remains deeply intertwined with the general political situation. The philosophical perspectives promoted by the ruling elites in Tehran have contributed to the richness of philosophical discourse. This ongoing dialectic between tradition and reform, between the seminaries and the modernists, and between the conservatives and the moderates, has positively impacted the philosophical landscape by fostering breadth and diversification, leading to the emergence of new topics and approaches. Two philosophers exemplify this dynamic and represent significant movements within Iranian philosophical thought. The first is Ali Shariati, who opposed enlightenment and modernity, clashing with both the West and the religious establishment and clerics at home. He criticized the religious establishment in his lectures and writings, advocating for a constitutional state based on Assyrian principles and rejecting the dominance of jurists over public affairs. The second is Abdul Karim Soroush, a prominent modernist philosopher who leads a broad liberal movement that sees democracy as the solution to Iran's challenges and views modernity and following the Western model as a way out of the impasse that began with the Iranian revolution of 1979.

Shariati and the State's Structure

Shariati's philosophy is significant because it diverged from traditional Shiite thought, emphasizing democracy and Shura while rejecting the authority and guardianship of the jurists. Although Shariati was a revolutionary, his political thinking was more advanced and distinct from his contemporaries. Unlike others, he did not emerge from the seminary's embrace, nor did he seek its approval, which led to clashes with the Shiite tradition and eventually to the boycott of his hossainiya. He faced criticism from several clerics, notably Morteza

Motahhari, who, after Khomeini's death, attempted to prevent the publication and dissemination of Shariati's works, even labeling him a "cursed person" in a speech. The core disagreement between Shariati and Khomeini and his followers centered on the issue of governance and the form of the state. Shariati advocated that governance in Islam should be based on Shura. His opponents, including Makarem al-Shirazi, argued that Shura is not a principle within the Shiite doctrine, accusing Shariati of denying the "Prophet's descendants' right to succeed him in leading the Muslim community," a principle that asserts the guardianship of Ali and his descendants. Makarem argued that Shura is a Shiite principle; Ali was denied his rightful caliphate through Shura.[50] One of the most serious accusations against Shariati was that he was a covert Sunni because he interpreted the initial disputes among the companions of Prophet Muhammad differently from the mainstream Shiite perspective. Shariati believed that had Ali assumed the caliphate after the Prophet's death, he would have established a democratic system based on allegiance and Shura.[51] Contrary to claims that he was influenced by the West, Shariati critiqued those modernists and enlighteners who sought to imitate the West in all aspects. His advocacy for democracy and Shura was an attempt at internal reform rather than a reflection of Western influence.

However, the clerics' disagreement with Shariati stemmed from his critical stance toward the religious institution and his attempts to reform it. Consequently, jurists labeled him a renegade, a Sunni, a modernist, or a "cursed person," as Motahhari described him. Shariati did not outright reject the Shiite concept of Imamate but reinterpreted it as a "transitional stage" following the death of Prophet Muhammad. He suggested that the Imamate was necessary until the people matured and the desired society emerged — one that did not require the continuous guidance of a 13th or 14th Imam. He believed that society, based on democratic allegiance and Shura, as advocated by Sunnis and rooted in authentic Islamic principles, would eventually progress and develop. This maturation, according to Shariati, would not occur immediately after the Prophet but would follow the period of the Imamate, representing a time of independence and political maturity for the Islamic community. Shariati's advocacy for Shura and democracy starkly contrasted with the traditional hawza perspective, which was more conservative and less open to such progressive ideas. Additionally, his views clashed with those of Khomeini and his followers, who upheld the doctrine of the guardianship of the jurist (Wilayat al-Faqih) rather than endorsing Shura and democracy.

Soroush and Political Philosophy

Abdul Karim Soroush does not focus extensively on political theorization. Instead, he engages in theological and philosophical debates with the hawza and religious establishment, seemingly aiming to induce political change indirectly.[52] The foundation supporting the concept of Wilayat al-Faqih is deeply rooted in philosophical, mystical, and theological principles. Soroush appears to believe

that challenging and undermining these foundations would suffice to instigate gradual political or behavioral change. He explicitly stated this, noting that Khomeini's mystical philosophical views shaped his political theory: "The late Imam's mystical views on guardianship fundamentally shaped both the overall framework and specific content of his concept of the guardianship of the jurist."[53]

However, Soroush also engages with political philosophy to some extent, considering the political realities and constraints in Iran. He argues that the nature of a government reflects the nature of its people and society. A religious government corresponds to a religious society, while an authoritarian government corresponds to an ignorant, unjust, backward, non-industrial, and closed population.[54] Regarding the Assembly of Experts, Soroush contends that if the assembly wishes to remove the leader due to immorality or unfitness, it cannot succeed if the assembly's legitimacy derives from the leader himself. Conversely, if the assembly's right to exist comes from the general public, it can remove the leader when his unfitness becomes evident. This highlights the crisis of the lack of oversight institutions and external checks on the Islamic government.

He highlights an important issue: the theoretical poverty faced by the "Islamic Revolution." There is no new thesis from the hawza regarding this revolution beyond the theory of the guardianship of the jurist. Moreover, this theory has become intertwined with power and so that it is beyond criticism, leading to a lack of scrutiny from both intellectuals and clerics.[55] Soroush criticizes the religious government for its stance on human rights, arguing that it neglects religious considerations and treats individuals as if they are part of a non-religious society.[56]

Iranian philosophers outside the hawza and the framework of the "Islamic government" do not share the same philosophical foundation as the regime's philosophers and theorists. Their engagement with modern philosophy and its trends is more profound than their engagement with classical philosophical teachings and the school of Transcendent Theosophy. This divergence influences their political philosophical approach. While classical philosophers focus on the centrality of the Imamate and seek to employ this in political strategies, those outside the hawza emphasize Shura and democracy, whether they align with liberal or leftist schools.

Conclusion

Before the Iranian revolution, the philosophical discourse in Iran was integral to the seminary curriculum, particularly through the efforts of Tabatabai. This discourse was primarily contemplative and theoretical, focusing on metaphysical issues, ontology, gnosis, and speculative theology (kalam). It engaged in intellectual debates with Greek philosophers and other opponents of Transcendent Theosophy, without being overtly politicized or employed for political ends. However, the "Islamic Revolution" transformed the entire hawza,

including its scholarly materials and methods of thought, and subsequently influenced philosophical discourse as well. Philosophy became entangled in political tensions and emerging political theories. The concept of the absolute guardianship of the jurist (Wilayat al-Faqih) began to be supported by theoretical, philosophical, mystical, speculative (*kalam*), and jurisprudential foundations. This was unprecedented, as no previous philosopher, from Nasir al-Din al-Tusi to the proponents of Transcendent Theosophy, had proposed such a framework. Conversely, a counter-philosophy emerged from former seminarians who rebelled against "tradition," "stagnation," "loss of independence," and being above criticism. They first clashed with the seminary as an institution that had become part of the political system's agenda and a representative of *taqlid* (emulation). They also opposed the theory of the guardianship of the jurist, especially in its absolute form. These critics observed a philosophical and theoretical stagnation in Iran following the revolution, attributing it to the dominance of the guardianship of the jurist theory in the political sphere and its constitutional legitimization, which rendered opposition to it anti-constitutional. Their theories offer alternative approaches and raise challenging philosophical questions in an environment marked by stagnation, *taqlid* and coercion.

Endnotes

(1) The deconstructionism referred to here is the Iranian school of deconstructionism, founded by the thinker Sheikh Reza Hakimi, who is the most prominent student of Shariati. This intellectual movement emerged in Mashhad and developed as a reaction against the gnostic current, which integrates philosophy, logic, theology and mysticism in the interpretation of revealed texts. In contrast, the deconstructionist current seeks to dismantle the sciences, separate them from one another, and eliminate any extraneous material and impurities.

(2) The School of Transcendent Theosophy refers to the philosophical school founded by Mulla Sadra.

(3) Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, *Tahafut al-Falasifa* [The Incoherence of the Philosophers] Trans. Sabih Ahmad Kamali (Lahore: Pakistan Philosophical Congress, 1963). https://www.ghazali.org/incoherence-of-the-philosophers-s-kamali/.

(4) Ibid.

(5) Ibid.

(6) See Ghazali, *Maqasid al-Falasifa* (Saudi Arabia–Jeddah: Dar Al-Minhaj, 2023), 17. [Arabic].

(7) Metaphysics pertains to matters related to the unseen and beyond the natural world.

(8) See: Dr. Tawfiq al-Tawil, *Foundations of Philosophy* (Cairo: Dar Al-Nahda Al-Arabiya 1964), 260. [Arabic].

(9) Ibn Sina, *Al-Isharat wa al-Tanbihat*, with an explanation by Nasir al-Din al-Tusi, ed. Suleiman Dunya (Cairo: Dar al-Maaref, 2018), 2/15.[Arabic].

(10) The status of Abu Hamid al-Ghazali as viewed by Mulla Sadra, Kamal al-Haidari, episode published on YouTube on: November 2, 2022 https://bit.ly/3TiDy5T. [Arabic].

(11) Irvin Rosenthal, *Islamic Political Thought in the Middle Ages* (Beirut: Nama Center for Research and Studies, 2020), 289. [Arabic].

(12) Ibid., 335.

(13) John Walbridge, *In God and Logic in Islam* (Beirut: Nama Center for Research and Studies, 2018), 143, notes that he was known as Suhrawardi the Murdered to distinguish him from other Sufis, such as Shihab al-Din Omar al-Suhrawardi (d. 632 AH/1234 AD) and Abu al-Najib al-Suhrawardi (d. 563 AH/1167 AD). For further reference, see Duncan Black MacDonald, *The Development of the State, Jurisprudence, and Speculative Theology in Islam* (Beirut: Nama Center for Research and Studies, 2018), 235. [Arabic].

(14) Ibid., 150.

(15) Farhad Daftary, *History of Shiite Islam* (Beirut: Dar al-Saqi 2017), 105.

(16) Ibid. See: Zabineh Schmitke ed., *The Handbook of Islamic Theology*, trans. Osama Shafi'i, presented by Hassan Al-Shafi'i (Beirut: Nama Center for Research and Studies, 2018), 2/760-761. [Arabic].

(17) Daftary, *History of Shiite Islam*, 115.

(18) Qusi, *The Illuminationist Philosophy of Sadr al-Din al-Shirazi* (Cairo-Abu Dhabi: Muslim Council of Elders, 2020,) 34-35. [Arabic].

(19) See: Farhad Daftary, *The History of Shiite Islam*, 116, and Fazl al-Rahman, Islam, trans. Hassoun al-Saray, presented by Abd al-Jabbar al-Rifai (Beirut: Arab Network, 2017), 208. [Arabic].

(20) Toshihiko Izutsu, *The Origins of the Sabzwari Philosophy*, trans. Bilal Laziq (Beirut: Hadara Center for the Development of Islamic Thought, 2019), 44, 45. [Arabic].

(21) See: *Criticism of Religious Thought According to Motahhari*, presented by Muhammad Amara (Virginia: The International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2011). [Arabic].

(22) See: Muhammad Hussein Al-Tabatabai, *Foundational Articles in Islamic Thought*, trans. Khaled Tawfiq (Beirut: Umm Al-Qura Foundation, 1415 AH), 185. [Arabic].

(23) Shariati, Return to the Self, p. 126.

(24) See: Mohammad al-Sayyad, "Mysticism and the Revolution in the Course of the Hawza in Qom… The Fall of Theory and the Rise of Ideology," *Journal of Iranian Studies (JIS)* 2, no. 5 (December 2017). [Arabic].

(25) Yahya Muhammad, "Understanding Religion: The Shiites between the Guardianship of the Jurist and the Shura," *Fahmaldin*, accessed May 29, 2024, https://fahmaldin.net/index.php?id=144&rid=300. [Arabic].

(26) See: Muhammad Hussein al-Tabatabai, Foundational Articles in Islamic Thought, Arabized by: Khaled Tawfiq, (Beirut: Umm Al-Qura Foundation, 1415 AH), 185. [Arabic].

(27) Ibid., 186

(28) Ibid.

(29) *Quran (Koran),* Chapter (33) sūrat l-a zāb (The Combined Forces), Verse (33:21), https://corpus.

quran.com/translation.jsp?chapter=33&verse=21.

(30) Muhammad Fanaei Al-Eshkuri, "Islamic Philosophy in Contemporary Iran," *Nosos Center*, September 21, 2017 accessed February 19, 2024. https://bit.ly/3ULbr1z. [Arabic].

(31) Ibid.

(32) Ibid.

(33) Taha Abdurrahman, Thaghour Al-Marabata (Beirut: AlMaaref Forum, 2019), 243.[Arabic]. Ibid., 186.

(34) The Great Imam Abdul Halim Mahmoud, *Philosophical Thinking in Islam* (Cairo: Dar Al-Maaref, 2021), 179. [Arabic].

(35) Hamid Parsia, *The Iranian Intellectual Makeup on the Eve of the Revolution* (Beirut: Hadara Center for the Development of Islamic Thought, 2012), 398.[Arabic].

(36) See: Abd al-Jabbar al-Rifai, *The Development of the Philosophical Studies in the Hawza* (Beirut: Dar Al-Hadi for Printing, Publishing and Distribution, 2005), 171.[Arabic].

(37) See: Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti: *Qam' al-mu'arid fi nusrat Ibn al-Farid*, Collection of Maqamat al-Suyuti, ed. Durubi, (Cairo: The General Authority for Cultural Palaces, 2007), 2/901-928. For details, see: Al-Hurr al-Amili, *The Ithna Ashariyyah Epistle in Refuting Sufism* (Qom- Iran, Dar Al-Kutub Al-Ilmiyyah, n.d.) 169, 177, 178.

(38) Ruhollah Khomeini, *The Islamic Government* (Beirut: Arab Difusion Company FZE, 2011), 26.

(39) Ibid. 42.

(40) Ibid., 46.

(41) Ibid., 51.

(42) Ibid., 52.

(43) Mehdi Jahromi and Muhammad Bagheri, *Collection and Classification, Criticism of Religious Thought According to Sheikh Morteza Motahhari*, presented by Mohammad Amara (Virginia: International Institute for Islamic Thought, 2011), 207.

(44) See *Mutair's attack on the Ash'aris*,. 132

(45) Jahromi and Bagheri *Criticism of Religious Thought*, 207

(46) Soroush, *Critique of the Official Reading of Religion* (Beirut: Arab Diffusion Company FZE), 46 [Arabic].

(47) Sadiq Haqiqat, *The Distribution of Power in Shiite Political Thought*, trans. Hussein Safi (Beirut: Center of Civilization, 2014), 294. [Arabic].

(48) Tawfiq al-Saif, *The Limits of Religious Democracy* (Beirut: Dar Al Saqi, 2008), 137 & *The Distribution of Power in Shiite Political Thought,* 295.

(49) Ali Shariati, *A Political Biography* (Beirut: Arab Diffusion Company FZE, 2016) 603.[Arabic].

(50) Ali Shariati, *Return to the Self and Return to Any Self*, trans. Haider Najaf, (Beirut: Alintishar Al-Arabi Foundation, 2020), 336. [Arabic].

(51) Shariati, History and Knowledge of Religions, (Beirut, Dar Al-Amir, ed.), 2/156.

(52) See: Zabineh Schmitke ed., *Oxford Handbook in Islamic Theology, biography of Dr. Osama Shafi' al-Sayyid*, presented by the scholar Hassan al-Shafi'i, (Beirut: Namaa Center for Research and Studies, 2018), 2/1228.

(53) Abdel Karim Soroush, *Broader than Ideology* (Beirut: Al-Intishar Al-Arabi Foundation, 2014), 94.[Arabic].

(54) Ibid., 87.

(55) Soroush, *Heritage and Secularism* (Beirut: Arab Diffusion Company FZE,, 2009), 309.[Arabic].

(56) Ibid., 145.