# A Millennium After al-Farabī; Notes on'Allāma abāabā'ī's Political Philosophy

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January 02, 2021

## Abstract

It is essential to ask why there is so little attention paid to political philosophy among these scholars? Or, if there is, why does it remain a minor or marginal conversation? Did they consider the discussion on governance under the other areas of their expertise, such as jurisprudence (*Fiqh*)? And, if yes, what motivated them to do so? Or, at least in Shia Islam, did this arise from their general belief that if there is an Imam, he is the right person to govern the community, and if we are in the occultation era, then our only choice is to wait for the Imam to return? Consequently, there is no need to philosophize an ideal society, an occurrence of which only happens with the presence of an Imam. Clarifying the questions mentioned above requires another investigation. We leave these questions aside here and focus instead on contemporary Shia philosophers to examine their thoughts on political philosophy, Utopia, or any discussion of governance. Our goal is to identify the al-Fārābīan heritage of the Islamic intellectual tradition in a more recent period.

# A Millennium After al-Farabī;

## Notes onʿAllāma Ṭabāṭabāʾī's Political Philosophy

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## Notes onʿAllāma Ṭabāṭabāʾī's Political Philosophy

It is essential to ask why there is so little attention paid to political philosophy among these scholars? Or, if there is, why does it remain a minor or marginal conversation? Did they consider the discussion on governance under the other areas of their expertise, such as jurisprudence (*Fiqh*)? And, if yes, what motivated them to do so? Or, at least in Shia Islam, did this arise from their general belief that if there is an Imam, he is the right person to govern the community, and if we are in the occultation era, then our only choice is to wait for the Imam to return? Consequently, there is no need to philosophize an ideal society, an occurrence of which only happens with the presence of an Imam.  Clarifying the questions mentioned above requires another investigation. We leave these questions aside here and focus instead on contemporary Shia philosophers to examine their thoughts on political philosophy, Utopia, or any discussion of governance.  Our goal is to identify the al-Fārābīan heritage of the Islamic intellectual tradition in a more recent period.

### Al-Fārabīan Heritage

In the history of Islamic philosophy, al-Fārabī[1] (872-950) is well known for theorizing

and philosophizing about the ideal society or Utopia. In his various works such as *Ārā'*

*Ahl al-Madīna al-Fāḍīla* (*The Ideas of People of the Perfect Society*), he claims that

man's happiness is achieved through a perfect human society, which he compares to a

sound body. In such a virtuous society, the perfect philosopher is identical to a

prophet. This also might be compared with Chinese Confucian terminology in calling

the prophet a Sage.  This statement suggests the identity of philosophy and revelation

in al-Fārābī's thought. It is on this ground that he expounds his political philosophy.

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[1] For more on al-Farabī's philosophy see Peter Adamson, "In the age of al-Fārābī: Arabic philosophy in the fourth-tenth century," ed. Peter Adamson (London: Warburg Institute, 2008), 7.

Thus, we agree with Muhsin Mahdi when he mentions that al-Fārābī's primary concerns, as revealed by his surviving works, are with logic and political philosophy.

Al- Fārābī is claimed to be the first Muslim political philosopher. Nevertheless, the path of the Fārābīan tradition of conceptualizing and philosophizing Utopia seems to be ambiguous in the history of Islamic intellectual tradition. Ibn Sīnā (980-1037), Suhrawardī (1154–1191), and Mullā Ṣadrā (1571-1636)[2] are among the most significant Muslim philosophers. Though they wrote extensively on metaphysics and other philosophical questions, they did not independently write on Utopia. Ibn Sina's philosophy begins from natural philosophy but continues into the metaphysics and discussions over God's attributes and Being. Suhrawardī, on the other hand, describes his philosophy as a philosophy of Illumination or *al-falsafa al-Ishrāq*, in which metaphysics, cosmology, and ontology in a traditional sense are discussed. Mulla Sadra, in his *Transcendent Philosophy* (*al-Hikma al-Muta'ālīya fi aāfar al-arba'a al-Aqlīya*), introduces his philosophy with a discussion on "being qua being" and "primacy of Being" (*Wujūd*) over "quiddity" (*Māhīya*). He later proceeds to spiritual psychology (`*ilm al-Nafs*) to describe and philosophize the *Circle of Existence* (*al-Dā'irat al-Wujūd*) from its beginning and the arc of descent (*al-Qual-s Nuzūl*) to the return or arc of ascent (*al-Qaws al-Su`ūd*). It seems that there is no specific chapter for political philosophy in Sadra's philosophy as well.

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[2] For Ṣadrā's vision on revelation and Islamic cosmology and ontology see SeyedAmirHossein Asghari, "Ontology and Cosmology of the aql in Sadra's Commentary on Usul al-Kafi," *Journal of Shia Islamic Studies* 10, no. 2 (Spr 2017), https://doi.org/DOI 10.1353/isl.2017.0011, <Go to ISI>://WOS:000486356600002.

It is essential to ask why there is so little attention paid to political philosophy among these scholars? Or, if there is, why does it remain a minor or marginal conversation? Did they consider the discussion on governance under the other areas of their expertise, such as jurisprudence (*Fiqh*)? And, if yes, what motivated them to do so? Or, at least in Shia Islam, did this arise from their general belief that if there is an Imam, he is the right person to govern the community, and if we are in the occultation era, then our only choice is to wait for the Imam to return? A result of which is that there is no need to philosophize an ideal society, an occurrence of which only happens with the presence of an Imam.

Clarifying the questions mentioned above requires another investigation. We leave these questions aside here and focus instead on contemporary Shia philosophers to examine their thoughts on political philosophy, Utopia, or any discussion of governance. Our goal is to identify the al-Fārābīan heritage of the Islamic intellectual tradition in a more recent period. The general assumption on the relationship between Shi'ite Islam and governance in our contemporary and post-occultation milieu is significantly colored by Ayatollah Khomeini's theory of the *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* (The Guardianship of the Jurist). Ahmad Vāezī, a contemporary scholar of Shia political thought, describes this theory as "the central axis of contemporary Shi'a political thought."[3] This theory, which was employed and practiced following the Islamic Revolution of 1979 in Iran and embodied in its constitution, has theoretical roots in the works of scholars such as Mulla Ahmad Narāqī (1771-1772 –1829). Mulla Ahmad

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[3] Ahmad Vaezi, *Shia political thought*, ed. Islamic Centre of England. (London: Islamic Centre of England, 2004), 98.

Narāqī, in his `Awāyid al-Ayyām,[4] was the first Shi'ite scholar of pre-Modern Iran to establish the authority of the religious jurist whom the Imams appealed to during the Iranian constitutional revolution.[5] His only legal work was referred to by Khumayni [sic] in support of his theory of the sovereignty of the jurist.[6] Khomeini, in his Islamic *Government*, illustrates the theory of the Guardianship of the Jurist (*Vilāyat al-faqīh*) as being self-evident:

> The governance of the faqih is a subject that in itself elicits immediate assent and has little need of demonstration, for anyone who has some general awareness of the beliefs and ordinances of Islam will unhesitatingly give his assent to the principle of the governance of the faqih as soon as he encounters it; he will recognize it as necessary and self-evident.7

Khomeini begins the *Islamic Government* by defining his theory as a self-evident concept that is clearly necessary. But, in what continues, his discussion turns to the religious law and what he describes as the goal of the Qur'ān and hadith. While he writes that Islamic law is a progressive, evolving, and comprehensive system, he enlightens his readers by pointing out that jurists have misunderstood the political or social principles of the Qur'ān and hadith:

> In order to demonstrate to some extent, the difference between Islam and what is presented as Islam, I would like to draw your attention to the

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[4] Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad Mahdī Nirāqī, "'Awāyid al-ayyām fī bayān qawāʻid al-aḥkām," ([Tehran?]: [publisher not identified], 1266).

[5] Saïd Amir Arjomand, "The Shiʻite Hierocracy and the State in Pre-modern Iran: 1785-1890," *European Journal of Sociology / Archives Européennes de Sociologie / Europäisches Archiv für Soziologie* 22, no. 1 (1981): 74, http://www.jstor.org/stable/23997653.

[6] Arjomand, "The Shiʻite Hierocracy and the State in Pre-modern Iran: 1785-1890," 74.

[7] āyatallāh Rūḥ-Allāh Khumainī, *Islamic government* (New York: Manor Books, 1979), 7; Khumainī, *Islamic government*.

difference between the Holy Qur'an and the books of hadith, on the one hand, and the practical treatises of jurisprudence, on the other. The Holy Qur'an and the books of hadith, which represent the sources for the commands and ordinances of Islam, are completely different from the treatises written by the mujtahids of the present age both in breadth of scope and in the effects, they are capable of exerting on the life of society. The ratio of Qur'anic verses concerned with the affairs of society to those concerned with ritual worship is greater than a hundred to one. Of the approximately fifty sections of the corpus of hadith containing all the ordinances of Islam, not more than three or four sections relate to matters of ritual worship and the duties of man toward his Creator and Sustainer. A few more are concerned with questions of ethics, and all the rest are concerned with social, economic, legal, and political questions—in short, the gestation of society.[8]

Nevertheless, while Khomeinī's discussion in *Islamic Government* is based on his views concerning Islamic law, the goal of this paper is to investigate the continuation of political philosophy and contemplation on Utopia in later Islamic philosophy, primarily through analyzing some of the works of the recent Iranian Shi`a philosopher and scholar of religion `Allāma Tabātabā'ī (1904-1981). The initial purpose of this chapter is to trace the Fārābīan heritage of political philosophy amongst the works of Tabātabā'ī[9] that we will discuss in what follows.

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[8] Khumainī, *Islamic government*, 9.

[9] I need to briefly discuss another contemporary Shia philosopher, namely Mehdi Hā'irī Yazdī (1923–99) here. He was the son of Sheikh Abdul Karim Haeri Yazdi, the founder of the Qom Seminary. Hā'irī was also a disciple of Khomeini in philosophy and received his Ph.D. in Western philosophy from Toronto University. He discusses his political philosophy in his *Hekmat va Hukumat*. Apart from *Hekmat va Hokumat*, he penned ten other books, mainly about Islamic philosophy. Other than The Principles of Epistemology in Islamic Philosophy, Knowledge by Presence (1992), all his books, including *Hekmat va Hokumat*, are in Persian.

However, there is no agreement among contemporary scholars whether Tabātabā'ī

was a political philosopher or whether he agreed or disagreed with Khomeinī's theory

of Vilayat-i Faqīh. Some scholars claim that Khomeinī's theory of *Vilāyat-i Faqīh* has

roots in Mullā Ṣadrā 's "Transcendent Philosophy" (*al-Ḥikmah al-muta'ālīyah*) where

he describes the four spiritual and intellectual journeys of the wayfarer toward the

Divine. Considering the central role of al-Faqih (jurist) in Khomeinī's theory as a ruler of

Muslim society, it is hard to connect it to any particular philosophical school,

particularly Mulla Sadra's philosophy. None of the four qualities that  Khomeini

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In *Hekmat va Hukumat*, he mentions that state-society relations exclusively belong to 'Aql 'Amalī
(practical intellect/reasoning) and is therefore completely out of the realm of metaphysics. As a result,
these practical functions of governance do not belong to the metaphysical domain and hence do not
require the expertise of religious scholars. It seems that Hā'irī in reaching this conclusion agrees with
Tabātabā'ī (we will discuss Tabātabā'ī's ideas later in this paper).Hā'irī, moreover, claims that Islamic
political theory cannot be developed simply on the basis on jurisprudence. Instead, robust political
thought must be strongly rooted in philosophy. Thereupon, when a conflict occurs in political affairs
between practical philosophy ('Aql 'Amalī), on the one hand, and Shi'i jurisprudence on the other, one
should side with practical philosophy. Hā'irī declined the theory of the Guardianship of the Jurist,
arguing that the government is inferior to the divine and to metaphysical reality contrary to the
assertions of the theory of *vilāyat-i faqīh*.

Hā'irī challenges the idea that the rule of the Jurist, as Khomeini claims, is a continuation of the right to
worldly rule bestowed upon the Prophet Mohammed and the Twelve Infallible Imams. He points out
that even the Infallible Imams themselves were revealed to be the legitimate political leaders *only after*
their Muslim communities had already expressed their desire for them to take charge: "This makes it
very unlikely that the jurists have a divine right of leadership when even the Infallibles, who according to
Shia theology have a special ontological status in the universe, did not themselves have the right to rule
the Muslim community without the consensus of the governed" (Badamchi 2017, p.132).With the
introduction of the notion of "joint private ownership" (*Mālikīyyat-i Shakhsī-i Mushā`*) in his book, Hā'irī
is employing a concept derived from traditional Islamic jurisprudence as the basis of his theory of
governance. Employing this Fiqhī theory makes us question whether Hā'irī is philosophizing about the
governance or making another Fiqhi theory?

attributes to a ruler in the third chapter of his "Islamic Government"–such as intelligence (`ālim), administrative ability (*Mudīr*), expertise in Islamic law (*Faqīh*), and a clear moral record (`ādil)–are related to Sadrā's or al-Fārābī's philosophy. In our view, it instead is a theory based on his perception of Islamic Law and the role that he assigns to the jurist (Faqīh) in that law. Moreover, Khomeini mostly focuses on the superiority of faqih over philosophers. Javādī Āmulī, a contemporary Shī'a scholar, also interprets this theory as guardianship of Jurisprudence (*Vilāyat-i Fiqh*) and not the jurist (*Faqīh*).

Returning to our initial question, we will examine Tabātabā'ī's works to investigate his political thoughts and philosophy concerning the Farabian tradition of political philosophy. It is evident that `Allāma wrote on governance in his various works, but it is still a valid question to ask whether he was discussing the rulership of a jurist or suggesting another system, and what are the foundations of his thought in explaining Islamic governance?

### ʿAllāma Ṭabāṭabāʾī

ʿAllāma Ṭabāṭabāʾī [10] (1904-1981) is known for his prominent role in developing and reviving the tradition of Islamic philosophy and Qur'anic exegesis in the Qom seminary in the twentieth century. In his remarkable contribution, "The Principle of Philosophy and the Method of Realism" (*Uṣūl-i Falsaf-i wa Rawishi Reālīsm*), Ṭabāṭabāʾī discusses

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[10] For a detailed account of Ṭabāṭabāʾī's life and works, see:
Hamid Algar, "ʿALLĀMA SAYYID MUḤAMMAD ḤUSAYN ṬABĀṬABĀʾĪ: PHILOSOPHER, EXEGETE, AND GNOSTIC," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 17, no. 3 (2006): 326-51, http://www.jstor.org/stable/26199626..

realities and concepts. *"Vilāyat wa Zi`āmat"* (Guardianship and Leadership) is an independent paper where he develops some of his ideas on governance. *Al-mīzān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* is his commentary on the Qur'ān and also includes a discussion on governance. In all of Ṭabāṭabāʾī's works, the study of governance is categorized within the concept of *al-a`tibārīyāt al-`aqlīya* (Secondary Intellectual Considerations). Before we begin discussing Ṭabāṭabāʾī's thoughts on governance, we need to consider his principal philosophical theory, which affects his other discussions. Ṭabāṭabāʾī conceptualizes things into two categories of the "real" and "the secondary aspect." In explaining this notion, he adds that:

> Existents (*mawjudāt* - things that exist) from one aspect can be divided into two kinds. Any meaning which we intellectualize has either a correspondent in the external world existing in itself, such as external substances like minerals, plants, animals and so on, whether there is an agent of intellection (`āqil) or not. The correspondent exists only in terms of how we intellectualize it, and does not exist without this process, such as ownership. Concerning the matter of ownership, one does not find anything in the external world called 'ownership' beyond the actual substance of the thing owned, such as land, and the substance of the 'owner', which is the human being, and it is this relationship that is called 'ownership'.
> Therefore, the meaning of ownership is rooted in the process of intellection and thus, had the process of intellection not existed, the concept of ownership', 'owner' and 'the owned' would not have existed and there would have only been a man and a piece of land. The first kind of existent is called 'real' (*haqiqi*) and the second kind is called a 'mental construct' (*itibari*). We have proven in our book al-*I'tibarat* that every mental construct is subsistent (*mutaqawwim*) of a reality behind it. If we were to investigate and contemplate, we would find that all the notions determined by human beings and the relationships that exist between these very notions, like ownership and other specialties, leadership, relationships and issues related to them, etc., are all mental constructs and imaginary ideas which, through their subjective import, compel men to consider them as his primary requirements for social life and civilization to secure what is good and beneficial, and to ward off evil and harm.[11]

Considering what Ṭabāṭabāʾī suggests in the distinction between things and concepts, it is necessary to ask where he places governance in this categorization. Is it "real" or

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[11] Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabāʾī, *Vicegerency = Risālah al-wilāyah* (Qom: Islamic International Foundation of Cooperation, 2009), 1.

considered a "secondary intellectual consideration"? To find the answer to this

question, one needs to assess Ṭabāṭabāʾī's *"Uṣūl-i Falsaf-i va Ravish-i Reaālism"*

(Principles of Philosophy and Methods of Realism) and his other philosophical works in

which he clearly explains that leadership is a concept that is created based on the

relations that a human society makes and it is, in fact, derived from other sorts of

human relationships; it depends on social convention rather than rational evidence. In

chapter eleven of his treatise "Mental Aspects or Secondary Concepts" (*al-Iʿtibārīyāt*),

Tabātabāʾī discusses the concepts of leadership, subordination, and their demands.

Leadership, therefore, is a mental construct that people create based on their needs. A

mental construct is not a (metaphysically) real thing but secondary to (metaphysically)

real things. Another question arises here that if leadership is a secondary and

derivative concept, what is its importance in Tabātabāʾī's thoughts? Thus, when

leadership, because of being derivative and relative, is categorized as "Secondary

Concepts" (*al-Iʿtibārīyāt*), one can not specify a single form of it.

Nevertheless, where the question of governance is concerned, it appears that

Ṭabāṭabāʾī's long chapter entitled *"Vilāyat va Ziʿāmat"* ("Guardianship and

Leadership") which is published within a collection of articles by scholars of religion

and entitled *Bahthī Darbaāriyi Marjaʿīyyat va Ruhānityat*, was his first direct

contribution to the discussion of religious leadership in Shia Islam. The collection was

published in the memoir of grand Ayatullah Burūjerdī (1875 –1961), whose death

caused a grave vacancy in the Shīʿites' religious leadership and *Marjaʿīya*.

Remarkably, Ṭabāṭabāʾī's contribution was the only chapter in the book

devoted to the topic of the Islamic government. Tabataba'i's approach to the topic in

the first place is philosophical. This chapter makes clear that Ṭabāṭabāʾī's

argumentation and methodology differ from that of Fiqh (Jurisprudence) and Fuqahā'.

He points out that his argument is formed from the point of view of Islamic social

philosophy.

He argues for the necessity of governance as rooted in the essential disposition (fiṭra)

of man as confirmed by revelation. He takes the following Qur'ānīc verse as evidence:

> Be devoted to the upright religion. It is harmonious with the nature which God has designed for people. The design of God cannot be altered. Thus is the upright religion, but many people do not know. (Quran, 30:30)

Based on this view, the relationship between revelation and guardianship is

conformational. That is why, according to Ṭabāṭabāʾī, no one questioned the necessity

of having a leader after the death of Muhammad. In this chapter, Ṭabāṭabāʾī refers to

the role of the leader with the Arabic terms Walī and Walī al-Amr (the head of the

community). The leader's role is to put into practice the necessary and permanent

rules of the religion and manage the changeable and variable law based on the time

and place requirements. Having divided the religious laws into permanent and

variable, Ṭabāṭabāʾī points out the similarities between Islamic societies and

democratic societies in which the constitution is permanent and unchangeable. At the

same time, some laws are subject to change. He later mentions that this similarity is

also a sign of difference because of the difference between the divine and human

sources of the laws in both societies.[12] (*Vilāyat va Ziʿāma*t, p. 85-6) While the will of

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[12] At least in the American case the founders considered themselves to be articulating *God-given* (and thus universal) rights. And thus, justifies the exporting of American democracy as a universal good. Some historians however, mention that the US Constitution was *negotiated* and *debated*, therefore it is not *God-given* (and thus universal).

the majority is the basis of change in a democratic society, Ṭabāṭabāʾī writes that "however, changeable laws in Islamic society are the result of the council of people, but their [the changes'] principal foundation is truth (Haqq), not the will of the majority."[13]

As mentioned, he first claims that guardianship is an inherent (*Fiṭrī*) trait before bringing forward the question of who should lead the community. His answer to this question, as Algar indicates, is quite ambiguous.[14] Ṭabāṭabāʾī first claims that this is a matter beyond the concern of the chapter, as evidenced in the following lines: "these are matters which lie beyond our current concern and must be solved in the context of fiqh" (*Vilāyat va Ziʿāma*t)Nevertheless, he still provides some characteristics of the leader:

> "The individual who excels all others in piety, administrative ability (*husn-i tadbīr*), and awareness of contemporary circumstances, is best fitted for this position [the leadership of society]." (*Vilāyat va Ziʿāma*t)

Algar suggests that this sentence "is an endorsement of the thesis of *vilayat-i faqih* ('governance of the faqih') as propagated by Imam Khomeini, and bears indeed some similarity to Article 109 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic, which spells out the qualifications required in the leader (*rahbar*)."[15]

Despite what Algar suggests, Ṭabāṭabāʾī raises an exciting question in conclusion as to whether Vilayat belongs to all of the Muslims or only to Faqīh as it is understood

[13] ibid

[14] Algar, Hamid. "ʿAllāma Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabāʾī: Philosopher, Exegete, And Gnostic." Journal of Islamic Studies 17, no. 3 (2006): 326-51.

[15] ibid

today. It is essential to point out that according to Ṭabāṭabāʾī, Mulla Sadra, and some other scholars, the modern notion of Faqīh has a narrower interpretation than the original sense that included all intellectual and transmitted knowledge, and not merely transmitted knowledge.[16]

Now, returning to Algar's claim, I argue that, on the contrary, Tabataba'i's and Ayatullāh Khomeini's theory of *Vilāyat* are not similar, much less identical, first and foremost because of a very broad definition of *Faqīh* by Ṭabāṭabāʾī and, secondly, because of the philosophical nature of Ṭabāṭabāʾī's discussion in comparison to Khomeiniʾī's *Fiqhī* definitions of *Vilāyat al-Faqīh*. On the other hand, in response to the question of whether one leader (*Walī*), must rule over all Muslim societies or not, Ṭabāṭabāʾī indicates that "this is one of the issues that Islam has not discussed, and in fact, it should not do so. Because religion includes permanent matters (*dhātī*), while the method of governing is subject to change based on the change and transition of

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[16] Sadrā, in his "Breaking the Idols of Ignorant," describes the original meaning of *al-Fiqh* as follows: In the earlier time, in the age of the Prophet and the purified Imams, peace be upon all of them, jurisprudence (*al-fiqh*) was totally limited to the knowledge of the First Real, and the knowledge of the path of the Hereafter and the blights of the soul and the states of the heart, and the way of refining the temper, and changing the evil deeds into good ones. It was not the knowledge of contracts for delivery with prepayment, mortgages, financial interests, divorce, repudiation within marriage, division of inheritance of the dead, learning jurisprudential loopholes, the way of escaping from legal pursuits, and the way of keeping some of the illegal issues. Sometimes man's life ends without ever needing any of them. These issues are necessary to the limit that there should be in every age some people that adopt them in their responsibility, whereas jurisprudence [*Fiqh*] in the former meaning is an individual's duty or an indubitable obligation for every wise person. (Shirazi, Mulla Sadra, BREAKING THE IDOLS OF IGNORANCE: ADMONITION OF THE SOI-DISTANT SUFI / SADR AL-DIN SHIRAZI (MULLA SADRA), trans. M.Dasht Borzorgi & F. Asadi Amjad. Edited & Introduced by S.K Toussi. (London, ICAS, 2008),

societies in accordance with the development of civilizations."[17] Nevertheless, he

mentions that three things–unity and integrity, protecting the interest of the Muslims,

and replacing the geographical borders with the borders of belief and faith–are what

define Islamic permanent rules in government.[18] He finally emphasizes that

consultation is the foundation of the orders issued by *Valī*.[19] These positions

differentiate Ṭabāṭabāʾī's theory of leadership from that of Khomeini.

In his commentary on the Quran, *Al-Mīzān fī al-Tafsīr al-Qur' ān,* Ṭabāṭabāʾī,

emphasizes that the responsibility of believers in establishing and sustaining their

society is an essential element of Islamic social philosophy. [20] "The executive power in

Islam is not confined within a separate class; implementation of Islamic laws is the

responsibility of all members of the society. Each and every individual is obligated to call to the

good, to enjoin what is good and forbid the evil.[21] He lines up verses in which God's

commands address all believers and make them responsible for those duties.[22] He

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[17] Muḥammad Ḥusain Ṭabāṭabāī, *Baḥthī dar bāriyi marjaʿīyyat wa rūḥanīyat* ([Tihrān]: Shirkat-i

   Sihāmī-i Intishār, 1980), 98.

[18] Ṭabāṭabāī, *Baḥthī dar bāriyi marjaʿīyyat wa rūḥanīyat*, 98.

[19] Ṭabāṭabāī, *Baḥthī dar bāriyi marjaʿīyyat wa rūḥanīyat*, 99.

[20] Muḥammad Ḥusain Ṭabāṭabāī, *Al-Mizan : An Exegesis of the Quran* vol. 7 (Tehran: WOFIS, 1990), 107-
45. See his commentary on Qur'an 3. 200

[21] Ṭabāṭabāī, *Al-Mizan : An Exegesis of the Quran* 7, 136.

[22] Following are the verses in discussion: ... and establish prayers ... [4:77]; ... and strive hard in
His way ... [5:35]; ... and give upright testimony for Allāh ... [65:2];... fasting has been
prescribed for you ... [2:183]; And spend in the way of Allāh ... [2:195]; And from among you
there should be a party who invite to good and enjoin what is right and forbid the wrong
[3:104]; And strive hard in (the way of) Allāh a striving as is due to Him ... [22:78]; (As for) the
fornicatress and the fornicator, flog each of them, (giving) a hundred stripes ... [24:2]; And (as
for) the man who steals and the woman who steals, cut off their hands ... [5:38];And there is

then clarifies his thoughts about public responsibility in his discussion of governance in

conclusion:

> There are many verses of this nature, and all taken together make it clear that religion is a collective matter which Allāh has made people responsible for; He is not pleased with disbelief for His servants; and He intends only that all of them together should establish the religion. The society of which they are members should be managed by themselves — none of them should be less responsible than the others. Enforcement of law is not an especial prerogative of some to the exclusion of others— be he the Prophet or the others. [23]

In this sense, Ṭabāṭabāʾī points to verses in the Qurʾān that order all people to prevent

social crimes, and he concludes that governance is the responsibility of all people. He

additionally states that when people are involved in political issues, they are already

engaged in their own business and duties. Therefore, they should not be banned from

performing their own business.[24]

When Ṭabāṭabāʾī mentions the prophet's leadership in the early Muslim

community, he repeats that this leadership is different from both monarchic rule and

democracy. The only goal of such rulership involves truth (*Haqq*), which is replaced by

the ruler's will in the case of a monarchy. However, in a democracy, the truth may be

replaced by the majority's will and is thus against Haqq. So far as the occultation era is

concerned, Ṭabāṭabāʾī states that "the authority of the Islamic government lies in the

hands of the Muslims themselves." and if they are supposed to appoint a ruler for

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life for you in (the law of) retaliation … [2:179]; And hold fast by the cord of Allāh all together
and be not divided ... [3:103].

[23] Ṭabāṭabāī, *Al-Mizan : An Exegesis of the Quran* 7, 132.

[24] Ṭabāṭabāʾī further applies another Qurʾānic command, "*maintain with justic*e," to show more example
of public responsibility in Islamic governance.

Islamic society, they must follow the tradition of *Imamah*, not of monarchy and

Imperialism"(Ṭabāṭabāʾī, 1986, p. 179)

This statement provides evidence for Algar's claim in which he criticizes Nasr for

claiming that Ṭabāṭabāʾī's traditional philosophical thought is not evident in politics.[25]

Although this may be true to some extent, there is nonetheless evidence from

Ṭabāṭabāʾī's life and practice that illustrate that his idea of Islamic government did not

accord with that which formed after the Iranian Islamic revolution of 1979. Kadivar's

paper, entitled "*Dar in Inqilāb Yek Shahīd vāqi'ī bud, ki maẓlūmāni ham shahīd shod, va

Ān Islam būd*", documents Ṭabāṭabāʾī's brazen statement after the revolution: "there

was only one true martyr in this revolution, and it was Islam."[26] Also, so far as

guardianship is concerned, Ṭabāṭabāʾī indicates that "he has to manage the affairs with

consultations according to the time and situation." [27]

Moreover, based on his commentary on Qur'ān 4:88, Ṭabāṭabāʾī shows his

disagreement with those who define scholars of *Fiqh* (*Fuqahā*) as "those who have

been entrusted with authority" (*Uli al-Amr*). We have already mentioned Mullā Ṣadrā's

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[25] Algar, in a footnote to his article on Ṭabāṭabāʾī mentions that "S. H. Nasr has sought repeatedly to insinuate, however, that a basic discrepancy exists between 'the traditional Islamic perspective' represented by 'Allama Ṭabāṭabāʾī'and the fundamental tendencies of the Islamic Revolution." (Algar, 2006, p.348)

[26] Mohsen Kadivar, "Dar in Inqilāb Yek Shahīd vāqi'ī bud, ki maẓlūmāni ham shahīd shod, va Ān Islam būd," 2020, no. 12/27/2020 (2017). kadivar.com/15678. Ṭabāṭabāʾī's daughter in her interview with Iranian Fars news agency denies such a narration. See Najmi Sādāt Ṭabāṭabāʾī, "Idiʿāhāyi Kadivar şihat nadarad," interview by Amin şubḥī; Maryan ʿāqilī, 16/2/1397, 1397/2018, https://www.farsnews.ir/news/13970216000787/ادعاهای-کدیور-صحت-ندارد-درباره-رابطه-امام-و-علامه-طباطبایی خیلی.

[27] Ṭabāṭabāī, *Al-Mizan : An Exegesis of the Quran* 7, 134.

and Ṭabāṭabāʾī's definition of *al-Fiqh* in its early Islamic sense. Now, with consideration of the modern and narrow meaning of jurisprudence (*Fiqh*/ Islamic Law), Ṭabāṭabāʾī rejects the idea that mere expertise in *Fiqh* qualifies an individual for the leadership position or makes him an expert on socio-political issues.[28] In fact, as much as he stresses the importance of the leader's characteristics such as piety, administrative ability (*husn-i tadbir*), and awareness of contemporary circumstances, he does not emphasize the leader's knowledge of *Fiqh*.

*Conclusion*

Al-Fārabī (872-950) was the first known Muslim philosopher to philosophize about the ideal society or Utopia. The initial question of this paper was an inquiry about the fate of political philosophy among the Muslim philosophers, and in particular, contemporary Shia philosophers. The general assumption about the relationship between Shi'ite Islam and governance in both contemporary and the post-occultation milieu is marked by Ayatollah Khomeini's theory of the *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* (The Guardianship of the Jurist) which is, according to what we discussed in this paper, an approach based on the science of *Fiqh* in its narrow, modern understanding. ʿAllama Ṭabāṭabāʾī's discussion of governance and guardianship has a philosophical foundation. He categorizes governance in what he calls *i'tibārīyāt al-ʿaqlīya* (Intellectual Considerations/Derivative Existences). Such categorization could result in flexible forms of governance. In his various works, Ṭabāṭabāʾī also discusses the issue of Vilayat or guardianship; nevertheless, the overall result of his speculation is not

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[28] M. H. Ṭabāṭabāī, *Al-Mizan : An Exegesis of the Quran*, vol. 5 (Tihrān: WOFIS., 1990), 23.

17

identical with Ayatullāh Khomeini's theory of guardianship of the jurist. On the contrary, he questions and rejects the idea that mere expertise in *Fiqh* qualifies an individual for a leadership position or makes him an expert on socio-political issues. His views on governance can be summarized by referring to the terms and notions he applies to his works. These include ideas such as *Istikhdām* (a leader is appointed by the people), justice and good for all, the authority of all to all (*Taslīt Kulli `Alā al-Kull*), and public *Vilayah*, all of which are based on his Shia beliefs.

By comparing Ṭabāṭabāʾī's political philosophy with al-Fārābī's concept of a philosopher-king, it is clear that Ṭabāṭabāʾī's political philosophy is influenced by both the Shia idea of *Imamah* on the one hand and his mystical-philosophical way of life on the other. It, in fact, is a return to social philosophy in the tradition of Islamic philosophy with all characteristic that Ṭabāṭabāʾī creates for it.

  Perhaps the most telling evidence for the disagreement between Ṭabāṭabāʾī and Khomeini's concept of guardianship is the fact that, after the Iranian Islamic revolution in 1979, Ṭabāṭabāʾī's philosophical and religious thought was widely discussed in Iran. Yet, his disciples completely neglected his political philosophy and governance theory.

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