

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

TOWARD A TRANSCENDENT POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY:
A PHILOSOPHICAL STUDY OF RŪḤULLĀH
AL-KHUMAYNĪ'S THEORY OF *WILĀYAT AL-FAQĪH*

by
HUSSEIN IBRAHIM IBRAHIM

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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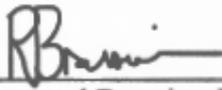
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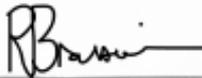
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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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Title: Toward a Transcendent Political Philosophy: A Philosophical Study of Rūhullāh al-Khumaynī's Theory of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh*

This thesis critically explores Rūhullāh al-Khumaynī's (1902–1989) theory of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* (guardianship of the jurist), tracing its philosophical sources, and bringing to light its conceptual structure and implications. It presents al-Khumaynī's argument on the necessity of establishing an Islamic government and his position on the correlation between religious and political authority. It highlights some of al-Khumaynī's rationales for an Islamic social-critical philosophy and examines his aim in reconciling the relationship between theoretical and practical aspects of Islam. In doing so, it investigates al-Khumaynī's religio-political vision and the social and political motivations that led him to theorize an Islamic government headed by the guardian jurist, or *al-walī al-faqīh*. The thesis attempts to answer the question of whether *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* should be considered as a philosophical, political, or jurisprudential theory.

Traditionally, *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* has been viewed as a legalistic, jurisprudential, and theological notion. However, *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* can also be understood as a political-philosophical theory that is influenced by a long tradition of Islamic philosophy. I argue that this theory is a legitimate form of Islamic political philosophy. To substantiate this claim, I investigate the philosophical perspective of al-Khumaynī's religio-political thought and examine the philosophical foundations of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh*. This entails an analysis of the existing genealogical relationship between *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* and the philosophical tradition of Islam. Therefore, I discuss how al-Khumaynī's theory could be seen as a political extension of Mullā Ṣadrā's (1572–1636) integrative epistemology, despite the fact that no explicit declaration to this effect was made by al-Khumaynī. In this context, I show how theoretical ontology and epistemology turned into practical politics in the hands of al-Khumaynī. I further show how the philosophical characteristics of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* reflect the pragmatism of al-Khumaynī who integrated the “idealism” of al-Fārābī (Alpharabius) (870–950/1) and the “realism” of Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna) (980–1037).

Through different examples from al-Khumaynī's texts, I show how al-Khumaynī's religio-political theory represents a synthesis of three epistemic trajectories: philosophical, mystical, and religious. In particular, I show how it reflects a deep

conviction in the subtle concordance between rational and revealed sources of knowledge. Building on a variety of primary and secondary sources, I draw out what al-Khumaynī believes to be the goal of politics in his revolutionary thought and investigate the role of ontology in his religio-political theory. I further situate the philosophical characteristics of al-Khumaynī's *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* in relation to its practical implications and political ramifications. In doing so, I locate the structure of the Islamic Revolution and Islamic Republic in contemporary political and philosophical debates. I further discuss al-Khumaynī's extension of the theory of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* in public affairs to the concept of the absolute guardianship of the jurist (*al-wilāya al-mutlaqa li-al-faqīh*).

The present thesis contributes to an understanding of the connections between Islamic philosophical tradition and al-Khumaynī's religio-political theory of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh*. It paves the way for the construction of an original understanding of Islamic political philosophy and argues for its revival in the contemporary world in the hands of al-Khumaynī under what I call a "Transcendent Political Philosophy."

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In the memory of all healthcare martyrs who fought bravely on the front lines during the treacherous COVID pandemic, and for a safer and more caring world.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* (guardianship of the jurist) has been viewed as a jurisprudential and theological notion.¹ It promotes a guardianship-based political system, relying on a qualified and just jurist (*faqīh ‘ādil*) to take the role of the leader of the government during the absence of the infallible Shi‘ite *Imām*. This kind of Shi‘ite Islamic government was implemented after the Islamic Revolution in Iran and has been in practice for over forty years. *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* could be seen as a cumulatively evolutionary process of determining the relationship between religion and politics in Shi‘ite Islam, especially since this doctrine forms the central axis of contemporary Shi‘ite political thought in Iran. There are various ways to approach Rūhullāh al-Mūsawī al-Khumaynī’s (1902–1989) theory of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh*, and a good number of secondary works has been devoted to examining his religio-political career.² As an Islamic revolution, the Iranian movement has been approached from different perspectives, i.e. jurisprudential, theological, sociological, political. However, what I try

¹ Throughout the thesis, I use *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* (capitalized) to refer to Rūhullāh al-Mūsawī al-Khumaynī’s (1902–1989) religio-political theory and *wilāyat al-faqīh* (uncapitalized) to refer to the general jurisprudential notion of guardianship of the jurist. It should be noted that although the guardianship of prominent jurists is well accepted among all Shi‘ite theories of governance, there are several versions of this theory which disagree in specifying the role of the jurist and the scope of his authority. Mohsen Kadivar argues that currently there are eleven theories of the state in Shi‘ite thought. See Mohsen Kadivar, *Nazarīya-hā-yi Dawlat dar Fiqh-i Shī‘a* (Tehran: Nashr-i Ney, 2001). On the origin of the ruling theory and its derivation in the Shi‘ite jurisprudence, see Tawfīq Sayf, *Nazarīyyat al-Sulṭa fī al-Fiqh al-Shī‘ī* (Beirut: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-‘Arabī, 2002). On jurisprudential/theological categorization of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh*, see Mālik Wahbī, *al-Faqīh wa-al-Sulṭa wa-al-Umma: Buḥūth fī Wilāyat al-Faqīh wa-al-Umma* (Beirut: al-Dār al-Islāmiyya, 2000), 452-65.

² Al-Khumaynī is known in Shi‘ite circles and among his supporters as al-Imām al-Khumaynī and in the Western world as Ayatollah Khomeini. For an extended account on al-Khumaynī’s life and thought, see Baqer Moin, *Khomeini: Life of the Ayatollah* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1999). Hamid Dabashi, *Theology of Discontent: The Ideological Foundation of the Islamic Revolution in Iran* (New York: New York University Press, 1993), 409-84.

to do in my thesis is to present a paradigm shift in order to reformulate our understanding of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* and its religio-political context. This is pivotal, not just from a theoretical standpoint, but also from a practical political perspective. In doing so, I work on understanding *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* from a philosophical angle to discover how it reflects a deep evolution in the Islamic political philosophy which can be traced back to Abū Naṣr Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Fārābī (Alpharabius) (870–950/1) and even earlier political thinkers.³

In situating *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* philosophically, I am not trying in any way to attribute the political theory of al-Khumaynī to any school of Islamic philosophy. Rather, I am examining al-Khumaynī’s theory and revolutionary movement through a philosophical lens, in order to bring out the philosophical dimension embodied in al-Khumaynī’s thought and intellectual character. For this I am studying *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* philosophically and tracing its philosophical foundations in the different schools of Islamic philosophy. In doing so, I aim to extract *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* from its solely religious image to see to which extent it could be considered as a modern extension and thus representative of Islamic political philosophy.⁴ With this, I will investigate how the

³ For the political philosophies of classical Islamic philosophers, see Charles E. Butterworth, ed., *The Political Aspects of Islamic Philosophy: Essays in Honor of Muhsin S. Mahdi* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992).

⁴ In this thesis, when referring to an Islamic or Khumaynian notion as “modern,” I do not use the term in accordance with the strict philosophical sense that reflects the intellectual break with the past, which prominently began with Descartes (1596–1650) and continued with Spinoza (1632–1677), Kant (1724–1804), before reaching Hegel (1770–1831). Neither do I refer to the socio-political aspect of the term, which is practically represented in the foundations of the French Revolution and theoretically in Kant and Hegel’s philosophies. This is especially true since the socio-political aspect reflects the argument that political authority no longer needs to appeal to religious authority in order to gain legitimization, which is contrary to what al-Khumaynī is arguing for. By modern I simply mean generally what is contemporary from an Islamic point of view. More specifically, it may take the form of an epistemic reaction to Western modernism and a religio-political reaction to secularism, colonialism, and imperialism. Thus, my use of the term is strictly conditioned by reflecting the attempts to revive the dominant position of Islam and thus represents a solely spiritual discussion and has nothing to do with materialistic (e.g. economic, technological) development. In fact, al-Khumaynī’s political philosophy was presented as a challenge to

Islamic philosophical tradition led by al-Fārābī, which approached politics metaphysically and ethically, flourished in the hands of his followers into the full-fledged Islamic political theory represented in *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* theory of governance.⁵ Consequently, I argue for the need to theorize a new understanding of political philosophy in the Islamic world. I aim to understand the development of political theory in Islam according to a non-linear model of progress, where several epistemic sources collaborate to form a hybrid yet coherent political system, which reflects a unique development in the history of Islamic political thought.

The philosophical discussion of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* allows us to understand the Shi‘ite conception of governance and authority with respect to the utopianism of Plato’s philosophy, which has been attractive to philosophical discourses in Shi‘ite contexts.⁶ An intuitive analysis of the Iranian Islamic Revolution would lead us to understand the theory as a means of achieving a unique form of Islamic political thought and practice. By taking it back to its supposed philosophical roots and movement and characterizing its major philosophical features, we will be able to have a better political understanding of the theory of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh*. This would help in contributing to the growing field of comparative political theory.

My thesis aims to clarify the existing genealogical relationship between *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* and the philosophical tradition of the Islamic world and to ensure a critical examination of the sources, structure, and politico-philosophical ramifications of this

modernity as conceived by Western philosophy. Thus, from a modern philosophical perspective, *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* could be seen as a counter-modern political theory.

⁵ On the foundation of Islamic political philosophy, see Muhsin Mahdi, *Alfarabi and the Foundation of Islamic Political Philosophy* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

⁶ For an introductory account on the relationship between Platonic political philosophy and Shi‘ite notions, especially in the hands of al-Fārābī, see Fuzzi M. Najjar, “Fārābī’s Political Philosophy and Shi‘ism,” *Studia Islamica* 14 (1961): 57-72.

theory. Furthermore, it paves the way for constructing a new understanding of political philosophy in Islam and its revival in the contemporary world. In addition, the thesis reflects on the relationship between metaphysics, epistemology, and politics, showing how the ontological-epistemological system of Mullā Ṣadrā al-Shīrāzī's (1572–1636) *al-Ḥikma al-Muta'āliya* (Transcendent Philosophy) could be invested in practical politics.⁷ Because the theory of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* has its own hidden philosophical heritage, which constitutes the practical form of Mullā Ṣadrā's philosophical notions in *al-Ḥikma al-Muta'āliya*, it is necessary to comprehend this religio-political theory within the context of the Islamic philosophical tradition. Mullā Ṣadrā's integrative intellectual structure gave birth to a new Shi'ite epistemic framework consisting of three main components: *burhān* (demonstrative proof), *'irfān* (mystical unveiling), and *Qur'ān* (divine revelation). Demonstrative proof, mystical unveiling, and divine revelation makes up the raw material of what is called an integrative epistemology.⁸ I argue that this epistemic system of *al-Ḥikma al-Muta'āliya* is primarily implied in *Wilāyat al-Faqīh*'s theory, but is usually shaded by the religious legitimization of the

⁷ In academic studies, the political aspect of Mullā Ṣadrā's philosophical outcome has either been ignored or dominated by research on his theoretical philosophy. See Sayeh Meisami, *Knowledge and Power in the Philosophies of Ḥamīd al-Dīn Kirmānī and Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 8.

For a classification of disciplinary and methodological approaches to Mullā Ṣadrā's philosophy, see Sajjad H. Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā and Metaphysics: Modulation of being* (London/New York: Routledge, 2009), 4-14.

For general introductions and historical accounts on Mullā Ṣadrā's life, thought, and works, see Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī and his Transcendent Theosophy: Background, Life and Works* (Tehran: Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies, 1978). Hossein Ziai, "Mullā Ṣadrā: His Life and Works," in *History of Islamic Philosophy*, eds. Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman (London/New York: Routledge, 1996). Ibrahim Kalin, "An Annotated Bibliography of the Works of Mullā Ṣadrā with a brief Account of his Life," *Islamic Studies* 42, no. 1 (2003): 21-62. Sajjad H. Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī: His Life and Works and the Sources For Safavid Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). Sayeh Meisami, *Mulla Sadra* (Oxford, UK: Oneworld, 2013). Ibrahim Kalin, *Mulla Sadra* (Delhi, India: Oxford University Press, 2014).

⁸ Hussein Ibrahim, "The Life and Intellectual Output of Muḥammad Muḥsin al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī (1007/1598–1091/1680)" (MA thesis, McGill University, 2019), 71-72.

theory that presents it as Godly form of ruling. My analytical approach would help better understand the theory from the lens of comparative political theory and build upon this understanding by comparing it to different modern and historical philosophical models of governance.

Al-Khumaynī's political thesis is a critical-fundamental innovation in both Shi'ite political and jurisprudential theories. However, it is at the same time the fruit of a highly-developed relationship between religion and philosophy on one hand and politics and Shi'ism on the other, especially when we take into consideration the period which preceded the establishment of Safavid Iran (1501–1736).⁹ However, as to my knowledge, there is no deep or specialized study that tackles this relationship or approaches *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* in a pure and focused philosophical manner. It is surprising that despite the significance of the philosophical aspect of the theory of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh*, it remains under-researched. Various aspects of this theory have been analyzed and investigated in several studies, but most fall short of offering key information about the role of philosophy in the theory's development. In most cases, when *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* is considered philosophically, it is studied through the compatibility of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* with democracy, such as in Mohsen Kadivar's article (2011): "*Wilāyat al-faqih* and Democracy."¹⁰ Yet, it is still far from clear how *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* could be seen as a political-philosophical theory that is influenced by a long tradition of Islamic philosophy. What makes this theory the legitimate successor of

⁹ On the relationship between religion and politics since early Shi'ism, see Said Amir Arjomand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam: Religion, Political Order, and Societal Change in Shi'ite Iran from the Beginning to 1890* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984). On religion and politics during the Safavid era, see Rula Jurdi Abisaab, *Converting Persia: Religion and Power in the Safavid Empire* (London/New York: I.B. Tauris, 2004). Colin P. Mitchell, *The Practice of Politics in Safavid Iran: Power, Religion and Rhetoric* (London/New York: Tauris, 2009).

¹⁰ Mohsen Kadivar, "*Wilāyat al-faqih* and Democracy," in *Islam, the State, and Authority: Medieval Concerns and Modern Issues*, ed. Asma Afsaruddin (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 207-24.

Islamic political philosophy? Scholars such as Abbas Amanat have traced al-Khumaynī's theory to the philosophical-mystical tradition of Islam, arguing that it has a very modest legalistic foundation.¹¹ A narrower standpoint by Hamid Dabashi understands *al-walī al-faqīh* (the guardian jurist) as the “philosopher king in the Platonic understanding of the term.”¹² In her *Knowledge and Power in the Philosophies of Ḥamīd al-Dīn Kirmānī and Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī* (2018), Sayeh Meisami presented a short account on how Mullā Ṣadrā's synthetic discourse on knowledge and authority can be interpreted as a discursive catalyst for the establishment of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* in contemporary Iran. However, the discussion of the abovementioned question is strongly related to a critique of the Eurocentric understanding of philosophy, where any proposed philosophy is seen merely through the eyes of modern Western notions and thoughts. It is well-known that the Islamic philosophical tradition is rooted in Greek thought. However, it is also agreed that this tradition was able to evolve on its own terms and produce an original philosophical synthesis.¹³ Thus, this contextual and methodological framework would lead us to examine political philosophy in the Islamic tradition independent of any modern Western political notions.

It is clear that the philosophical aspect of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh*, especially when compared to other characteristics, has not gained enough attention by philosophers and scholars of religion. I therefore feel that an introductory work on *Wilāyat al-Faqīh*'s philosophical characteristics and roots would help reveal its core essence. However, I

¹¹ Abbas Amanat, “From Ijtihād to Wilāyat-i Faqīh: The Evolution of Shiite Legal Authority to Political Power,” in *Shari‘a: Islamic Law in Contemporary Context*, ed. Abbas Amanat and Frank Griffel (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 130.

¹² Dabashi, *Theology of Discontent*, 413.

¹³ See Dimitri Gutas, “Avicenna and After: the Development of Paraphilosophy. A History of Science Approach,” in *Islamic Philosophy from the 12th to the 14th*, ed. Abdelkader Al Ghouz (Bonn University Press, 2018), 19-73.

am very aware that I am working within the thin boundaries between philosophy and political theory. It is well known that al-Khumaynī did not address his theory in a philosophical work nor did he present it in a directly philosophical manner. Therefore, my thesis will analyze the implied philosophical aspects of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* in the various jurisprudential, theological, and mystical works of al-Khumaynī and will examine the philosophical scope of practicing this theory politically. In my examination of al-Khumaynī’s theory, I have consulted a great number of primary sources and major secondary literature. Among al-Khumaynī’s works, *al-Ḥukūma al-Islāmiyya (The Islamic Government)*, which is my main primary source for his theory, is the broadest in scope from a jurisprudential and theological perspective, while *Miṣbāḥ al-Hidāya ilā al-Khilāfa wa-al-Wilāya (Torches of Guidance toward Vicegerency and Guardianship)* is the most philosophically inspired. The “hybrid” character of my thesis wavering between a philosophical approach and a religio-political one runs the risk of lacking depth on both counts. Nonetheless, I consider this thematic issue to only reflect the “hybrid” character of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* itself, as discussed above.

Accordingly, this thesis is meant to critically explore the nature of al-Khumaynī’s theory of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh*, tracing the continuity and shifts of its philosophical sources and bringing to light its conceptual structure and implications. This thesis consists of seven chapters. Chapter One presents an introductory account and situates the methodology of the research; Chapter Two provides the philosophical setting; Chapter Three examines al-Khumaynī’s theory of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh*; Chapter Four investigates the philosophical perspective of al-Khumaynī’s religio-political thought; Chapter Five draws out the teleology of politics in al-Khumaynī’s revolutionary thought; Chapter Six locates the structure of the Islamic Revolution and

Islamic Republic in contemporary political and philosophical debates; and Chapter Seven concludes the argument for the need of an original understanding of Islamic political philosophy in the contemporary world. What follows is a detailed description of the contents of each chapter.

Chapter Two offers a summary background of the epistemic-prophetic system in Mullā Ṣadrā's philosophy. It goes over the philosophical relationship between politics and religion. This chapter focuses on investigating the political perspectives that appear in Mullā Ṣadrā's epistemology. This will involve a conceptual analysis of what constitutes a relationship between integrative epistemology and political theory, how we can comprehend the historical development of such a relationship, and the extent to which we are able to hold their coherence and specify the boundaries of their relationship. It is pivotal to examine how Mullā Ṣadrā's epistemology and psychology (ontology and eschatology in a lesser manner), influenced, albeit indirectly, the political theory of al-Khumaynī.¹⁴ It is mainly the Ṣadrian discourse on imamology (Shi'ite Imamate), including discussions on the ontological and political authorities of the infallible, that influenced al-Khumaynī and was developed politically in his hands.¹⁵ This chapter further encompasses an analysis of divine revelation as a pivotal source of

¹⁴ On Mullā Ṣadrā's epistemology, see Ibrahim Kalin, *Knowledge in Later Islamic Philosophy: Mullā Ṣadrā on Existence, Intellect, and Intuition* (Oxford, UK/New York, US: Oxford University Press, 2010). Zailan Moris, *Revelation, Intellectual Intuition and Reason in the Philosophy of Mulla Sadra* (London/New York: Routledge, 2003). Jari Kaukua, *Self-Awareness in Islamic Philosophy: Avicenna and Beyond* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2014). On his ontology, see Christian Jambet, *L'acte d'être: La philosophie de la révélation chez Mollā Sadrā* (Paris: Fayard, 2002); Cecil Bonmariage, *Le réel et les réalités: Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī et la structure de la réalité* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 2007). David Burrell, "Mullā Ṣadrā's Ontology Revisited," *Journal of Islamic Philosophy* 6 (2010): 45-67. Sajjad Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā and Metaphysics*. On his eschatology, see Eiyad S. al-Kutubi, *Mullā Ṣadrā's Eschatology: Evolution of Being* (London/ New York: Routledge, 2015).

¹⁵ On Mullā Ṣadrā's imamology, see Shigeru Kamada, "Mullā Ṣadrā's imāma/walāya: An Aspect of His Indebtedness to Ibn 'Arabī," *Journal of Islamic Philosophy* 6 (2010): 67-79; Maria Massy Dakake, "Hierarchies of Knowing in Mullā Ṣadrā's Commentary on the *Uṣūl al-kāfi*," *Journal of Islamic Philosophy* 6 (2010): 5-46.

justification. It ends by examining al-Khumaynī's engagement with Mullā Ṣadrā's intellectual thought, pointing out a possible connection between them. The purpose of this chapter is to ground the relationship between theoretical philosophy and practical political acts and to present the political consequences of the epistemic structure of *al-Hikma al-Muta'aliya* and the influence this bears on al-Khumaynī's revolutionary thought.

Chapter Three highlights al-Khumaynī's religio-political thought and vision. It also covers the social and political motivations that lead him to theorize an Islamic government headed by *al-walī al-faqīh*. It presents al-Khumaynī's argument on the necessity of establishing an Islamic government and shows his position on the correlation between religious and political authority. This chapter highlights the process by which al-Khumaynī integrated his intellectual and political interests to present the theory of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh*. It displays the theoretical framework of his doctrines of the Islamic government and *Wilāyat al-Faqīh*. Furthermore, it builds on different discourses (i.e. philosophical, mystical, theological, jurisprudential) to examine the term *wilāya*, its political significance, and its relationship with the notion of absolute religious and political authority.

Chapter Four discusses the philosophical foundations of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh*. It shows how the philosophical characteristics of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* reflect the pragmatism of al-Khumaynī who integrated the "idealism" of al-Fārābī and the "realism" of Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna) (980–1037) *pace* Miriam Galston.¹⁶ In this respect, it also highlights the differences and common aspects between al-Khumaynī's theory and its

¹⁶ See Miriam Galston, "Realism and Idealism in Avicenna's Political Philosophy," *The Review of Politics* 41, no. 4 (1979): 561-77.

philosophical model (i.e. the theory of the philosopher king and the ideal city).¹⁷ Furthermore, it investigates the relationship between al-Khumaynī's theory and the Ṣadrian epistemology on both methodological and terminological aspects. In this sense, it shows how the absolute epistemic authority of the infallible *Imām* influenced the delegation of religious and political authority to the jurists that led to al-Khumaynī's theory of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh*. This chapter then turns to answer the question of whether *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* should be considered as a philosophical, political, or jurisprudential theory. It further shows how al-Khumaynī was able to engage modern political aspects with jurisprudential and theological notions in order to achieve a practical outcome which I argue grounded for a transcendent political philosophy.

Chapter Five investigates the role of ontology in al-Khumaynī's political theory. This chapter also examines his social, philosophical, and religious guidelines in order to better understand the coherence of the causes that led to the Islamic Revolution in Iran. It includes a discussion of what revolution means in the Khumaynian perspective and how it is related to the social and political condition of Iranian Muslims. It examines the revolutionary motives of the Islamic Revolution in Iran and briefly investigates whether it was a social, religious, political, or intellectual revolution. This would help to sharpen the concept of revolution that we are dealing with. Finally, it highlights some of al-Khumaynī's rationales for a social-critical philosophy and examines his aim in reconciling the relationship between theoretical and practical aspects of Islam.

¹⁷ When I refer to the Platonic notion of "philosopher king" in comparison to *Wilāyāt al-Faqīh*, I do not mean to reflect the epistemic structure of Plato's philosopher king theory, which is based on the epistemic role of reason and thus differs fundamentally from that of *Wilāyāt al-Faqīh*. Rather, I consider it as the practical philosophical model of al-Khumaynī's religio-political theory, building on its practical form of intellectual elite ruling. For an account on this practical similarity, see Vanessa Martin, "A Comparison between Khumaynī's *Government of the Jurist* and *The Commentary on Plato's Republic* of Ibn Rushd," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 7, no. 1 (1996): 16-31.

Chapter Six studies some features of the process of transforming the Islamic Revolution to the Islamic Republic according to al-Khumaynī's theory and practice. It discusses al-Khumaynī's extension of the theory of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* in public affairs to the concept of the absolute guardianship of the jurist (*al-wilāya al-muṭlaqa li-al-faqīh*).¹⁸ In this respect, it focuses on examining the theoretical contributions of al-Khumaynī through a modern lens, without engaging with specific practical affairs of modern politics. It concludes by discussing the position of the Khumaynian Islamic political system—both in theory and in practice—in comparison with modern liberal democracy. In doing so, it offers an alternative philosophical reading of al-Khumaynī's thought and religio-political aims and challenges some traditional religious and academic positions in understanding *Wilāyat al-Faqīh*. Related to this concern, the chapter shows how the revival of political philosophy in the modern Islamic East occurred in the hands of al-Khumaynī.

Chapter Seven examines the appropriateness of the philosophical approach by which I embarked to understand *Wilāyat al-Faqīh*, especially when this is carried out in light of historical and contemporary philosophical and political issues. It provides an overall summary of al-Khumaynī's main contributions to political philosophy, and some implications of his thought. In addition, it invites to an original understanding of Islamic political philosophy in the contemporary world in general and of *Khumaynism* in particular.

¹⁸ Mohsen Kadivar argues that al-Khumaynī's theory of *al-wilāya al-muṭlaqa li-al-faqīh* (the absolute guardianship of the jurist)—which represents his ideal political theory—had been preceded by three theoretical developmental stages. In this thesis I will not discuss the development of al-Khumaynī's theory. On the development of the theory, see Mohsen Kadivar, "Ayatollah Khomeini's Political Theory & Public Interest," published April 20, 2020, <https://english.kadivar.com/2020/04/20/ayatollah-khomeinis-political-theory-public-interest-url/>.

CHAPTER 2

FROM INTEGRATIVE EPISTEMOLOGY TO *WILĀYAT AL-FAQĪH*

Engaging in intellectual debates with religious doctrines was essential in establishing modern Western philosophical thought. In the West, it is commonly believed that Christianity performed a vital role in the shift from premodern to modern secular political thought. A famous claim of Carl Schmitt is that “[a]ll significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts.”¹⁹ This is frequently used to explain the history of Western political thought as well as the relationship between modern and premodern Judaic-Christian notions. Accordingly, many attempts have been made in the domain of intellectual history to identify the beginning of modern political ideas in the Judaic-Christian thought. It is often argued that the “critique of religion” is a significant feature in Baruch Spinoza’s (1632–1677) work which is usually given a prominent place among his many contributions to modernity and the secular West.²⁰ The idea of secularism has been discussed in the West on both theoretical and practical perspectives. In comparison, this notion is notably absent when scholars engage with the political system in Iran after the Islamic Revolution. In a similar way that Spinoza is often included in genealogies of Western modernity, Mullā Ṣadrā should be seen as the philosophical influence of al-Khumaynī’s

¹⁹ Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology*, trans. George Schwab (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 36.

²⁰ For example, see Jonathan Israel, who attempts to trace what he considers to be the distinctive features of modernity back to Spinoza. Jonathan Israel, *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man 1670-1752* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); and *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650-1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

theory of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* (guardianship of the jurist).²¹ Al-Khumaynī does not quote Mullā Ṣadrā directly in his most prominent religio-political work, *al-Hukūma al-Islāmiyya*. Yet, Mullā Ṣadrā’s core philosophical thought could be considered as the inspiration behind the Islamic Republic in modern Iran. Mullā Ṣadrā’s name appears extensively in the early religio-political work of al-Khumaynī, namely *Kashf al-Asrār* (*Unveiling of Secrets*). There, al-Khumaynī quoted Mullā Ṣadrā’s philosophical views concerning metaphysics, psychology, and eschatology among other Islamic and Western philosophical views.²² Another essential example of al-Khumaynī’s praise of Mullā Ṣadrā appears in the late letter he sent to Mikhail Gorbachev, the former president of the Soviet Union.²³ There, al-Khumaynī’s philosophical linkage to Mullā Ṣadrā and other prominent Muslim philosophers and his reliance on the Ṣadrian philosophy in building the structure of his political thought is clearly evident. The letter was sent on the 7th of January, 1989 and was al-Khumaynī’s only written message to a foreign leader.²⁴ In the letter, al-Khumaynī predicted the end of Marxism and declared

²¹ Peter Adamson, *Philosophy in the Islamic World: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 117. In her book *Knowledge and Power in the Philosophies of Ḥamīd al-Dīn Kirmānī and Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī*, Sayeh Meisami argues that Mullā Ṣadrā’s synthetic discourse on knowledge and authority, especially in its approach to the Sufī narrative of *wilāya*, became an important discursive catalyst for the formation of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* and its political crystallization in contemporary Iran. See Meisami, *Knowledge and Power*, 185-98.

²² Rūḥullāh al-Mūsawī al-Khumaynī, *Kashf al-Asrār*. In p. 57 he mentions Thales of Miletus (d. 546 BC) and Anaximenes of Miletus (d. 525 BC); in p. 58 he mentions the Wise Pythagoras (d. 495 BC), Socrates (d. 399 BC), the Great divine great philosopher Plato (*Aflātūn al-faylasūf al-kabīr al-ilāhi al-‘azīm*) (d. 348/347 BC); in p. 59 he mentions “the great philosopher Aristotle” (d. 322 BC). Al-Khumaynī mentions Ibn Sīnā (also as *al-Shaykh al-ra’īs* and *al-faylasūf al-kabīr*) in p. 33, 61, and 73. He mentions al-Suhrawardī (also as *al-Ḥakīm al-ishrāqī al-kabīr*) in p. 61 and 74. He mentions Mullā Ṣadrā in p. 74. Lastly, he mentions Descartes in p. 62-63. This at least shows a comprehensive knowledge in philosophy that can be attributed to the early al-Khumaynī.

²³ Rūḥullāh al-Khumaynī, *Da ‘wa ilā al-Tawḥīd: Risālat al-Imām al-Khumaynī Za ‘īm al-Thawra al-Islāmiyya wa-Mu’assis al-Jumhūriyya al-Islāmiyya ilā al-Za ‘īm al-Sūfī Mikhā ‘l Ghurbātshūf* (Tehran: Mu’assasat Tanzīm wa-Nashr Turāth al-Imām al-Khumaynī, 2006), 12.

²⁴ Al-Khumaynī was perhaps attempting to trail in the footsteps of Prophet Muḥammad who sent letters to the emperors of Ethiopia, Byzantium and Persia, inviting them to Islam. After the representatives of the Iranian delegation had returned to Tehran, ‘Abdullāh Jawādī Āmulī, a philosopher, jurist, student of al-

that Communism was collapsing. Therefore, he called on Gorbachev and the Soviet Union to abandon the Communist ideology and join Islam instead of relying on Western materialistic capitalism to solve the economic problems of the Soviet bloc. Al-Khumaynī wrote:

Mr. Gorbachev, it is clear to everybody that from now on communism will only have to be found in the museums of world political history, for Marxism cannot meet any of the real needs of mankind. Marxism is a materialistic ideology and materialism cannot bring humanity out of the crisis caused by a lack of belief in spirituality; the prime affliction of the human society in the East and the West alike.²⁵

This explains the philosophical basis of al-Khumaynī's approach to political theory, especially in its relation to the Islamic religion and the idea of monotheism. Al-Khumaynī argued that the problem of the Soviet Union is not economic or social, nor is its lack of liberal orientation, rather it is the Soviet Union leaders' lack of belief in God and their false understanding of ontological matters.²⁶ In this respect, he provided an Islamic philosophical criterion for distinguishing between different types of objects (e.g. the concrete and abstract, existent and nonexistent). Furthermore, he presented a mystical and metaphysical account of human eschatological return to God.²⁷ Referring to these notions, al-Khumaynī turned shortly to discuss the meaning of the law of causation (*qānūn al-illa wa-al-ma'lūl*) from a metaphysical and epistemic point of view. After providing this short philosophical account, al-Khumaynī backed up his arguments with several references to prominent Muslim philosophers, such as al-Fārābī,

Khumaynī, and the leader of the delegation, wrote a lengthy commentary on al-Khumaynī's letter. The letter, in addition to Āmulī's commentary, was published by Mu'assasat Tanzīm wa-Nashr Turāth al-Imām al-Khumaynī (the Foundation for Governing and Publishing *Imām al-Khumaynī's Heritage*) in a book entitled *Da'wat bih Tawhīd (An Invitation to Monotheism)*.

²⁵ Al-Khumaynī, *Da'wa ilā al-Tawhīd*, 13.

²⁶ Al-Khumaynī, *Da'wa ilā al-Tawhīd*, 12.

²⁷ Al-Khumaynī, *Da'wa ilā al-Tawhīd*, 14-16.

Ibn Sīnā, Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī (1154–1191), Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn ‘Arabī (1165–1240), and Mullā Ṣadrā, in order to prove the superiority of Islam as a doctrine and to critique the materialistic approach of Marxism. Al-Khumaynī stated:

Should Your Excellency desire further information on these matters, you may command those scholars of yours who are well-versed in this field to study, in addition to the works of Western philosophers, the writings of Peripatetic philosophers, al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā, peace be upon them. It will then become clear that the law of causation on which all knowledge depends is a rational, not sensible law. Likewise, perception of universal laws and concepts on which all reasoning rests is reached not by means of sensory experience but through rational argument. Your scholars may further refer to the Illuminationist philosophy of Suhrawardī, and explain to you that the flesh, as well as any other material thing, is in need of Pure Light which has no material entity, that man’s witnessing of his own truth does not take place by means of any sense organ. You may also have the scholars familiarize themselves with the Transcendent Philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā (may Allāh be pleased with him and resurrect him with the prophets and the pious), so that it may become clear that the nature of knowledge is different from the nature of matter and that intellect, far removed from matter, cannot be restricted by the laws governing matter. I will not tire you further by mentioning the works of mystics, in particular Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn ‘Arabī. If you wish to make yourself acquainted with the doctrines of this celebrated mystic, send a number of your brilliant scholars, who are well-versed in this field, to Qom so that, by reliance on God, they may, after a couple of years, glimpse the depth of the delicate stages of gnosis, which will be impossible for them to acquire without making such a journey.²⁸

From this, we can highlight one major characteristic of the Khumaynian political thought, namely the philosophical dimension that envisions a deep relationship between politics and metaphysics. This relationship is part of a long philosophical tradition in Islam and seems to follow the footsteps of Plato’s approach in *The Republic*.²⁹ Al-Khumaynī presented his political model of governance, which has its own operational specificity, from a philosophical perspective in order to compete with contemporary

²⁸ Al-Khumaynī, *Da‘wa ilā al-Tawḥīd*, 16-17.

²⁹ See Dimitri Gutas, “The Meaning of *madanī* in al-Fārābī’s “Political” Philosophy,” *MUSJ* 57 (2004): 259-82. For a comprehensive account on Plato’s *The Republic*, see C. D. C. Reeve, *Philosopher-Kings: The Argument of Plato’s Republic* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 2006).

political and ideological schools. This is dramatically shown in al-Khumaynī's presentation of this model as being capable of confronting the "tyranny" of existing political paradigms. The Khumaynian political approach in which ontology, philosophical Sufism (better known as speculative *ʿIrfān* within Shiʿite circles), and religion are mixed with politics is located at the opposite side of modern Western and Eastern theories of secularism, which calls for the separation between religion and politics, although each in different ways and to different degrees.³⁰ This letter in general shows the philosophical perspective that al-Khumaynī adopted and implemented in order to express his political positions to Gorbachev. Al-Khumaynī, in his letter wanted to present himself as philosopher rather than a regular jurist. This is especially obvious when looking into the deep philosophical theme al-Khumaynī uses to approach political matters. This text reveals how al-Khumaynī believes that the way to solve societal problems is to return to the minds of individuals such as Mullā Ṣadrā. The Ṣadrian philosophical school, *al-Ḥikma al-Mutaʿāliya*, adheres to an integrative synthesis of the thoughts of all the Muslim philosophers mentioned by al-Khumaynī.³¹ Hence, we can find an original connection between al-Khumaynī's thought and Ṣadrian philosophy.

In his early work *Kashf al-Asrār*, al-Khumaynī describes Mullā Ṣadrā as being "the greatest of the divine philosophers, the founder of divine rules, and the regenerator of the metaphysical wisdom [...] who was the first to [...] achieve harmony between the purified law (*Sharīʿa*) and divine wisdom."³² This notion of harmonization between

³⁰ On the notions, practices, and political formations of secularism, with a focus on the significant historical incidents that have influenced secular perceptions and practices in the modern West and the Middle East, see Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular: Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003).

³¹ See Ibrahim, "The Life and Intellectual Output," 71.

³² Al-Khumaynī, *Kashf al-Asrār*, 62.

“purified law (*Sharī‘a*)” and “divine wisdom” was crucial in the construction of a full-fledged Khumaynian political theory. It is essential to mention that the young al-Khumaynī studied Mullā Ṣadrā’s magnum opus *al-Asfār al-Arba‘* (*The Four Journeys*), during his education at the Shi‘ite seminary of Qom. Al-Khumaynī’s dedication to Mullā Ṣadrā’s discourse of *al-Ḥikma al-Muta‘āliya* (Transcendent Philosophy) could be clearly seen through his adoption of Mullā Ṣadrā’s notion of the evolution of the soul through knowledge.³³ The pivotal Ṣadrian theme of the soul’s spiritual journey, which appears in *al-Asfār*, was adopted by al-Khumaynī in his own philosophical and esoteric writings.³⁴ Furthermore, this adoption was also reflected in his personal character as a political leader as I will later expand. In this respect, I argue that while the modern political system in the West is based on secularism, Islamic political philosophy, on one hand, and Mullā Ṣadrā’s effort in harmonizing philosophy and religion, on the other, had a large influence on the establishment of a “modern” religio-political system in contemporary Iran.

2.1. The Ṣadrian Model of the Perfect Epistemic Authority

It is clear that theoretical philosophical theses and practical concerns frequently intersects, especially when philosophical ideas flourish within a religious environment that has its own metaphysical, doctrinal, and legislative vision. This kind of intersection enhances the relationship between epistemology and politics through a religious and

³³ Rūḥullāh al-Khumaynī, *Miṣbāḥ al-Hidāya ilā al-Khilāfa wa-al-Wilāya* (Beirut: Mu‘assasat al-A‘lamī li-al-Maṭbū‘āt, 2006), 113.

In general, al-Khumaynī’s *Miṣbāḥ al-Hidāya* is one of the best examples that show the influence of mystical philosophers such as Ibn ‘Arabī (1165–1240), Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī (1209–1274), and Mullā Ṣadrā (1572–1636) on al-Khumaynī’s thought.

³⁴ Alexander Knysh, “*Irfan* Revisited: Khomeini and the Legacy of Islamic Mystical Philosophy,” *Middle East Journal* 46, no. 4 (1992): 634-35.

cultural framework. Now, if we connect the parts of the picture together, we will realize how religion, ethics, and metaphysics all play a role in forming a unique approach to political philosophy in medieval and pre-modern Islam. During the classical period, the task of harmonizing reason and mystical unveiling with revealed or scriptural knowledge gave rise to a productive debate among Muslim scholars. The resulting discourse influenced other debates that occurred between Sufis and Islamic rationalist philosophers.³⁵ We know that Islamic theories usually believe that demonstrative (or rigorously justified rational) proof is an essential condition for true knowledge. Therefore, in order to have true beliefs, one ought to have justified beliefs. This, perhaps, shows that attaining truth is the most fundamental goal of a philosopher's epistemic project. On a narrower perspective, the truthfulness of an epistemic project will itself be necessary to support political authority. The main issue is how to define and determine the valid and necessary epistemological criteria and source of "truth," especially when associated with religious questions that have political implications. The school of the notable Safavid philosopher Mullā Ṣadrā embraced a controversial stand in this epistemological debate. From one angle, Mullā Ṣadrā's epistemology could be understood as a combination of four principle factors, i.e. the Peripatetic discursive philosophy (*mashshā'ī*) of Aristotle and Ibn Sīnā, the Illuminationist philosophy of Suhrawardī, who merged the philosopher's demonstrative method with the mystic's spiritual experience, the philosophical Sufism of Ibn 'Arabī and finally, the wide range of Shi'ite teachings, including the *Qur'ān*, the sayings of the Prophet and the teachings of the *Ahl al-Bayt*.³⁶ Mullā Ṣadrā integrated these sources through a unified epistemic

³⁵ Ata Anzali, *"Mysticism" in Iran: The Safavid Roots of a Modern Concept* (Columbia, South Carolina: The University of South Carolina Press, 2017), 63.

³⁶ On the relationship between Mullā Ṣadrā and Ibn 'Arabī, see Muhammad Reza Juzi, "The Influence of

method. This integrative intellectual structure led to a fresh Shi‘ite epistemic framework comprising of three key factors; namely, *burhān* (demonstrative proof), *‘irfān* (mystical unveiling), and *Qur‘ān* (divine revelation).³⁷ Mullā Ṣadrā’s method came as a continuity to the prevailing philosophical approach in Islamic civilization. Nonetheless, his own thesis was more closely related to the religious system, which could be seen as a result of the intellectual, social, and political situation of his era. In Mullā Ṣadrā’s thought, we notice a consistent attempt to link political discourse and his philosophy of religion to the legitimacy of the ruler’s rule. However, it is essential to mention that the topics related to the political philosophy are not discussed by Mullā Ṣadrā separately in any of his works, as he did not write a specific work on the science of politics. Rather, Mullā Ṣadrā discusses political philosophy only within his metaphysical, ethical, and religious works. These discussions can be found in the fourth Section of his *al-Mabda’ wa-al-Ma‘ād* (*The Origin and Return*), the fifth Manifestation of his *al-Shawāhid al-Rubūbiyya* (*Godly Manifestations*), the third and fifteenth Key of his *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb* (*The Keys to the Unseen*), his *Kasr Aṣnām al-Jāhiliyya fī al-Rad ‘alā al- Ṣūfiyya* (*Breaking the Idols of Ignorance: Admonition of the Sufis*), and his *Sih Aṣl* (*The Three Foundations*). For example, in the fifth Manifestation of his *al-Shawāhid al-Rubūbiyya*, Mullā Ṣadrā investigates the relationship between *Sharī‘a* and politics, where he claims that politics without *Sharī‘a* is like a body without a soul, and that politics in all cases

Ibn ‘Arabi’s Doctrine of the Unity of Being on the Transcendental Theosophy of Sadr al-Din Shirazi,” in *The Heritage of Sufism*, Volume 3, *Late Classical Persian Sufism (1501-1750)*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn and David Morgan (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1999), 266-72.

³⁷ Ibrahim, “The Life and Intellectual Output,” 71.

must be subordinate to *Sharī‘a*. He writes: “The end aim of politics is obedience to divine law (*Sharī‘a*).”³⁸

In general, it is not clear whether Mullā Ṣadrā had brought new ideas in the field of political philosophy after al-Fārābī, who was the first and the most prolific political philosopher in Islam, or whether he was extensively influenced by al-Fārābī’s ideas.³⁹ Therefore, the importance of linking al-Khumaynī to Mullā Ṣadrā is not mainly to prove the influence he exerted on Mullā Ṣadrā’s political philosophy. Rather, it is to show how the epistemically integrative method that was genuinely founded by Mullā Ṣadrā affected al-Khumaynī’s structuring of his political philosophy. By pursuing this line of thought, it will be clear that Mullā Ṣadrā’s importance to the Khumaynian political vision is based on two prominent pillars: the epistemic dimension and the reformist view, which are both deeply connected to the ideal of harmonizing philosophy, religion, and politics. For instance, Mullā Ṣadrā’s *al-Mabda’ wa-al-Ma‘ād* among other works shows his tendency toward understanding Islam as a philosophical religion.⁴⁰ Looking at al-Khumaynī’s philosophical understanding of the divine law—which will be discussed later on—we find that it is influenced by Mullā Ṣadrā’s philosophical approach and terminology as formulated in *al-Ḥikma al-Muta‘āliya*. Mullā Ṣadrā was seeking an expanded philosophical interpretation of the *Sharī‘a*, which was initiated by Ibn Sīnā and Abū ‘Alī Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad Miskawayh (932–1030). In doing so, he sought to establish the political standing of the *mujtahids* (jurists capable of *ijtihād*), and

³⁸ Mullā Ṣadrā al-Shīrāzī, *al-Shawāhid al-Rubūbiyya fī al-Manāhij al-Sulūkiyya*, ed. Sayyid Jalāl al-Dīn al-Āshtiyānī (Mashhad: Dānishgāh-i Mashhad, 1966), 366.

³⁹ I lately noticed that Seyyed Khalil Toussi, *The Political Philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā* (London, UK: Routledge, 2020) was published this year. However, I was not able to benefit from it.

⁴⁰ Mullā Ṣadrā al-Shīrāzī, *al-Mabda’ wa-al-Ma‘ād*, ed. Sayyid Jalāl al-Dīn al-Āshtiyānī (Qom: Markaz-i Intishārāt-i Daftār-i Tablīghāt-i Islāmī, 2001).

the concept of *ijtihād* (rational legal inference), in Islamic philosophy. Thus, there is historical foundation to the rational proofs for the guardianship of *mujtahids*, which al-Khumaynī would further develop jurisprudentially.⁴¹ With al-Khumaynī, the jurists will reach their role in fulfilling their duty to search and investigate the specifics of the religious government's structure during the era of the great occultation and to present it to society.⁴²

With the emergence of what I call a “transcendent political philosophy,” a new era began in Shi'ite political thought, bringing into stark relief the challenges and conflicts between the political system and political jurisprudence (*al-fiqh al-siyāsī*). This harmonization gradually created the necessary ground for the political guardianship of *mujtahids* to appear in the contemporary era as *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* in the hands of the philosopher-jurist, al-Khumaynī, who seems to fulfill the varying aspects of Farabian, Avicennan, and Ṣadrīan political philosophies, as will be shown later in the thesis. Therefore, examining Mullā Ṣadrā's ideas and arguments on prophecy, prophets, and their role in communities is crucial in tracking the development of the philosophical and theoretical aspects of al-Khumaynī's *Wilāyat al-Faqīh*. Clarifying the philosophical role of Mullā Ṣadrā's contribution to the contemporary Iranian religious political ruling system depends on understanding the general role of religion and its relation to philosophy in his works and philosophical school. To achieve this it is necessary to

⁴¹ Najaf Lak-Zāyī, *Āfāq al-Fikr al-Siyāsī 'ind Ṣadr al-Muta'allihīn*, trans. Walīd Muḥsin (Qom: Mu'assasat Dā'irat Ma'ārif al-Fiqh al-Islāmī, 2005).

⁴² Occultation (*ghayba*) in Twelver Shi'ism indicates the absence of the Shi'ite Messianic *Imām* known as al-Mahdī. According to Twelver Shi'ism, Muḥammad al-Mahdī a descendant of the Islamic Prophet Muḥammad and the Twelfth Shi'ite *Imām*, was born in 870 and subsequently went into hiding, from which he will one day emerge and establish a global divine-just state. Twelver Shi'ites believe that al-Mahdī went into the Minor Occultation (*al-Ghayba al-Ṣughrā*) in 874, during which he communicated to his Shi'ites through the Four Deputies. The Minor Occultation was followed by a Major Occultation (*al-Ghayba al-Kubrā*), which denotes the second, longer portion of the Occultation—continuing to the present day.

investigate Mullā Ṣadrā’s integrative epistemology and examine its relation to the epistemic and political role of the fourteen infallible *Imāms* of Shi‘ism. From a Ṣadrian perspective, the idea of prophecy is the major axis that links together practical philosophy (or politics) and religion. While I will surely not be able to discuss prophecy in all its aspects in this thesis, I shall draw attention to what seems to be the main epistemic foundation of the notion of infallibility (*‘iṣma*) in Mullā Ṣadrā’s thought and how the perfect epistemic system necessitates the existence of an “infallible being” most suited to govern the community.

Soul (*nafs*), intellect (*‘aql*), and imagination (*khayāl/takhayyul*) are considered to be the three main epistemic faculties that specifies the unique authority of the prophets.⁴³ These three faculties appear systemically in Mullā Ṣadrā’s writings, where he would engage philosophy and religion in a single system through three epistemic foundations; namely, demonstrative proof, mystical unveiling, and divine revelation.⁴⁴ Through an impeccable functioning of these aforementioned faculties, an infallible being would be able to identify what is true and what is false in both abstract and concrete manners.⁴⁵ Doing so, religion, which is based on revelation, would exceed its basic role of ensuring obedience to divine law,⁴⁶ as it is intended to guide and educate philosophers and non-philosophers, the elite and the masses. The medieval Muslim

⁴³ See the seventh seen of the fifteenth key of Mullā Ṣadrā’s *Maḥāṭib al-Ghayb (The Keys to Metaphysics)*.

⁴⁴ Ibrahim, “The Life and Intellectual Output,” 71-72.

⁴⁵ See Mullā Ṣadrā’s *Maḥāṭib al-Ghayb (The Keys of Metaphysics)* and *al-Mabda’ wa-al-Ma’ād fī al-Ḥikma al-Muta’āliya (The Origination and the Restitution in the Transcendent Theosophy)* as a primary literature, as these two books hold the main debate on prophecy.

⁴⁶ Spinoza describes and rejects this position in his *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus (TTP)*, referring to it as “dogmatic”. He believes that the “dogmatist,” instead of strictly separating philosophy from theology, turns theology into the “handmaid of philosophy”. See chapter 7 and chapter 15 of the *TTP* in Benedictus de Spinoza, *The Collected Works of Spinoza*, ed. and trans. Edwin Curley, vol. 2 (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2016).

philosopher, al-Fārābī, was the first to introduce this so-called “dogmatic” approach into medieval Islamic and Jewish philosophies.⁴⁷ Al-Fārābī, considered “religion” (*milla*) as an “imitation of philosophy” (*muḥākīya li-al-falsafa*).⁴⁸ The difference between the prophet and the philosopher is that the prophet has not only intellectual perfection, but also has the skills of an orator, legislator, and poet, all of which make him capable of translating rational and inspirational perceptions into accessible language and useful rules that can be readily understood by non-philosophers (the “multitude”).⁴⁹ Mullā Ṣadrā agrees with this theory to some extent, but does not even place philosophers in a position comparable to prophets, especially given that for him prophets know the absolute truth, at least with respect to their respective contexts, and are able to convey this truth to everyone irrespective of their intellectual rank. In supporting his position, he goes further by adding some pivotal adjustments to al-Fārābī’s theory, in order to render it coherent with his epistemic theory. For instance, Mullā Ṣadrā turns to mystical unveiling as an alternative path to settling the issues that reason is unable to resolve. He believes that the authority of revelation is not built solely upon reason; rather this kind of knowledge must be supplemented by another faculty of knowledge which is imagination through mystical unveiling. According to Mullā Ṣadrā, the eye of prophecy can grasp things that the intellect cannot. He considers three

⁴⁷ On this topic, see Carlos Fraenkel, “Philosophy and Exegesis in Al-Fārābī, Averroes, and Maimonides,” *Laval théologique et philosophique* 64 (2008): 105-25.

⁴⁸ Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, *Taḥṣīl al-Sa’āda (The Attainment of Happiness)*, ed. Ja’far Āl-Yāsīn (Beirut: 1962), 185.

Al-Fārābī’s most elaborate discussion on religion can be found in his *Kitāb al-Milla (Book of Religion)*. See Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, *Kitāb al-Milla wa-Nuṣūṣ Ukhṙā*, ed. Muhsin Maḥdī (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1991), 41-66.

⁴⁹ See Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, *Ārā’ Ahl al-Madīna al-Fāḍila*, ed. Albert Nasri Nader (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1986) 114-16; 122-26. For a translation of al-Fārābī’s *al-Madīna al-Fāḍila* see Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, *Mabādī’ Ārā’ Ahl al-Madīna al-Fāḍila*, trans. Richard Walzer, *On the Perfect State* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985).

conditions for prophethood; 1) purity of the soul (*ṣafā' fī al-nafs*); 2) strength in theoretical reason reaching the limits of perfection (*quwwa fī al-'aql al-nazarī bāligha ilā ḥad al-kamāl*); and 3) inability of the imaginative faculty to dominate the soul (*du'f fī sulṭān al-mutakhayyila*).⁵⁰ Mullā Ṣadrā puts out the epistemic qualities of the human soul who reaches perfection as follows:

Verily the perfect human (*al-insān al-kāmil*) consists of three parts: nature (*ṭabī'a*), soul (*nafs*), and intellect ('*aql*) that can also be called the spirit (*rūḥ*). And each is from a different world and each is possessed of perfection (*kamāl*) and imperfection (*naqs*) and there are those among human beings who are perfect in all these. The perfection of the soul (*al-rūḥ*) or the theoretical intellect (*al-'aql al-nazarī*) is attained through knowledge of divine truths and matters (*al-ḥaqā'iq wa-al-umūr al-ilāhiyya*). And the perfection of the soul (*al-nafs*) or the imaginative faculty (*al-quwwa al-khayāliyya*) is attained through recording of particular images. And the perfection of nature (*ṭabī'a*) is the power over material substances (*mawād*) that is attained through control (*iḥāṭa*), transforming (*qalb*) and moving (*tahrīk*).⁵¹

Following the Islamic Peripatetic tradition, Mullā Ṣadrā regards the uttermost achievement of the soul to be the perfection of the intellectual faculty. He considers the perfection of the human intellect to be possible through its connection to the Agent Intellect (*al-'aql al-fa'āl*). However, he solely ascribes this level to prophets and saints (*awliyā'*), considering their souls to be independent of instruction (*ta'līm*) as they receive all knowledge directly from the Agent Intellect.⁵² Nonetheless, it is only by means of infallible beings that all other human beings are able to obtain knowledge

⁵⁰ See the seventh seen of the fifteenth key of Mullā Ṣadrā's *Maḥāṭib al-Ghayb*.

⁵¹ Mullā Ṣadrā al-Shīrāzī, *Sharḥ Uṣūl al-Kāfi*, eds. Muḥammad Khājāwī and 'Alī Nūrī, vol. 2 (Tehran: Pizhūhishgāh-i 'Ulūm-i Insānī wa-Muṭala'āt-i Farhangī, 2004), 440. All texts of Mullā Ṣadrā's *Sharḥ Uṣūl al-Kāfi* that are quoted in this thesis are cited and translated by Meisami, *Knowledge and Power*. However, I do apply some minor changes to these translations.

⁵² Although this notion is theorized by Peripatetic philosophers, the position of al-Fārābī is questionable since it describes revelation in terms of the perfection of imagination rather than intellect. For the Farabian account on the relationship between the faculty of imagination and prophecy, see al-Fārābī, *al-Madīna al-Fāḍila*, 114-16; 124-26. Also, see Richard Walzer, "Al-Fārābī's Theory of Prophecy and Divination," *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 77, no. 1 (1957): 142-48.

from the Agent Intellect. In this respect, emanation (*al-fayḍ*) becomes the ultimate source of knowledge. Following Aristotle via Alexander Aphrodisas, Mullā Ṣadrā suggests that the Agent Intellect is what turns the potential knowledge of the soul into actual knowledge of the intelligibles (universal forms).⁵³ He writes:

This agent (*al-fā'il*), as mentioned by Aristotle, is similar to light because like light which causes all visible colors to become actual, this intellect renders the potential intellect (*al-'aql al-hayūlānī*) actual by establishing in it the habit (*malaka*) of intellective conception (*al-taṣawwur al-'aqlī*).⁵⁴

While stressing the basic state of the imperfection of the soul, Mullā Ṣadrā maintains that the human soul has the potential to go beyond the initial states of knowledge and being.⁵⁵ Although most human beings do not exceed the imagination and sense-perception levels of animals, he believes that the epistemic independence for the human intellect is achieved exclusively by certain perfect human souls. Mullā Ṣadrā continues to say:

Thus, when the potential faculty (*al-quwwa al-hayūlāniyya*) becomes actual intellect (*'aqlan bi-al-fi'l*), it becomes identical with the intelligible things (*al-ashyā' al-ma'qūla*) and there is no doubt that the intelligible things are possessed of the most superior being (*afḍal al-wujūd*) and the noblest of the goods (*ashraf al-khayrāt*) after the First One (*al-Awwal*). And the happiness (*sa'āda*) of the soul is more sublime (*ajall*) and more powerful (*aqwā*) than the potential faculty (*quwwa al-hayūlāniyya*). The soul is transferred from the rank of the sensible (*al-ḥadd al-mahsūs*) to the rank of the intelligible (*al-ḥadd al-ma'qūl*) and the sacred world (*al-'ālam al-quds*), to endure (*ṣābira*) in the divine realm (*al-ṣuq' al-ilāhī*) and enter into the way of the separated intellects (*al-jawāhir al-mufāriqa*) and the incorporeal forms (*al-ṣuwar al-mujarrada*) which are the loci for illumination (*al-muṭāriḥ*) by the divine beam (*al-ashi'a al-ilāhiyya*), and the site for the lights (*al-mawāḍi' al-anwār*) and the joys of the Necessary [being] (*al-ladhdhāt al-wājibiyya*), and the recipients of never-ending

⁵³ Sayeh Meisami notes that Mullā Ṣadrā and his Islamic predecessors clearly follow the commentators of Aristotle in considering this agent as external to the human soul. Meisami, *Knowledge and Power*, 141.

⁵⁴ Mullā Ṣadrā al-Shīrāzī, *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, ed. Muḥammad Khājawī (Tehran: Mu'assasa-yi Muṭāla'āt-i wa-Taḥqīqāt-i Farhanghī, 1984), 116. All texts of Mullā Ṣadrā's *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb* that are quoted in this thesis are cited and translated by Meisami, *Knowledge and Power*. However, I do apply some minor changes to these translations.

⁵⁵ Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Shawāhid al-Rubūbiyya*, 202-203.

delights (*qawābil al-ibtihājāt al-ghayr al-mutanāhiya*).⁵⁶

The integrative epistemology of Mullā Ṣadrā can be seen in the intersection between philosophy and mysticism that also overlaps with divine revelation. This intersection has the aim of promoting a special kind of epistemic authority held by the infallible. Each of the three aforementioned epistemic faculties is embodied in a coherent integrative system of justification. A unique character of Mullā Ṣadrā's integrative epistemology is the combination of the externalist and the internalist accounts of knowledge. The internalist account of knowledge is related to the mental state of an individual, where by a belief is only justified if one has conscious access to beliefs and obtains evidence for them through internal epistemic faculties (i.e. demonstrative proof, mystical unveiling).⁵⁷ On the other hand, the externalist account of knowledge is outside one's direct mental capacity and happens when the knower places him or herself in a position in which he or she are more likely to acquire it (i.e. divine revelation). It is a relationship between an individual's belief and the condition of the external world.⁵⁸ The belief which is obtained through this account is justified only if it was arrived in a manner that can be verified independently through a coherent processes (i.e. divine revelation, inspiration). Nonetheless, Mullā Ṣadrā, like his Muslim predecessors, was very aware of the epistemic challenge that revealed knowledge posed to philosophy, given that revelation seems to be a case of a supra-rational form of knowledge. However, contrary to al-Fārābī who tried to humanize the acquisition of revealed knowledge, Mullā Ṣadrā firmly distinguished between revelation (*wahy*) and

⁵⁶ Mullā Ṣadrā, *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, 117.

⁵⁷ Jamie Carlin Watson, "Epistemic Justification," *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, accessed November 30, 2018, <https://iep.utm.edu/epi-just/>.

⁵⁸ Watson, "Epistemic Justification."

inspiration (*ilhām*). He considers revelation to be a unique form of knowledge that should be categorized independently.⁵⁹

Now the doctrines of an infallible can be justified at all epistemic levels. I argue that Mullā Ṣadrā insists that the sources of infallible knowledge are not mutually exclusive from each other, nor do they take the form of what epistemologists call the “linear form of justification.” Rather, the three accounts are combined together, forming one unified epistemic system that upholds the importance of each of the faculties, but acknowledging the ontological superiority of revelation as a divine source of knowledge. For Mullā Ṣadrā this coherence reflects the ultimate form of justification. This form of justification supports the theory of infallibility and alludes to the perfection of this mode of knowledge. Thus, while the infallible can identify the importance of any legalistic ruling through divine revelation, he acquires this knowledge through his reasoning, and obtains it through the process of mystical unveiling. It might be difficult to arrange these complicated connections using a linear epistemic theory, which somewhat reflects a foundationalist characterization. Thus, I hold that in the case of the perfect human being, the three accounts overlap and cohere, meaning they are logically consistent and build upon each other. However, it should be clear that the use of each account of justification will differ depending on the situation, especially if we consider that perfect human being deals with people of different intellectual capacities.

There is an aspect of Platonic intellectualism in all of the above, with the exception of revelation that stands on its own as a special kind of knowledge. Ibrahim

⁵⁹ Ibrahim Kalin, *Knowledge in Later Islamic Philosophy*, 205-206.

In this thesis, “Platonic” terminology refers to the teachings of *The Republic* as they were understood in medieval times.

Kalin holds that if we embrace Plato's profound insight that beyond perceptible things lies the true knowledge of things in themselves, it becomes rational to conclude that knowledge is not only created, but also obtained and unveiled. In Islamic philosophy, this offers a major explanation for non-rational and non-discursive modes of knowledge. A philosopher like Mullā Ṣadrā will have to announce that the foundation of this particular kind of knowledge (i.e. mystical unveiling) is more true and accurate than what logical analysis and sense perception give us. Both intelligibilia and sensibilia take us to the boundary of non-rational experience in that they are essentially based on a form of intuition that makes both rational and empirical knowledge sufficient for our everyday experience of the external world.⁶⁰ It is important to understand that according to Mullā Ṣadrā, we reveal a characteristic of existence when we obtain knowledge of new things and interact with the various modalities of existence. We also put aside the subjectivist claims of the possession of meaning. By recourse to his ontology, Mullā Ṣadrā establishes his understanding of the underlying intelligibility of existence and the resulting non-subjectivist epistemology this implies. Intelligibility and meaning are defined as functions of existence, which the knowing subject is able to understand and disclose. This results in the redefinition of the relation between the subject and the object, or the knower and the known. It is where the definition of knowledge becomes the act of finding existence. This will consequently hold a unique epistemic doctrine, where degrees of existence and levels of consciousness are tightly linked together.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Kalin, *Knowledge in Later Islamic Philosophy*, 206.

⁶¹ Ibrahim Kalin presented a detailed analysis of Mullā Ṣadrā's theory of knowledge in connection to his ontology, as Mullā Ṣadrā almost relates the solving of all philosophical problems to the notion of primacy of existence (*aṣālat al-wujūd*). See Kalin, *Knowledge in Later Islamic Philosophy*, 87-181.

2.2. Divine Revelation as a Source of Epistemic Reliability

Revelation is superior to any other source of knowledge on the basis of reliability. Muḥammad Muḥsin al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī (1598–1680), a Shi‘ite philosopher and jurist, and the most notable student of Mullā Ṣadrā, quotes various important *ḥadīths* in section seven of his introduction to his *Qur’ānic exegete al-Ṣāfi (The Pure)*.⁶² These *ḥadīths* assert that the *Qur’ān* presents and elucidates all knowledge needed by man. This is consistent with his stand on the *Qur’ān*’s authority and high epistemic status. Al-Fayḍ al-Kashānī states:

Abī ‘Abdillāh (Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq, the Sixth *Imām* of Twelver Shi‘ism, d. 148/765), peace be upon him said: “God revealed in the *Qur’ān* the explanation of everything and God did not leave out anything the servant might need so that a servant might not say “If only this had been revealed in the *Qur’ān*.” Indeed, God has revealed it in it.” [...] Abī al-Ḥasan Mūsā (al-Kāzīm, the Seventh *Imām* of Twelver Shi‘ism, d. 183/799) peace be upon him said: “Everything is in the Book of God and the tradition (*sunna*) of His Prophet.”⁶³

Here, the following question would rise: how can we then understand our supposed parallelism between the rational-philosophical method of the infallible and the scriptural-theological track of divine revelation? Mullā Ṣadrā argues that, to attain extraordinary intuition that allows receiving revelation, one must have an extraordinary rational faculty. This means that in order to perfectly use the power of imagination, one must have the perfect intellect.⁶⁴ This is needed to transform one’s imagination into a suitable form of legislation. That is, the prophetic epistemic capacities refer exactly to the ability to effectively conceive laws that would be accepted in the prophet’s cultural

⁶² On the life and intellectual output of al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, see Ibrahim, “The Life and Intellectual Output.”

⁶³ Muḥammad Muḥsin al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, *Tafsīr al-Ṣāfi*, ed. Ḥusayn al-A‘lamī, vol.1 (Tehran: Maktabat al-Ṣadr, 2000), 56.

⁶⁴ Mullā Ṣadrā, *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, 470-71. Al-Fārābī earlier argues for this notion in his *al-Madīna al-Fāḍila*.

and socio-political surroundings. Thus, the difference between knowledge obtained directly from scripture and knowledge from the sayings of the infallibles is that the latter might be more comprehensible to the common people. Thus, the perfect philosopher-exegete (infallible) should be in principle able to make divine content accessible in both philosophical and non-philosophical forms. The words of the infallible are the foundation for legitimizing mystical unveiling, making it a source of true knowledge. Al-Fayḍ al-Kashānī is keen on maintaining the synchrony between mystical unveiling, rational demonstrative proof, and the teachings of divine revelation. The *ḥadīths* of the *Imāms* are explanatory in their nature and are the sole trustworthy guide to the truth of the *Qur'ān*, as is emphasized in Twelver Shi'ite theological discourse. Thus, according to the philosophical school of *al-Ḥikma al-Muta'aliya*, the *Qur'ān* holds the sufficient knowledge needed for the development and flourishing of human beings. However, this knowledge is accessible only to selected people, whom God had chosen through a specific epistemic criterion that takes into consideration their ability to properly understand His revealed words and disseminate them according to people's intellectual abilities.⁶⁵ Consequently, revelation should be understood as an appeal to the epistemic capacity that is common to all people. Yes, the prophets were extraordinary; but they were so because of the rare combination of purity and rationality which gained them access to intuition (*ḥads*) that is unattainable by the common people.⁶⁶ Following Ibn Sīnā, Mullā Ṣadrā describes all theoretical knowledge as

⁶⁵ See al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, *al-Ṣāfi*, 1: 35-36; and Ibrahim, "The Life and Intellectual Output," 74-75.

⁶⁶ This notion was profoundly discussed by Ibn Sīnā. On Ibn Sīnā's view of the relationship between reason and intuition, see Dimitri Gutas, "Intellect without Limits: The Absence of Mysticism in Avicenna," in *Intellect et imagination dans la philosophie médiévale*, eds. M. Cândida-Pacheco and J. Francisco-Meirinhos, vol. 1 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), 351-72; and "Intuition and Thinking: The Evolving Structure of Avicenna's Epistemology," in *Aspects of Avicenna*, ed. Robert Wisnovsky (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2007), 1-38. For an account on Ibn Sīnā's thought on rational imagination, insight, and cogitative power, see Herbert A. Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes*,

originating from what he terms the “world of the holy” (‘*ālam al-quds*). Human beings exhibit differing degrees of perspicacity in obtaining knowledge from this realm. This leads to a hierarchy of perceptions, whereby certain individuals are gifted with an inherent capacity to obtain *a priori* truth without much effort and analysis. Mullā Ṣadrā introduces intuition as an extraordinary faculty of the soul, linking it to the “Sacred Angelic World.” This provides a clear connection between the intuitive knowledge of primary intelligibles and the reception of light and blessings from the Angelic World. He suggests that existence can only be known through intuition and that mystical unveiling is not only an epistemic but also a spiritual act of encountering and witnessing the Divine.⁶⁷ Mullā Ṣadrā supports this assumption by arguing that knowledge and wisdom are not always the result of education; rather, they could in many cases be the result of purity of the soul and mind. He argues that if we were to suppose that wisdom and knowledge are only achievable through education, then no one would be educated. This is because if every educated person would need a teacher, we end up with one or more people who were either self-taught or granted complete wisdom by God at once or gradually, according to their capability and their societal conditions.⁶⁸ With this, I argue that Mullā Ṣadrā does not hold that prophecy is a fruit of supernatural powers granted by God. This note is crucial, as it would be false to believe that the prophets have only

on Intellect: Their Cosmologies, Theories of the Active Intellect, and Theories of Human Intellect (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 95-102. Deborah Black, “Rational Imagination: Avicenna on the Cogitative Power,” in *Philosophical Psychology in Arabic Thought and the Latin Aristotelianism of the 13th Century*, eds. Luis Xavier López-Farjeat and Jörg Alejandro Tellkamp (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 2013), 59-81.

⁶⁷ See Kalin, *Knowledge in Later Islamic Philosophy*.

⁶⁸ Mullā Ṣadrā, *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, 470-71. This view is however supported by some proofs from the *Qur’ān* and the Shi’ite tradition: “And He taught Adam the names - all of them. Then He showed them to the angels and said, “Inform Me of the names of these, if you are truthful.” || They said, “Exalted are You; we have no knowledge except what You have taught us. Indeed, it is You who is the Knowing, the Wise.” (*Qur’ān*, 2:32-33). Muḥammad al-Mahdī, the Twelfth Shi’ite *Imām* said: “He who devote himself sincerely to God for forty mornings (days), springs of wisdom would flow from his heart to his tongue.”

human bodies but not human minds, and that therefore their sensations and consciousness are of an entirely different nature from other human beings. The case that Mullā Ṣadrā is trying to make is that the imagination of prophets is pure and transcendent and can only appear in a person who has a pure soul and a perfect intellect, as well as embodying incomparable piety and virtue. Therefore, prophets would receive God's words and interpret His thoughts in light of their social and spiritual conditions.

Mullā Ṣadrā attempts establish the theoretical and practical authority of the prophets. He considers the role of prophets as having the absolute authority in guiding and ruling the community, both in terms of theoretical and practical guidance. That is why he holds that the imaginative faculty alone is not enough to achieve communication with God, but the truth attained by both reason and imagination is required to understand scripture and attain revelation. In this sense, Mullā Ṣadrā holds that the infallibles are exceptional when it came to both branches of knowledge, and should therefore be entrusted with practical and theoretical matters.⁶⁹ However, regarding what subjects does revelation become authoritative? For one, it would certainly exceed the spreading of “love and how to conduct our lives,” and the production knowledge of “matters of integrity and morals,” as Spinoza would suggest.⁷⁰ Thus, although prophets present a very honest version of how we should live our lives and address how to live religiously, one should bear in mind that their main role is to be the delegated authority of God on earth (*khulafā' Allāh fī al-arḍ*). Thus, their role is not limited to some religious call, but is rather is to achieve the Godly system of justice

⁶⁹ On these two branches of knowledge and their core relationship with respect to *al-Ḥikma al-Muta'aliya*'s epistemic system, see Muḥammad Muḥsin al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, *'Ayn al-Yaqīn*, ed. Riḍā 'Ayyāsh (Beirut: Dār al-Maḥajja al-Bayḍā', 2011), 16.

⁷⁰ Spinoza, *TTP 2*, [52].

worldwide which is itself the true embodiment of living religiously. Now, this cannot simply be achieved in a few years, but requires a lot of time. Therefore, according to Mullā Ṣadrā, prophecy is linked to the concept *wilāya* (guardianship), such that, although the most Perfect Human (*al-insān al-kāmil*) and the last prophet, Muḥammad (570–632), had died, he had established the foundation on which his grandson, who is a *walī* (guardian) and *Imām*, would come in the end of time (*fī ākhir al-zamān*) to establish the Godly government on earth. According to Mullā Ṣadrā this would be the Twelver Shi‘ite *Imām* al-Mahdī (b. 870). Here, one of the pivotal concepts of philosophical Sufism embraced and discussed by the Ṣadrian School in the Shi‘ite context is that of the Perfect Human. As the notion of the *Imām* became fixed in Shi‘ism, Ibn ‘Arabī’s concept of the Perfect Human was shaped to fit and be integrated into *al-Hikma al-Muta‘āliya*’s philosophical structure.⁷¹ In his commentary on the *Āyat al-Nūr* (The Verse of Light, *Qur’ān*, 24:35), Mullā Ṣadrā presents a description of the Perfect Human. However, it could be argued that he, unlike al-Fayḍ al-Kashānī, does not follow a clear Twelver Shi‘ite view of the Perfect Human. An example of the confluence of Ibn ‘Arabī’s mysticism and Shi‘ite imamology is seen in the philosophical-mystical account of al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī in his *al-Kalimāt al-Maknūna*.⁷² Al-Fayḍ al-Kashānī attempted to bridge the gap between man and the Absolute through presenting the concept of the Perfect Human. In his *al-Kalimāt al-Maknūna* (*The Hidden Words*), al-Fayḍ al-Kashānī considered the notion in his discussions of mystical

⁷¹ The works of Ibn ‘Arabī are the original source for the philosophical narrative of the perfect human. See Ibn ‘Arabī, *The Meccan Revelations*, ed. Michel Chodkiewicz, trans. William Chittick and James W. Morris, vol. 1 (New York: Pir Press, 2004), 109; 213; 217; 234; 320; 322.

⁷² See Mullā Ṣadrā al-Shīrāzī, *The Hermeneutics of the Light-Verse of the Qur’an*, trans. Latima-Parvin Peerwani (London: Saqi, 2003); Mohsen Mahmoud Saleh, “The Verse of Light: A Study of Mullā Ṣadrā’s Philosophical Qur’ān Exegesis” (PhD diss., Temple University, 1994).

philosophy. His understanding of the Perfect Human should be understood with respect to the self-manifestation of the Absolute.⁷³ Using the more Shi‘ite formulation of al-Sayyid Ḥaydar al-Āmulī (1319–1385),⁷⁴ al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī viewed the prophets and *Imāms* as distinct forms of the Perfect Human, whose manifestations are categorized under four classes: absolute prophethood (*nubuwwa*), absolute sainthood (*walāya*), limited prophethood, and limited sainthood.⁷⁵ This conceptual understanding of prophecy and sainthood in Ṣadrīan philosophy presents a framework for those who have the task of following the footsteps of the infallibles and who are expected to take over their mission, i.e. the ‘*ulamā*’ (scholars of religion).⁷⁶

2.3. The Heirs of the Infallible’s Authority

It is obvious that Mullā Ṣadrā writes centuries after the great occultation of the Twelfth *Imām*, al-Mahdī. Therefore, his insistence on the necessity of the infallible’s active role in public affairs was not solely taken as an evidence for upholding role in the past while neglecting the present. In this respect, Mullā Ṣadrā theorizes the leadership

⁷³ To better explain this relation, some Muslim scholars and philosophers use the theory of emanation (*fayḍ*) or self-manifestation (*tajallī*). The Absolute represents the full truth before “His” Self-determination into the real world. On the Perfect Human and the self-manifestation of the Absolute in al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī’s thought, see Shigeru Kamada, “Fayḍ al-Kāshānī’s Walaya: The Confluence of Shi‘i Imamology and Mysticism,” in *Reason and Inspiration in Islam: Theology, Philosophy and Mysticism in Muslim Thought*, ed. Todd Lawson (London; New York: I.B Tauris in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2005), 457-61.

⁷⁴ See Kamada, “Fayḍ al-Kāshānī’s Walaya.”

For works of Ḥaydar al-Āmulī and Ibn ‘Arabī’s influence on Shi‘ite discourses, see Robert Wisnovsky, “One Aspect of the Akbarian Turn in Shi‘i Theology,” in *Sufism and Theology*, ed. Ayman Shihadeh (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 49-62.

⁷⁵ For al-Fayḍ’s works on Prophethood and Sainthood see, Kamada, “Fayḍ al-Kāshānī’s Walaya,” 461-63.

⁷⁶ The Arabic word ‘*ulamā*’ is plural for ‘*ālim*, which means scholar. Throughout this thesis the term ‘*ulamā*’ will be used to signify the Twelver Shi‘ite scholars of religion.

of the community as being the representative of the infallible. Now, who would this leader be? Seyah Meisami mistakenly claims that according to Mullā Ṣadrā this leadership is held by three types of people during the absence of the infallible *Imām*. According to Meisami, the first and the second are “saints” and “trustees” respectively, while the third authority is the “jurists” (*al-mujtahidīn*).⁷⁷ This is an incorrect interpretation of Mullā Ṣadrā’s theory. In fact, I argue that he proposes only the third authority mentioned by Meisami. What she identifies as “saints” and “trustees” who represent the *Imām* are themselves the infallibles, the 11 *Imāms* who are the descendants of the first Shi’ite *Imām* ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (599–661). Meisami based her argument on the following text of Mullā Ṣadrā’s *Sharḥ Uṣūl al-Kāfī* (*Commentary of the Foundations of the Sufficient*):

It is a necessity that at all times there should be a saint/guardian (*walī*) who is in charge of (*qā’im*) preserving the *Qur’ān* and knows its secrets (*al-asrār*) and mysteries (*al-rumūz*) so that he can teach the believers and guide those who receive guidance (*al-muhtadīn*), perfect the souls of his God-fearing (*al-muṭṭaqīn*) followers (*al-atbā’*) and supporters (*al-shī’a*), and illuminate their hearts with the light of knowledge and certainty (*yaqīn*). Thus, the warner (*al-mundhir*) was the Messenger of the Lord [(Q 4:165)] of the worlds (*rabb al-‘ālamīn*) and the guide (*al-hādī*) was the Commander of the Faithful (Amīr al-Mu’minīn), the *Imām* of the God-fearing [believers] (*Imām al-Muṭṭaqīn*), ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, salutations be upon him to whom these qualities are attributed—and there are many prophetic traditions on this subject that support each other, [the inclusion of] which would make this discussion too long. And after him [‘Alī] there are those who represent him (*yanūbu manābah*) and take charge of his position (*yaqūmu maqāmah*) among the Friends of God/saints (*awliyā’ Allāh*) and the trustees (*awṣiyā’*) of His Messenger (*rasūl*). This is due to the fact that the earth is never without those who guide people with His light.⁷⁸

It is clear from the text that by “*awliyā’ Allāh*” and “*awṣiyā’*” Mullā Ṣadrā means the 11 *Imāms* who came after ‘Alī, and who represent the notion of *wilāya* and

⁷⁷ Meisami, *Knowledge and Power*, 157-158. Meisami also kept the door open for the first and second categories to be in one category.

⁷⁸ Mullā Ṣadrā, *Sharḥ Uṣūl al-Kāfī*, 2: 611.

wiṣāya after the death of the first *walī* and *waṣī*, ‘Alī. I presume that Meisami was misled in interpreting what Mullā Ṣadrā means by “*yanūbu manābah*” and “*yaqūmu maqāmah*.” The infallible *Imāms* are clearly the indicated persons, as the position that should be upheld is that of ‘Alī, the Imamate. The term “*waṣī*” initially alluded to ‘Alī as the “inheritor (*wārith*)” of the Prophet’s knowledge and authority, whereas the term *wilāya* speaks to the guardianship that was upheld by ‘Alī after the prophet. In the Shi‘ite tradition, *wilāya* represents a rank of spirituality that is possessed by all the infallible *Imāms*, who are referred to as *awliyā’ Allāh* in Shi‘ite discourses.⁷⁹ Thus the (*awliyā’ Allāh*) and the trustees (*awṣiyā’*) of His Messenger (*rasūl*) are the Twelve *Imāms* in total. Mullā Ṣadrā is pointing out those who fulfilled the position of the Imamate after the death of the first *Imām* ‘Alī. Consequently, we are left with one authority to represent the infallible, who Meisami believes are the *mujtahids* or “jurists”.⁸⁰ In his *al-Shawāhid al-Rubūbiyya*, Mullā Ṣadrā emphasizes the authority of the *Imām* and the jurist afterwards, maintaining the closing of the doors of prophecy (*nubuwwa*) and messenger-ship (*risāla*). In this regard, it is crucial to clarify what would be the role of the jurist in the network of the Shi‘ite authority during the absence of the infallible. The word “*mujtahid*” appears at the very end of *al-Shawāhid al-Rubūbiyya* where Mullā Ṣadrā describes the continuity of the religious authority following the death of the Prophet—the stage which signifies the closure of direct revelation. Mullā Ṣadrā writes:

[After the Prophet], God preserved the rule (*ḥukm*) of the harbringers of good tidings (*al-mubashshirāt*)⁸¹ and the *Imāms* who are immune to errors (*al-a’imma*

⁷⁹ See for example Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Shawāhid al-Rubūbiyya*, 377; *Sharḥ Uṣūl al-Kāfi*, 2: 423; 431; 478; 500; 523; 555; 564.

⁸⁰ Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Shawāhid al-Rubūbiyya*, 377.

⁸¹ For this *Qur’ānic* term, see *Qur’ān*, 4:165.

al-ma'şūmīn 'an *al-khaṭa'*)—salutations be upon them—and the authority of the jurists (*al-mujtahidīn*). While removing (*azāla*) the title [of prophet or messenger] from them, He established their authority and commanded anyone who is lacking in the knowledge of the divine judgment (*al-ḥukm al-ilāhī*) to take their questions to the people of remembrance (*ahl al-dhikr*)⁸² as God said: “If you do not know, ask the people who have the knowledge of the Scriptures (*ahl al-dhikr*) [(*Qur'ān*, 21:7)].” So, [the jurists] give their legal ruling (*fatwā*) according to their rational legal inference (*ijtihād*) and they could also disagree just like different religious laws (*al-sharā'i'*) disagree as God said: “We have assigned a code of law and a way of life to each of you [(*Qur'ān*, 5:48)].”⁸³

Here it is clear that Mullā Ṣadrā expands the infallible status of guidance to all those who may assume this position. In this respect, “jurists” according to Mullā Ṣadrā would be legal scholars who function as a kind of intermediary between the *Imāms* and the believers.⁸⁴ Meisami assumes that in this passage Mullā Ṣadrā “is explicitly attributing the legal-political authority of the prophets and the *Imāms* to jurists.”⁸⁵ I agree with Meisami concerning the legal authority; however, I disagree with respect to the attribution of political authority. There is nothing in this text that reflects Mullā Ṣadrā’s direct opinion on the matter. However, if one wants to deduce an opinion in this concern, it would be that Mullā Ṣadrā is solely talking about religious authority. This is because rationally, the political order should be managed by only one political authority and cannot be spread among the different opinions of the jurists. Still, as I previously mentioned, Mullā Ṣadrā holds that “the end aim of politics is obedience to *Sharī'a*.”⁸⁶

The complication of the aforementioned issue, with respect to the relationship between knowledge and power, will later be considered by al-Khumaynī among others,

⁸² For this *Qur'ānic* term, see *Qur'ān*, 3:58; 13:28; 15:6; 15:9; 20:124; 21:7; 43:5; 51:55; 54:40.

⁸³ Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Shawāhid al-Rubūbiyya*, 377.

⁸⁴ Kamada, “Mullā Ṣadrā’s imāma/walāya,” 72.

⁸⁵ Meisami, *Knowledge and Power*, 159.

⁸⁶ Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Shawāhid al-Rubūbiyya*, 366.

holding that legal authority and political authority must be presented in correlation, as having legal authority without the political one will not ensure the implementation of the divine law. The heredity nature of the divine authority that is affirmed by the Safavid Shi‘ite philosophers of the Ṣadrīan School will be indirectly adopted by al-Khumaynī and transformed politically in the modern world, where *al-walī al-faqīh* will assume the position of leadership of the community given his role as the supposed deputy of the Perfect Human of his time, al-Mahdī. Nevertheless, this still raises the question of whether Mullā Ṣadrā initially considers the *mujtahids* to be eligible to function as the political leaders of the community, in addition to upholding their religious authority. We might deduce the answer from his late epistle *Sih Aṣl*.⁸⁷ Although in the Epistle, Mullā Ṣadrā was not calling the ‘*ulamā*’ for upholding the position of leadership of the community, he was genuinely proposing an active role of the ‘*ulamā*’ in political manners. If we examine Mullā Ṣadrā’s *Sih Aṣl*, we see that he was looking for a special type of jurists, who represents the *fiqh* (legal understanding) that encompasses the theoretical and practical sciences. Yet we should take into consideration that Mullā Ṣadrā was writing within specific religious and sociopolitical contexts that influenced his philosophical tendencies.⁸⁸ It is essential to note that the allocation of power among the clergy had undergone several changes since the early Safavid times. By Mullā Ṣadrā’s day, there was no longer one Safavid dominant jurist—such as ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn ‘Abd al-‘Ālī al-Karakī ‘Āmilī (1461/66–1534), well known as al-Muḥaqqiq al-Thānī or al-Muḥaqqiq al-Karakī—to whom all the other

⁸⁷ See Mullā Ṣadrā al-Shīrāzī, *Risāla-yi Sih Aṣl*, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Mawlā, 1997).

⁸⁸ Throughout the thesis, I will show how the political theory of al-Khumaynī changed and developed with respect to the sociopolitical changes that occurred in the public sphere.

jurists had to obey. Rather, the Safavid Shah would appoint different high-ranked jurists for each major city, all of whom held the status of *Shaykh al-Islām*. Therefore, in this way, we can see his approach to the jurisprudential pluralistic authority represented by each one of the jurists. Furthermore, we should bear in mind that what all the Safavid phases had in common was the fact that the Shah was considered to be the political representative of the infallible, and based on this authority he would appoint all the jurists in positions of religious authority throughout the Safavid state.⁸⁹

2.4. Mullā Ṣadrā and al-Khumaynī Seeking Reformation and Revolution

Although Mullā Ṣadrā does not criticize the Safavid monarchy from its foundations as al-Khumaynī did in the 20th century, there is no dispute that he was one of the most prominent influencers of the criticism of modern Iran's monarchy. His quiet-active technique has philosophically paved the way for the Iranian religio-political revolution that prevailed three centuries later. The philosophical-religious rhetoric of Safavid philosophers and '*ulamā*', such as Muḥammad ibn 'Izz al-Dīn Ḥusayn al-'Āmilī, better known as al-Shaykh al-Bahā'ī (1547–1621), Muḥammad Bāqir al-Astarabādī (1561–1632)—nicknamed *al-Mu'allim al-Thālith* (the Third Teacher) and better known as Mīr Dāmād—Mullā Ṣadrā, and al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, appears to be a vital part of their political doctrine and added to the achievement of establishing a religio-political ruling system in modern Iran under the umbrella of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh*.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Examining Mullā Ṣadrā's interaction with the state is very essential in understanding Mullā Ṣadrā's political philosophy. However, this goes beyond the research scope of this thesis. For an introductory account on the status of politics in Mullā Ṣadrā's Transcendent Philosophy, see Lak-Zā'ī, *Āfāq al-Fikr al-Siyāsī*, 43-67. On Mullā Ṣadrā's political philosophy, see Seyyed Khalil Toussi, *The Political Philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā* (London, UK: Routledge, 2020).

⁹⁰ The proclamation of Shi'ism as the official state religion of Safavid Iran (1501–1736) featured the first chief event leading to the revival of the political conscience of Shi'ite philosophers and jurists. Religious positions in the government were created and the collaboration of Shi'ite jurists was demanded in order to

The condensed use of scriptural metaphors with philosophical and sometimes sociopolitical interpretations by Safavid philosophers led the Ṣadrian Khumaynī, three centuries after Mullā Ṣadrā, to indirectly elaborate his integrative epistemology and apply it politically.

Al-Khumaynī appeared as a notable revolutionary leader and then became the famous founder of the modern Islamic Republic of Iran. He was also a prominent *marja' taqlīd* (source of legal emulation), mystic philosopher, unique writer, eloquent poet, and a lecturer. Prior to his political engagement, al-Khumaynī was especially known for his great attraction to mysticism and philosophy. He was inspired by the philosophy of Aristotle, especially in its practical branch, as well as Plato, who he praised for his rich philosophical knowledge of divinity.⁹¹ Al-Khumaynī was also greatly influenced by Muslim philosophers including Ibn Sīnā, Ibn 'Arabī, Mullā Ṣadrā.⁹² Although he did not cite Mullā Ṣadrā in his religio-political lectures as previously mentioned, Mullā Ṣadrā's epistemic thought and practical philosophy seem to be embodied in al-Khumaynī's political doctrine. The understanding of prophecy and the pivotality of religious legislation was mirrored in al-Khumaynī's revolutionary political theory. Al-Khumaynī, who himself taught Mullā Ṣadrā's philosophical thought

foster Shi'ism within the state and maintain the new religio-political order. Accordingly, a major controversy emerged among the 'ulamā', concerning the legality of their involvement in politics, as political quietism was the common stance among the Shi'ite 'ulamā' prior to the Safavid era. See Abisaab, *Converting Persia*. In the tradition of Islamic philosophy, the First Teacher is Aristotle, the Second is Fārābī, and the Third is Mullā Ṣadrā's philosophy teacher; Muḥammad Bāqir Mīr Dāmād. See Muhsin Mahdī, *Alfarabi: Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1962), 4.

⁹¹ Al-Khumaynī wanted to maintain that reason does not oppose revelation, and that the foundational (ancient) philosophical thought, especially that of Plato and Aristotle supports revelatory knowledge. That is why al-Khumaynī, especially in his early writings frequently mentions the ancient philosophers, such as Plato, whom he calls the "divine Plato". On how Platonic and Neoplatonic thought influenced al-Khumaynī, see Vanessa Martin, *Creating an Islamic State: Khomeini and the Making of a New Iran* (London/New York: I.B. Tauris, 2003), 32-47.

⁹² Knysh, "Irfan Revisited," 631-53.

in the Shi‘ite seminary (*al-ḥawza al-‘ilmiyya*), must have been influenced by the latter’s revolutionary thought in critiquing the Safavid Shahs and their scholars.⁹³ Mullā Ṣadrā’s integrative epistemology is clearly reflected in the characteristic role of ‘*ulamā*’, who he held to be the mirror of the infallible in leading a revolution and forming Islamic government. Therefore, al-Khumaynī had probably turned his deep philosophical interest toward a social analysis that aims to redirect the role of ‘*ulamā*’ in the community and their relationship with the political system in Iran.

At this stage, it is crucial to mention that Mullā Ṣadrā’s epistemic project is related to many other disciplines, which cover politics in an indirect manner through metaphysics and ethics. In his *Sih Aṣl*,⁹⁴ Mullā Ṣadrā calls for reforming social conditions and getting rid of the conditions that obstruct the development of society. He sought realistic enlightenment based on enhancing the consciousness and awareness of ‘*ulamā*’ with respect to the socio-political and cultural conditions of the society he lives in. According to Mullā Ṣadrā, this must be done in parallel with acquiring a deep philosophical and mystical understanding of the religious system and its theoretical and practical structures. For instance, the second problem which Mullā Ṣadrā identifies in the relationship between the Sultan and the *faqīh* (jurist) is the love of wealth, money, and inclination for bodily pleasures.⁹⁵ This, according to Mullā Ṣadrā deprives the ‘*ulamā*’ among other people from realizing the truth and gaining divine knowledge which is the key to knowledge of the unseen and eschatological happiness.⁹⁶ *Sih Aṣl* is

⁹³ On al-Khumaynī studying and teaching ancient, Islamic, and mystical philosophy see Martin, *Creating an Islamic State*, 31-34.

⁹⁴ Mullā Ṣadrā, *Sih Aṣl*.

⁹⁵ Mullā Ṣadrā al-Shīrāzī, *Risālat al-Uṣūl al-Thalātha: Ru’ūs al-Shayṭān fī ‘Alāqat al-Faqīh bi-al-Sultān* (Beirut: Dār al-Ma‘ārif al-Ḥikmiyya, 2008), 135-39.

⁹⁶ Mullā Ṣadrā, *Risālat al-Uṣūl al-Thalātha*, 163-67.

born of an integrative epistemology and therefore, embodies the epistemic foundations of Mullā Ṣadrā's practical philosophy in the sense of presenting his political and ethical thoughts as arising from Shi'ite theological and jurisprudential commitments in conversation with the Islamic philosophical tradition. In *Sih Aṣl*, Mullā Ṣadrā works critically on resolving the tension between the 'ulamā' and the ascetics using an ethical approach. By explaining the relationship between purification of the soul, ethical training, and gaining knowledge, *Sih Aṣl* is intended to be an ethical treatise along philosophical lines. The three principles referred to in the title signify the three hurdles in the path leading to knowledge: (1) ignorance of psychology and philosophical anthropology; (2) love of wealth, power, desire, and pleasure; and (3) the lust for domination, which, when joined with demonic deception, makes the differentiation between right and wrong difficult.⁹⁷ This shows how Mullā Ṣadrā's contribution is deployed under psychological and eschatological thematic umbrellas as part of his transcendent philosophy.

In *Sih Aṣl*, Mullā Ṣadrā shows no restraint in criticizing the exoteric 'ulamā', and never disavowed the large corpus of philosophical and mystical works he had composed. The Epistle represents the Ṣadrīan approach to political affairs and was written to critique the Sultans' jurists whom Mullā Ṣadrā calls, "the 'ulamā' of rituals."⁹⁸ However, the text is not just a critique of a group of "materialistic 'ulamā'" or of the mutually beneficial relationship between the court and the clergy, but is also an implicit attack on the ruling system by a philosopher who was under religio-political pressure. Mullā Ṣadrā's text presents a methodological and thematical shift in engaging

⁹⁷ Mullā Ṣadrā, *Sih Aṣl*, 153-56. On the terminological translation, see Carl W. Ernst, "Sufism and Philosophy in Mulla Ṣadrā," *Afkār: Journal of 'Aqīdah & Islamic Thought* 6 (2005): 159.

⁹⁸ Mullā Ṣadrā, *Risālat al-Uṣūl al-Thalātha*, 109-110.

with political authority, as the Shah is no longer Sunni, but rather belongs, albeit exoterically, to the Shi‘ite sect.⁹⁹ This is pivotal in showing Mullā Ṣadrā’s practical engagement in public and political affairs, especially since he is widely considered in academic research to be an apolitical theoretical philosopher and mystic. It is important to note that *Siḥ Aṣl* was written in Persian instead of Arabic, which was the main language of religious and philosophical scholarship. Mullā Ṣadrā wanted to broaden the audience and indeed, the *Epistle* was more accessible to the Persian public. This indicates that a socio-religious conflict was indeed taking place. For Mullā Ṣadrā, the matter is not related solely to the legitimacy of exploiting Shi‘ite religious sentiments in order to establish power, but is also related to what he did not accept to be a legitimate Shi‘ite orientation in political affairs on the part of the exoteric ‘*ulamā*’. Mullā Ṣadrā was not fighting the ‘*ulamā*’s support for a political system as much as he was fighting the existing religious system itself and its corruption. He was dealing with scholars who were taking advantage of their political positions to achieve their worldly interests, to confirm their intellectual beliefs, and to fight all those who contravene their intellectual-ideological lead. At the same time, they employed their religious authority to re-draw the image of the Shi‘ite belief into what the ruler pleases. The battle of Mullā Ṣadrā with *fuqahā’ al-salāṭīn* (the jurists of the sultans) was an epistemic and ethical battle that carried political dimensions.

⁹⁹ Prior to the Safavid dynasty, the ‘*ulamā*’ did not face the serious challenge of whether it is legal or not for the ‘*ulamā*’ to intervene in politics during al-Mahdī’s occultation. The controversy relates to the fact that the rise of Safavids gave the opportunity for Shi‘ites to transform into a stronger more capable religio-political sect; however, the government was brutal and tyrannical in many ways. Therefore, any jurisprudential view concerning cooperation with the Safavid state will in turn have its own religious and sociopolitical consequences. An applicable ramification of this issue is the Friday prayer, a topic that was highly debatable between jurists in Safavid Iran. See Andrew J. Newman, “Fayd al-Kashani and the Rejection of the Clergy/State Alliance: Friday Prayer as Politics in the Safavid Period,” in *The Most Learned of the Shi‘a: The Institution of the Marja‘ Taqlid*, ed. Linda S. Walbridge (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 34-52.

Accordingly, I argue that Mullā Ṣadrā upholds the duality of the quietist and activist trajectories when dealing with the political circumstances and uses philosophical notions as tools when critically dealing with Safavid political authority. Mullā Ṣadrā was an activist in critiquing the religious bureaucracy and the political system, although he uses scholars of religion as a front to criticize the actions of the Sultan. Of course, when he is criticizing the Shah's scholarly entourage, he is criticizing the Shah himself, albeit indirectly. However, I hold that Mullā Ṣadrā was not so much concerned about Safavid authority as such than with the court scholars who were to a large extent responsible for the state oppression on philosophers and mystics.¹⁰⁰ Mullā Ṣadrā's public interaction with the Safavid authorities and clerical circles had created a unique form of clergy-state relationship where quietism and activism coincide. Although his self-exile to Kahak, a village near Qom, from the capital Isfahan seems to reflect a quietist act, it still speaks to a tension he felt with the religio-political order that was expressed publicly later in *Siḥ Aṣl*. This derivation helps us better understand how Mullā Ṣadrā presents his philosophical and religious discourses as a way of life, where political commitments are articulated through ethical transformation.

Although written in the 17th century, the Epistle examines the political establishment of Shi'ism as state-religion in early modern world and helps us understand the complex relationship between the religious circles and the Iranian monarchy since the rise of Safavid Iran in 1501/2 until the night preceding the victory of the Islamic Revolution in 1979. Mullā Ṣadrā's impact on the clergy's sociopolitical role and the clergy-state relationship in the 20th century can be seen through the philosophers of the period who upheld Ṣadrīan thought. What was theorized by Mullā

¹⁰⁰ Mullā Ṣadrā, *Risālat al-Uṣūl al-Thalātha*, 112-13.

Şadrā in his *Sih Aşl* concerning the role of the clergy was later practiced in Iranian seminaries and public politics in the hands of al-Khumaynī and his students. This view can be seen by the following statement by al-Sayyid Aḥmad, al-Khumaynī’s son, who holds that the greatest accomplishment of his father was his fight against the traditional orthodox clergy:

We have had many jurists, mystics, and philosophers. We have had many politicians who fought America. But none were the *Imām*. Was his greatest art to set up the Islamic Republic? No. What made him the *Imām* and led to the historic and victorious Islamic movement was the fact that he fought the backward, stupid, pretentious, reactionary clergy [...] He fought them with theology, mysticism, and jurisprudence; philosophy, art, and poetry [...] All this he did to liberate the oppressed from the yoke of the backward clergy. It was [the forces of the oppressed], liberated by the *Imām*, who brought about the victory of the movement. The feeling was mutual and the orthodox clergy retained their [absolute] opposition to al-Khumaynī’s “mystical ravings” and “troublesome politics.”¹⁰¹

Al-Khumaynī insists, when instituting the political responsibility of the ‘*ulamā*’, that both rationality (‘*aql*’) and Islamic Law (*shar*’) mandate that the governments cannot be left without questioning and criticism.¹⁰² He holds that “the *Imāms* have laid very important duties on the shoulders of the jurists (*fuqahā*’), and have committed them with preserving this trusteeship.”¹⁰³ In this sense, al-Khumaynī’s *al-Ḥukūma al-Islāmiyya* had stressed that the ‘*ulamā*’s duty in opposing tyrant sultans comes before the duty of the people. There, al-Khumaynī pointed out to the many damaging impacts of the clergy-court cooperation on the religion of Islam, stressing that the resulting effects of the collaboration between *fuqahā*’ *al-salāṭīn* and the oppressors were even

¹⁰¹ Aḥmad al-Khumaynī, *Majmū‘a-yi Āthār-i Yādigār-i Imām* (Tehran: Mu’assasat Tanzīm wa-Nashr Turāth al-Imām al-Khumaynī, 1996), 497-98.

¹⁰² Al-Imām Rūḥullāh al-Mūsawī al-Khumaynī, *al-Ḥukūma al-Islāmiyya* (Beirut: Markaz al-Imām al-Khumaynī al-Thaqāfī, 2008), 36.

¹⁰³ Al-Khumaynī, *al-Ḥukūma al-Islāmiyya*, 146.

more harmful to the religion than the fealty of an ordinary person to the ruler.¹⁰⁴ He further claimed that the major corruptions in the society (the Iranian society during his time) were the consequences of the corruption of the Shah and his family. He further elaborates:

In this context, the infallible *Imāms* prohibited their followers from any form of cooperation or association with tyrant rulers, regardless how minor [the actions] are, so that Islam and Muslims do not end up in the condition that we see now.¹⁰⁵

This statement shows how al-Khumaynī critiqued political cooperation with the *de facto* illegitimate tyrant government. However, al-Khumaynī also critiqued political isolation and political quietism.¹⁰⁶ He was against passivity in political affairs, and in this respect, he opposed any kind of isolation on the part of the ‘*ulamā*’. For al-Khumaynī, this practice only reflects a complete renunciation of one’s social and ethical responsibilities. Al-Khumaynī seems to be calling upon the clerical class to engage in political activism and transformation.

In *Sih Aṣl*, Mullā Ṣadrā shows himself to be a political reformist who articulates his political position and criticism of the ruling class through ethical teachings. The outcome of stressing the centrality of living an ethical life and purifying the soul is the transformative call for an internal revolution and reconstitution of the clerical *madrasas*. Al-Khumaynī seems to follow this method as well but in a more advanced manner. This will turn al-Khumaynī from a philosopher-jurist who theoretically critiques the social scourges to a revolutionary leader who seeks revolution and the implementation of

¹⁰⁴ Al-Khumaynī, *al-Hukūma al-Islāmiyya*, 145-46.

¹⁰⁵ Al-Khumaynī, *al-Hukūma al-Islāmiyya*, 146.

¹⁰⁶ On political cooperation, quietism, and isolation see Zeina Taha, “Shiite Ulama Between Political Quietism, Activism, and Revolution” (MA thesis, University of Tehran, 2017),” 9-10.

Wilāyat al-Faqīh. This is what represents the turn from ethical theory to political theory in the Khumaynian thought. The reconstitution of the *madrasas* must involve a deep political commitment from the part of the ‘*ulamā*’ to society, one that might lead them to leading an external revolution in order to implement what they believe to be a Godly way of life. Al-Khumaynī drew very clear lines showing where the battle was to be fought. He unified the doctrine of *jihād*, where its two branches *al-jihād al-akbar* (the greater holy war) and *al-jihād al-aṣghar* (the lesser holy war) are harmonized in order to implement a single aim.¹⁰⁷ According to al-Khumaynī, the *jihād* in both branches would be seen through deeply political perspectives, in which esoteric and exoteric actions would be in balance and where fighting internally to purify the soul is directed externally in realizing the revolutionary aim of abolishing the enemy of God. This perhaps, could be considered as a complete battle, which includes the individual and society in the sense of it being fought internally and externally and involves both moral and political fronts.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ *Al-jihād al-akbar* (the greater holy war) represents metaphorically—according to a Prophetic tradition—the struggle with one’s self (*mujāhadat al-nafs*) toward achieving purification and refinement. This is basically done through *murāqabat al-nafs* (self-supervision) and *muḥāsabat al-nafs* (self-accounting). The notion is deeply and widely discussed in esoteric Islam and Islamic ethical theories. For example, al-Fayḍ al-Kashānī discussed this topic within a general ethical scheme under the heading of *al-murābaṭa* (vigilance). According to al-Fayḍ al-Kashānī, *al-murābaṭa* consists of six subdivisions: (1) *al-mushāraṭa* (self-preparation); (2) *murāqabat al-nafs* (self-supervision); (3) *muḥāsabat al-nafs* (self-accounting); (4) *mu’āqabat al-nafs* (self-punishment); (5) *mujāhadat al-nafs* (self-struggle); and (6) *mu’ātabat al-nafs* (self-recrimination). See M. N. Saghaye-Biria, “Al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī (1598-1680) on Self-supervision and Self-accounting” (MA thesis, McGill University, 1997), 34-35. For further discussion on each of the six subdivisions, see *ibid*, 36-45. Nonetheless, what is unique and innovative in al-Khumaynī’s dealing with this notion is that he deeply links it to public religious and sociopolitical revolutions, in which struggling with the self to purify it becomes a necessary condition for any genuine societal reformation and refinement. In addition, revolting against the backward and reactionary clergy system and the tyrant government becomes an external image of struggling with the self. For a comprehensive account on al-Khumaynī’s theoretical and practical approach to this topic al-Imām al-Khumaynī, *al-Jihād al-Akbar*, trans. Ḥusayn Kawrānī (Beirut: al-Dār al-Islāmiyya, 1991).

¹⁰⁸ In his esoteric-ethical writings such *al-Ādāb al-Ma’naviyya*, *Sir al-Ṣalāt*, and *al-Arba’ūn Ḥadīthan*, al-Khumaynī develops this broader esoteric sense of his political thought through mystical, ethical, and religious notions. In his mystical and ethical works, al-Khumaynī maintains that humans were created to develop perfection and unity with God. When he talks about prayer, he considers it to be a path toward perfection, where the prayer is a developing human. This sort of development involves implementing the

During his 1964–65 exile in Turkey, al-Khumaynī wrote his *al-Risāla al-‘Amaliyya* (a booklet of legal rulings) in two volumes, entitled *Tahrīr al-Wasīla*. He innovatively adds the chapter of “enjoining good and forbidding evil” (*al-amr bi-al-ma‘rūf wa al-nahiy ‘an al-munkar*) in his *Tahrīr al-Wasīla*, as this inclusion was unprecedented in other booklets during the previous centuries. This chapter lays out the jurisprudential framework for the Iranian Islamic Revolution. There are some conditions under which it will be deemed obligatory to enjoin good and forbid evil. One of these requirements deals with the possibility of the success of the religious obligation in question. To this condition al-Khumaynī applied an inventive point, in which he backed up his political theory with a jurisprudential rationale. Al-Khumaynī cancelled the probabilistic condition (i.e. effectiveness) of forbidding evil in cases where evil (*munkar*) targets the essence of Islam. He considers the silence of the ‘*ulamā*’ concerning these evils as a mean of ruining the trust of the believers in their religion. Using a complete jurisprudential terminology, al-Khumaynī paved the way for his future political theory through a *fatwā* (legal ruling):

In the time of the occultation of the hidden *Imām*, his general deputies (*nuwwābah al-‘amma*)—who are the jurists qualified to give legal opinions and practice jurisdiction (*al-fuqahā’ al-jāmi‘ūn li-sharā’iṭ al-fatwā wa-al-qaḍā’*)—uphold his position in public domains and [are responsible for] all what falls under the authority of the *Imām*, except for initiating *jihād*.¹⁰⁹

Accordingly, al-Khumaynī holds that if the hidden *Imām* is both a political and spiritual ruler, then likewise, his representatives must also hold such qualities. The

institution of justice. In this, al-Khumaynī is linking together a concrete up-rising for God with an abstract step toward God. Prayer leads human beings out of darkness as an introductory step to advance practically for God. He fights for God and revolts for the sake of God. Therefore, studying the mystical and ethical works of al-Khumaynī is essential to understand his whole intellectual project and its relationship to his political activity. On al-Khumaynī’s mystical personality and thought, Christian Bonaud, *L’Imam khomeyni un gnostique méconnu du XXe Siècle* (Beirut: al-Bouraq, 1997).

¹⁰⁹ Rūḥullāh al-Mūsawī al-Khumaynī, *Tahrīr al-Wasīla*, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Muntaẓar, 1985), 443.

guidance of these rulers must not be limited to spiritual matters, such as reaching Muslims with what supplications to recite, but should extend to the whole state politically, providing Muslim citizens with political guidance and dimension at a broader level. I argue that in stating this, al-Khumaynī built the initial block to solve the aforesaid issue of combining knowledge and power within multi-authoritative jurists of Safavid Iran. In his statement, al-Khumaynī maintains the legalistic and public authority for all jurists. He will later turn on to attribute the political authority to only one jurist, *al-walī al-faqīh*. This is one jurist among many others who would not only have the qualifications that would make him a political leader, but would also need to actualize them in public (e.g. fighting tyranny and leading the revolution) in order to fully merit the political authority of the infallible, as we will see in what follows.

CHAPTER 3

AL-KHUMAYNĪ'S POLITICAL THEORY: FROM ISLAMIC GOVERNMENT TO *WILĀYAT AL-FAQĪH*

3.1. Al-Khumaynī's Political Vision: The Motivation for Revolution

I maintain that there are two significant features that characterize the Islamic Revolution as led by al-Khumaynī. The first is that it was a revolution against a tyrannical secular government of his time; the second, which is perhaps more important, is that it was a revolution against the quietist tradition of the Shi'ite '*ulamā*'.¹¹⁰ From the middle of the Qajar period (1789–1925) until al-Khumaynī's reflections on the political aspects of Shi'ism and Iran, the dual-power doctrine of the Safavid era and some form of supervision of the Shi'ite jurists over secular government remained the dominant political doctrines of the '*ulamā*'.¹¹¹ Under the Pahlavi dynasty (1925–1979), the social contract between the kingship and the religious circles, which was maintained since the Safavid era, was abolished.¹¹² This left the '*ulamā*' with no practical authority in applying *Shari'a* and in being involved with social matters. The secular nature of the Pahlavi policies was deemed by al-Khumaynī as being an existential threat to Islam.¹¹³ Al-Khumaynī sought a re-examination of the role of the '*ulamā*' in the face of increased

¹¹⁰ Quietist orientation represents a non-interventionist attitude toward the ruling government and abstention from political action. This in turn implies a silent rejection of the legitimacy of the existing government. Prior to the rise of the Safavids in 1501, political quietism dominated most of the Shi'ite political history. After the establishment of the Safavid state, Shi'ism witnessed the emergence of an innovative political activism that paved the way for the political revolutionary aspect that outlined Shi'ism in modern history, crowned with the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran.

¹¹¹ Al-Khumaynī political life dates back to the publication of *Kashf al-Asrār* (1942–1943), in which he publicly expressed his political opposition against Reza Shah's secular policies for the first time.

¹¹² On the '*ulamā*'-state relations under Mohamad Reza Shah, see Taha, "Shiite Ulama," 94-95.

¹¹³ On political reasons of calling for revolution, see Taha, "Shiite Ulama," 124.

secularization and westernization of Iranian society led by Muhammad Reza Pahlavi (r. 1941–1979). In this respect, he rejects the traditional notion of quietism in Shi'ism that Shi'ite '*ulamā*' used to act upon when facing such conditions.¹¹⁴

I hold that al-Khumaynī's claim for the necessity of a revolution was centered on three main arguments. The first is what he believes to be the corruption and oppression of the Shah and his regime. The second is what he believes to be the Muslim population's clear right for an Islamic government. The third is his complete confidence in the philosophical-jurisprudential legitimacy of the doctrine of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh*. His view that the monarchy was a serious threat to the religion of Islam was the main reason that pushed al-Khumaynī to take justify revolution as the necessary political action. Even though this was not the only factor that caused al-Khumaynī to start the revolution, his continuous stress on the illegitimacy of the regime was itself a revolutionary perspective within a tradition that usually stipulates passive anticipation for the return of the *Imām*. Thus, al-Khumaynī's political theory cannot be seen as a direct reaction to the "gradual decline in the power of the ulama in politics during the rule of the Pahlavi dynasty," as Rasoul Namazi claimed.¹¹⁵ Rather it is an opposition to a westernization approach that prevailed in the Pahlavi dynasty. Al-Khumaynī felt the need to establish the Islamic view of ruling in order to spread the teachings of Islam instead of waiting for the kingship system to finally embody Islamic values. Therefore, I hold that the secularization and westernization of the Iranian society was the main

¹¹⁴ Norman Calder argues that al-Khumaynī's movement was a break from the classical Shi'ite tradition, asserting that the general clerical political outlook in medieval Shi'ism reflected an accommodation rather than a revolutionary tendency. See Norman Calder, "Accommodation and Revolution in Imami Shi'i Jurisprudence: Khumayni and the Classical Tradition," *Middle Eastern Studies* 18, no. 1 (1982): 3-20.

¹¹⁵ Rasoul Namazi, "Ayatollah Khomeini: From Islamic Government to Sovereign State," *Iranian Studies* 52, no. 1-2 (2019): 117.

reason behind the Islamic Revolution in Iran.¹¹⁶ It was an anti-colonial movement by a Muslim jurist, theologian, and philosopher in the path of returning to an authentic government from the ruins of modern political structures. So, al-Khumaynī was theorizing a new way of upholding authority and was aiming to establish a direct functionary role for the *'ulamā'* in ruling the state, in an effort to uphold the prophetic role in leading society. The government of Iran was starting to make significant steps to achieve a secular state, one which applies only secular laws, bringing the *Sharī'a* to an end. Here, al-Khumaynī represents an active resistance to this kind of modernization, as can be seen in his speeches about the importance of implementing *Sharī'a*.

In political philosophy, themes such as the genuine aims of political communities and the objectives of laws implemented within these communities have been thoroughly discussed. Since ancient philosophy, different notions were theorized about the nature of political life and law. As a result, we have many philosophical accounts regarding the ideal or best government. This in turn has led to controversies concerning whether the best system should be the respective loci of any political experience. Al-Khumaynī specifies an apparently attainable condition in achieving a just government. In the fourth article of his early religio-political work *Kashf al-Asrār*, he describes an oppressive government as one that fails to perform its obligations to its people. A government that does fulfill its obligations is considered non-oppressive and is thus respected by God, according to al-Khumaynī.¹¹⁷ At first, this condition would appear attainable; however, he then contends that the world has not witnessed a modern government that is founded on justice and that the only state that can be absolutely

¹¹⁶ For a good summary of secularization and westernization in Iranian society during this period, see Moin, *Khomeini*, 92-128.

¹¹⁷ Al-Khumaynī, *Kashf al-Asrār*, 209.

legitimate would be a government of God (*hukūmat al-Ḥaqq*).¹¹⁸ He then adds that a government can only be labeled as just when its laws are in agreement with *Sharīʿa*. He holds that this position contains the standards upon which all temporal states are to be evaluated.¹¹⁹ This kind of political theorization seems to reflect a central concern for an “idealistic” political philosophy. In binding state laws to *Sharīʿa*, al-Khumaynī argues from an Islamic perspective to achieve the best form of human excellence attainable in the political realm. In doing so, al-Khumaynī considers that the function of a political community is to attain a wide range of excellences, perhaps through religious, moral, and intellectual education and training. Such a political orientation is originally presented in works of Plato and Aristotle, such as *The Republic* and *Nicomachean Ethics* respectively. According to this philosophical view, politics ought to be oriented toward the individual and community striving for happiness, justice, and perfection.

The philosophical works of the prominent medieval Muslim philosopher al-Fārābī are centered around the idea of the “virtuous city.”¹²⁰ This notion is intensely connected to Plato’s theorization of the Republic and apparently represents its Islamic version. Both al-Fārābī and Plato view the ideal city as being the standard political order in comparison to which all other orders must be evaluated. This is done so that the various political orders can be fully examined and assessed in the aim of implementing reforms to the existing government. Thus, the principal theme of political philosophy

¹¹⁸ Al-Khumaynī, *Kashf al-Asrār*, 209.

¹¹⁹ Al-Khumaynī, *Kashf al-Asrār*, 210.

¹²⁰ The virtuous city of al-Fārābī is a political community whose people support one another to achieve their genuine perfection, which is ultimate happiness. The aim of the art of governance is for the true King to ensure genuine happiness for himself and for the other people living in the city. Galston, “Realism and Idealism,” 568. For a comprehensive account on al-Fārābī’s political philosophy, see Miriam Galston, *Politics and Excellence: The Political Philosophy of Alfarabi* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1990).

according to al-Fārābī is “rulership of the virtuous” whose end is true happiness. This rulership opposes “rulership of the ignorant,” which presides over ignorant cities whose ends are presumed (rather than true) happiness.¹²¹ Al-Khumaynī’s religio-political approach to the ideal system of governance in *Kashf al-Asrār* could be described as an attempt to answer the question of what constitutes virtuous rule which governs and preserves the virtuous city and how to achieve the most virtuous rulership possible in the contemporary world during the absence of the infallible *Imām*. I hold that one can derive three forms of government according to al-Khumaynī: (1) the righteous-Godly government (*ḥukumat al-Ḥaqq*), (2) the desired Islamic government (*al-ḥukūma al-islāmiyya*), which applies the laws of *Sharī‘a* and follows in the footsteps of the righteous-Godly government in order to achieve the establishment of the virtuous city, and (3) the oppressive government (*al-ḥukūma al-zālima*). After arguing that Islam offers the most civilized ruling system amongst all other systems, al-Khumaynī states a very crucial proposition, which holds that by applying this system, the “virtuous city” (*al-madīna al-fāḍila*) would be realized.¹²² The best government according to al-Khumaynī is one that secures for the individual and society a clear path toward perfection, even if this interferes with some apparent materialistic aspects of the citizen’s life. The idea of the false utopia of materialistic happiness, which al-Khumaynī argues against, is similar to what was theorized in medieval Islamic philosophy.¹²³ Al-Khumaynī, like medieval Muslim political philosophers, divided political systems into two groups; virtuous and non-virtuous. Virtuous political systems are formed in

¹²¹ For example, see Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, *Iḥṣā’ al-‘Ulūm*, ed. Uthmān Amīn (Cairo: Maktabat al-Anjlū al-Maṣriyya 1968), 124-25.

¹²² Al-Khumaynī, *Kashf al-Asrār*, 210.

¹²³ For an outline of this tradition, see Butterworth, *The Political Aspects of Islamic Philosophy*.

connection with the virtuous nation, the virtuous city, the virtuous leadership, and the virtuous society, all of which seek to cooperate with each other to achieve a single aim, which is attaining the ultimate good and final perfection. On the other hand, political systems that are oppressive (*ẓālīma*) being intently non-virtuous, ignorant (*jāhiliyya*), wicked (*fāsiqa*), or misguided (*dālla*) are formed in connection with the non-virtuous nation, the non-virtuous city, the non-virtuous leadership, and the non-virtuous society, all of which seek to cooperate with each other to achieve an imaginary happiness, which is in fact evil.¹²⁴ In this concern, Mullā Ṣadrā states:

The greatest good and the utmost perfection is attained by the virtuous city and the virtuous nation, whose cities all cooperate to achieve the real goal, and the real good, [in opposition] to the deficient (*nāqiṣa*) city and the ignorant nation that cooperates to achieve evil goals.¹²⁵

According to this analysis, al-Khumaynī appears to adopt al-Fārābī's philosophical notion of the "virtuous city." This, however, leads to the question of whether al-Khumaynī's view of the ideal Islamic government can be characterized as philosophical, and to what extent it is rooted in Islamic philosophy. Are we able to consider al-Khumaynī's early political thought in *Kashf al-Asrār* as a philosophical description of the ideal government using medieval terminology? Al-Khumaynī in a later work, *al-Ḥukūma al-Islāmiyya*, will specify the conditions and qualities of the governor who would administer the Islamic government through practical wisdom, justice, and ultimate piety, labeling him as *al-walī al-faqīh*.

When the texts of al-Khumaynī are laid out chronologically, a significant pattern is disclosed. His works not only mirror a development in his jurisprudential thought, but

¹²⁴ On the definition of each kind of the mentioned cities, see al-Fārābī, *al-Madīna al-Fāḍila*, 131-36.

¹²⁵ Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Mabda' wa-al-Ma'ād* (1398/1969), 490. Similar to this passage is seen in al-Fārābī's *al-Madīna al-Fāḍila*. Al-Fārābī, *al-Madīna al-Fāḍila*, 118.

also show the extent to which sociopolitical analysis necessitates the formation of a new Islamic political thesis. Al-Khumaynī's assessment of politics and its jurisprudential ramifications changed with varying political circumstances. While the research scope of this thesis does not focus on the development of al-Khumaynī's political views, this chapter will examine his political doctrine in *al-Hukūma al-Islāmiyya* and its philosophical and analytical discussion on the Revolution and its product, the Islamic Government.¹²⁶ In his aforementioned early work, *Kashf al-Asrār*, published circa 1942-1943 in Qom, al-Khumaynī still follows the principles of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution, supporting the Shi'ite jurists in supervising legislation processes instead of advocating for their direct rule.¹²⁷ Nonetheless, he asserts the notion of Islamic government and appears willing to go beyond its traditional understanding of limiting the role of Shi'ite jurists to the legal sphere solely.¹²⁸ This position was an essential move that paved the way for his major political theory, which is mainly presented in *al-Hukūma al-Islāmiyya*, one of his short works composed in Persian and published in 1970.¹²⁹ This work presents a new proposal which focused on the idea that Islam and Muslims are in great need for the creation of an Islamic government. It consistently advocated for a revolution against the corrupt Pahlavi rule and for its replacement with an Islamic ruling system. It is important to note again that this revolution had two-sided aims, the first being against imperialism, and the second

¹²⁶ On the development of al-Khumaynī's religio-political theory, see Kadivar, "Ayatollah Khomeini's Political Theory."

¹²⁷ Al-Khumaynī, *Kashf al-Asrār*, 223; 233.

On the political context that *Kashf al-Asrār* was composed in, see Taha, "Shiite Ulama," 97-98.

¹²⁸ Al-Khumaynī, *Kashf al-Asrār*, 258.

¹²⁹ The book is the transcript of a series of jurisprudential lectures given by al-Khumaynī from 1969 to 1970 in Najaf, Iraq, where he lived after arriving from Turkey due to an exile which followed his 1964 dispute with the Shah.

aimed at *fuqahā' al-salāṭīn*. Al-Khumaynī, in his *al-Ḥukūma al-Islāmiyya*, goes beyond the traditional Shi'ite perception of political power. He maintains that *wilāyat al-faqīh* is consistent with Islamic teachings and contends that politics is a main and obvious aspect of Islam. He says:

The guardianship of the jurist (*wilāyat al-faqīh*) is a clear practical idea, which may not require demonstrative proof (*burhān*); for anyone who has known Islam, jurisprudentially and doctrinally, will grasp its intuitive justification (*yarā badāhatahā*). However, the [deteriorating] status of the Islamic community, and the status of our scientific [religious] circles in particular, puts this issue out of mind, so that today, it is once again in need of proof.¹³⁰

In stating this argumentative structure, al-Khumaynī implies that he needs to justify in the eyes of the Muslim community the need for *Wilāyat al-Faqīh*. In other words, it is not an obvious concept in contemporary Islam and “is in need of proof” again after the Muslim community in general and the scholarly circles in particular have been estranged from true Islamic teachings on the role of the jurists. Here, he is addressing a Muslim opposition to the implementation of such a notion, an opposition which tends to separate religion from politics either deliberately or begrudgingly under harsh political circumstances.

Al-Ḥukūma al-Islāmiyya starts with a description of the enemies of the religion of Islam, revealing their efforts in falsifying Islam in the hearts of the public. Al-Khumaynī then presents two main reasons for the alienation of the nation from the principle of guardianship: the Zionist movement and colonial proselytizing and the suspicions of colonists and orientalist regarding Islam. He follows:

Islam is the religion of the [righteous] strugglers (*al-mujahidīn*) who seek truth and justice, the religion of those who demand freedom and independence, and who do not want the non-believers to block the path of those who believe [in God]. On the contrary, the enemies portrayed Islam in another manner. They draw a distorted image in the minds of the common people, and even instilled it

¹³⁰ Al-Khumaynī, *al-Ḥukūma al-Islāmiyya*, 9.

in scientific [religious] circles, with the aim of quelling its (i.e. Islam's) flame and concealing its vital revolutionary character. This is so that Muslims do not consider seeking self-liberation, and implementing all the provisions of their religion by establishing a government that would guarantee their happiness in the light of a dignified human life.¹³¹

Al-Khumaynī maintains that “the Jews,” *fuqahā' al-salāṭīn*, and colonial powers are accountable for this obstruction in the pathway of Islam, denouncing their disinformation and false claims. This portrays the political dimension from which al-Khumaynī proposes his theory, as he addresses the general skepticism of the deep connection between Islam and system of governance in the Islamic world. He opposes the idea that presents Islam as simply a moral religion that is not concerned with the political organization of society. From this sketch, it should be clear that al-Khumaynī's account of political theory would lead to a kind of rulership that aims to implement Islam as a system of governance. Up to the writing of this treatise, nothing in al-Khumaynī's religio-political approach addresses specific issues concerning the rights of the people, elections, parliamentary representatives, and division of powers. He called instead, for the guardianship of the jurist. However, it is very clear that he emphasizes the importance of religion for uniting people and encouraging them to achieve the virtues of a long and decent political life.¹³² This mirrors the general view upheld by al-Fārābī in his practical philosophy.

3.2. The Necessity of an Islamic Government

Despite the clear similarities between the Farabian and Avicennan political philosophies, especially regarding the notion of the virtuous city, there are pronounced

¹³¹ Al-Khumaynī, *al-Ḥukūma al-Islāmiyya*, 10.

¹³² See al-Fārābī, *Kitāb al-Milla*, 64-66.

differences in the political writings of Ibn Sīnā that show a withdrawal from the Platonic position that is strictly upheld by al-Fārābī. In Chapter 2 of Book X of *Ilāhiyyāt al-Shifā'* (*The Metaphysics of the Healing*), Ibn Sīnā argues that the end aim of political life as well as divine law is to assure the materialistic comfort of man, whose common ground is physical survival.¹³³ Ibn Sīnā argues that human nature necessitates that all people “consider [as] just what others owe them, and [as] unjust what they owe others.”¹³⁴ This interpretation of the aim of political life and divine law sets the individual as the center of any aim of political action. Al-Khumaynī would accept this Avicennan notion of individuality to an extent; but he would also theorize the communal aspect of political life, where he seems closer to al-Fārābī in insisting on the central role of the community, which entails providing the material conditions of life and attaining the utmost of human intellectual and moral capacities. According to al-Fārābī, these necessary aspects of human life, including achieving the virtuous city, can only be accomplished in communal political associations.¹³⁵ Accordingly, while al-Fārābī holds that the human good consists of contemplation and political action and Ibn Sīnā holds that it consists of contemplation and moral action,¹³⁶ al-Khumaynī seems to argue for both trajectories, as was argued in the last section of Chapter Two of this thesis. In any case, the aforementioned dispute that emerges when tackling politics seems to echo the various ways of categorizing the true nature of human perfection. Al-

¹³³ Ibn Sīnā’s most comprehensive and analytical account of religio-political subjects appears in Book X of his famous treatment of metaphysics, *Ilāhiyyāt al-Shifā'*. See Abū ‘Alī al-Ḥusayn ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā', al-Ilāhiyyāt*, eds. al-Ab Qanawātī and Sa‘īd Zāyid (Qom: Maktabat Samāḥat Āyat-Allāh al-‘Uzmā al-Mar‘ashī al-Najafī al-Kubrā, 2012) 441-55.

¹³⁴ Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā', al-Ilāhiyyāt*, 441.

¹³⁵ Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, *al-Siyāsa al-Madaniyya*, ed. Fawzī Najjār (Beirut: al-Maṭba‘a al-Kāthūlīkiyya, 1964), 69.

¹³⁶ Galston, “Realism and Idealism,” 577.

Khumaynī seems to approach politics on a grand scale, where religion, ethical theory, and political theory integrate to sustain the steady movement toward achieving the highest goal of human life, which is worshiping God through implementing the religio-philosophical notion of human's vicegerency of God on Earth.

In his *Iḥṣā' al-'Ulūm (Enumeration of the Sciences)*, al-Fārābī argues that a major reason for establishing laws is in order to perpetuate the political order after the lawgiver dies and the community is no longer directly guided by his leadership.¹³⁷ Hence, theology and jurisprudence have the responsibility of maintaining the establishment of the prophet after his death, when the religious community has lost its founding lawgiver. This Farabian philosophical analysis of the religious sciences could be seen reflected in the Khumaynian understanding of the relationship between religion, politics, and the status of the state. Al-Khumaynī's political theory is originally related to the Godly role of the prophets and infallibles in assuming God's authority on Earth and their role in implementing God's justice through religion. Thus, the question of the divine laws or of the kind of political regime needed to implement these laws remains an important theme in al-Khumaynī's political thought. This idea of the necessity of the presence of prophecy and *Sharī'a* in political life was discussed extensively by Ibn Sīnā in his masterpiece *al-Shifā' (The Healing)*. There, he considers spiritual salvation as being the eschatological aim of prophecy and divine law, while material comfort being their worldly end. Accordingly, the whole system of religious beliefs and actions is the supreme path that allows human beings to become near to God and consequently lead them to the perfection of their souls.¹³⁸

¹³⁷ Al-Fārābī, *Iḥṣā' al-'Ulūm*, 130-31.

¹³⁸ See Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Shifā'*, *al-Ilāhiyyāt*, 443-46.

Al-Khumaynī's most systematic argument for his political theory is that the laws of Islam include certain rules that only a government can implement; and thus, there is a need for an Islamic government to rule over Muslims. In *al-Hukūma al-Islāmiyya*, al-Khumaynī offers rational arguments while showing how establishing executive institutions in government is necessary in order to implement Islamic legislation that is supported by the Iranian people. With respect to this, al-Khumaynī argues that Islam is a religion of law, and that the mission of the Prophet Muḥammad was above all to bring the laws of God to mankind. However, merely bringing laws and clarifying them is not enough, since laws that are not applied lose their value. Al-Khumaynī shows how this system of expounding and implementing laws took place during the lifetime of the Prophet, before he then discusses the Shi'ite perspective regarding the necessity of the Twelve successors (infallible *Imāms*), and their role in completing the prophetic mission by their execution of Islamic law.¹³⁹ Up to this point, al-Khumaynī's rationale is centered within the general perspective of imamology, which has been defended in Shi'ite history by philosophers and theologians who stipulate the metaphysical need for an *Imām*, the appointment of the *Imām*, and the *Imām*'s qualities and characteristics. Building on the infallibles' sociopolitical status and role, al-Khumaynī's rationale turns into what can be called a political imamology. He provides historical instances of political authority that proves the necessity of setting up the right authority in the aim of implementing divine law. Thus, following in the footsteps of several prominent Shi'ite philosophers and theologians preceding him, al-Khumaynī argues for the necessity of the infallible *Imām* and that his appointment by God is a prerequisite for the good

¹³⁹ Al-Khumaynī, *al-Hukūma al-Islāmiyya*, 27-30.

governance of the community.¹⁴⁰ This will lead him to construct a scheme which he will use to prove the necessity of establishing an Islamic government. The need for a continuation of a system of governance that is divinely ordained shows, according to al-Khumaynī, the necessity of establishing a government founded on divine law. Accordingly, the paths of legislation and execution go parallel with each other, in that the roles of guardians would exceed mere legislation and extend to the execution of laws. In this sense, al-Khumaynī holds that the importance of forming a government that executes laws and establishes government institutions is an integral part of believing in the infallible's *wilāya*. Striving for this goal is a manifestation of one's faith in the Imamate.¹⁴¹ Therefore, the importance of striving toward strategies that lead to the implementation of laws in the nation is highlighted, and here lies the point of transition from weakness to strength. At this stage, al-Khumaynī argues for a deep connection between religion and politics, where politics becomes the worldly tool of religion, a position that Mullā Ṣadrā held in his *al-Shawāhid al-Rubūbiyya* as quoted in Chapter Two.

Al-Khumaynī writes that one of the arguments against Islam is that, despite the clear importance of legal provisions in this religion, Islam does not necessitate the existence of a government or governmental institutions to guarantee the implementation of these laws.¹⁴² Al-Khumaynī's counters this claim by insisting on the view that the Prophet's appointment of a successor is not simply for clarifying rulings, but also to

¹⁴⁰ See Mullā Ṣadrā, *Sharḥ Uṣūl al-Kāfi*, 2: 404-405. For a philosophical-theological approach on the appointment-ship of the *Imāms*, see al-Ḥasan ibn Yūsuf al-Ḥillī, *Kashf al-Murād fī Sharḥ Tajrīd al-Iṭiqād*, ed. Ḥasan Ḥasanzāda al-Āmulī (Qom: Mu'assasa-yi Nashr-i Islāmī, 2012), 495-96; Maytham ibn 'Alī al-Bahrānī, *Qawā'id al-Marām fī 'Ilm al-Kalām*, ed. Sayyid Aḥmad al-Ḥusaynī (Qom: Kitābkhāna-yi 'Umūmī-yi Āyat-Allāh al-'Uzmā al-Mar'ashī al-Najafī, 1978), 181.

¹⁴¹ Al-Khumaynī, *al-Ḥukūma al-Islāmīyya*, 22-23.

¹⁴² Al-Khumaynī, *al-Ḥukūma al-Islāmīyya*, 21.

ensure the implementation of these provisions as well. Thus, the core role of the state is embodied in the Islamic doctrine of governance, which guarantees the implementation of rulings.¹⁴³ Al-Khumaynī also holds that Islamic laws are permanent and everlasting. He claims that the absence of the Islamic government during the occultation would make Islam a deficient religion in that it would fail to provide a political framework to execute *Sharī'a*.¹⁴⁴ Consequently, establishing and maintaining an Islamic government is essential even following the occultation of the Twelfth *Imām*. Al-Khumaynī further argues for the need of a government that follows the laws and principles of Islam on the part of the Muslim community. In suspending or denying the formation of such a government, Muslims would be declaring that Islamic principles and laws are not practical or efficient. Al-Khumaynī notes that the verses of the *Qur'ān* which deal with the administration of public matters greatly exceed those that deal with private worship and personal affairs. Thus, according to al-Khumaynī, these verses on public matters were revealed to form the ideal type of government. He further explains that one can find more textual evidence related to economic, social, and political aspects of the community as well as human rights than those related to private religious matters. Accordingly, al-Khumaynī distinguishes between the Christian and Islamic religions and between the role of the Church and that of the mosque. Islam offers a broader framework than simply regulating the private relationship between the individual and his/her Lord.¹⁴⁵ According to al-Khumaynī, Islam goes beyond the issues of believing in God and in His attributes. Religion deals not only with otherworldly concerns, but also

¹⁴³ Al-Khumaynī, *al-Hukūma al-Islāmiyya*, 21.

¹⁴⁴ Al-Khumaynī, *al-Hukūma al-Islāmiyya*, 29.

¹⁴⁵ Al-Khumaynī, *al-Hukūma al-Islāmiyya*, 11-12.

with temporal politics; this is because for al-Khumaynī, a religion that does not benefit people in this world will not benefit them in the hereafter. Al-Khumaynī rejects the opinion that holds that the end aim of Islam is to enhance the inner dimension or the spiritual aspect of human beings. Instead, he would emphasize the transition from the theoretical dimension of religion to the social reality of human beings. For al-Khumaynī, the manifestation of some eschatological governance in the temporal realm would reveal the earthly victory of the monotheistic religion. He argues that Islam does not stand against the political ruling, nor does it promote negligence of public goods and political solutions. Rather, it demands Muslims to actively oppose the misuse of power through economic inequalities and political oppression.¹⁴⁶ This notion recalls the religious view of happiness, where real happiness is usually reserved for the life of the hereafter, rather than in this life, which leads only to presumed and unreal happiness. It also recalls the above-mentioned philosophical opinion that human beings should not confine their goals in life to such things as worldly pleasures, glory, and wealth, but that they should pursue a higher end, such as righteousness or knowledge. Thus, al-Khumaynī appears to use the Platonic and Aristotelian distinction between assumed and true happiness to interpret the theological distinction between the end result of this life and the hereafter. In this respect, he preserves a role in the fulfilment of some materialistic desires, by showing that the ultimate goal is both happiness in this world and in the next. However, this is achieved when materialistic desires are not sought for themselves, but rather to obtain what has true worth. Al-Fārābī reflects on this matter in his *Iḥṣā' al-'Ulūm* when describing the role of political philosophy in investigating

¹⁴⁶ Al-Khumaynī, *al-Ḥukūma al-Islāmiyya*, 58. This was highly insisted in al-Khumaynī's famous *al-Waṣīyya al-Siyāsiyya al-Ilāhiyya (Political Divine Commandment)*. See al-Imām Rūḥullāh al-Mūsawī al-Khumaynī, *al-Waṣīyya al-Siyāsiyya al-Ilāhiyya* (Beirut: Dār al-Mawadda), 33-35.

human activities and their ends, whether they lead to genuine happiness or not. He writes:

[S]ome of their [ends] are true happiness, while others are presumed to be happiness though they are not. That which is true happiness cannot possibly be of this life, but of another life after, beyond this, which is the other life; while that which is presumed to be happiness consists of things such as wealth, honor, and pleasures, when these are made the only ends in this life.¹⁴⁷

Al-Khumaynī believes that Islam covers all aspects of life, and that this can be observed in the comprehensiveness of the *Qur'ān* and *ḥadīth*. He also argues that the religion of Islam, which has stipulated good practices and rituals for mundane activities, would not ignore such a significant aspect of human life as political governance. The laws of Islam would not be thorough if they did not include precise rules to govern the community during the period of occultation. Al-Khumaynī's lectures of *al-Ḥukūma al-Islāmiyya* thus argue for the vital need of forming an Islamic government. This argument can be divided into four principles: (1) The need for an executive power in Islam (2) The nature of fiscal laws in Islam (3) The laws of defense and *jihād* (4) The laws of *ḥudūd* (legal boundaries), *diyyāt* (blood feuds), and *qaṣās* (punishment).¹⁴⁸ Here we turn to a crucial concluding question: what are the actions that al-Khumaynī expects a religious government to achieve that non-religious governments are not capable of achieving? The answer to this question is centered on the idea of religious guidance. The primary expectation of a religious government and its most important function is the implementation of divine laws. This is the specialized work that a religious government can carry out and which the non-religious government is incapable of achieving. This will reflect a common interest in worldly and eschatological happiness,

¹⁴⁷ Al-Fārābī, *Iḥṣā' al-'Ulūm*, 124.

¹⁴⁸ Al-Khumaynī, *al-Ḥukūma al-Islāmiyya*, 30-35.

or as al-Khumaynī believes, the true happiness. This is related to true transcendence, which takes into account the regulation of both material and moral matters of people. With this conclusion, we realize how al-Khumaynī was able to combine Ibn Sīnā with al-Fārābī’s political theory through Ṣadrian thought. Al-Khumaynī believes that every society ought to have its own political system that is compatible with its religio-cultural background. As such, it is practically impossible for the government to act contrary to the citizens’ beliefs and tendencies. This notion is associated to a great extent with the notion of the “will” in the Ṣadrian thought. Mullā Ṣadrā upholds the reality of human free will. He argues that it is the people who should decide how to live their lives. He writes:

[K]now that everything in the realm[s] of the kingdom (*al-mulk*) and heavens (*malakūt*) has a special nature [...] except for the human being, who is forced to choose [...], given that the status of possessing free will (*al-mukhtāriyya*) is embodied in his [nature and] is necessary for him (*iḍṭirāriyya lahu*).¹⁴⁹

3.3. *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* (The Guardianship of the Jurist)

Having discussed the epistemic foundations of the infallible and his role as the ruler of the community, and having examined al-Khumaynī’s theory of Islamic government, two pivotal questions remains: how is the Shi‘ite community situated in the absence of an infallible? And who should earn the position of the ruler in the absence of the hidden *Imām*? These questions represent the starting point for a philosophical examination of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh*, as they reflect a unique theoretical and practical understanding of the role of the ‘*ulamā*’ in Shi‘ite communities, as al-Khumaynī considers them as the mirrors of the infallibles. According to al-Khumaynī, the ‘*ulamā*’ must wield the task of governance responsibility, being the legitimate heirs

¹⁴⁹ Mullā Ṣadrā al-Shīrāzī, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-Karīm*, 180-81.

of the infallibles. In Shi‘ism, the perfectly legitimate government is that of Prophet Muḥammad and the infallible *Imām*. All governments that are not ruled by an infallible during their existence are considered illegitimate. In *al-Ḥukūma al-Islāmiyya*, al-Khumaynī’s perception was that Muslims’ politics during the occultation should be based on the rule of Islam through a government established by a guardian jurist to prevent any dilution of Islamic teachings. Al-Khumaynī presents the pivotal role of the ‘*ulamā*’ in establishing the Islamic government to conclude that their mission is not only to clarify the rulings of Islam, but also to implement them. In doing so, he insists on his theory that legislation alone is not enough, but that enforcement by legitimate authority is also necessary.¹⁵⁰ Therefore, the order to enforce rulings goes back to practicing the notion of guardianship. Hence, the principle of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* asserts the following; because the jurist is the *Imām*’s delegate in his absence, then during the period of occultation, the duty of governance would fall under the jurist. In doing so, al-Khumaynī widened the jurisprudential boundaries of the guardianship of the jurist in the absence of the *Imām* to the political arena. Al-Khumaynī states:

Today, the jurists are *ḥujjas* (proofs) to the people, just as the Messenger was the proof of God (*ḥujjat Allāh*) to them. So that [the conduct of all affairs] that was entrusted to him was thereafter transferred by the *Imāms* to the jurists. [In this respect,] they are the [reliable] source for all matters, to whom all the affairs of the Muslims have been entrusted. This includes governing, guardianship and ruling of people, and the gathering and expenditure of public funds. [Accordingly,] God will question and punish anyone who disobeys them.¹⁵¹

Following the famous notion of *ḥujja*, al-Khumaynī extends the application of political authority beyond the infallible *Imāms*.¹⁵² In this respect, he argues for the

¹⁵⁰ Al-Khumaynī, *al-Ḥukūma al-Islāmiyya*, 27.

¹⁵¹ Al-Khumaynī, *al-Ḥukūma al-Islāmiyya*, 84.

¹⁵² The term *ḥujja* which connotes a pivotal notion in Shi‘ite theology and philosophical Sufism has its significance in Mullā Ṣadrā’s identification of knowledge with power at the level of the Imamate. Mullā

necessity of associating knowledge and power; those who represent the infallible are in need of the same sort of power that would have been necessary to the *Imām* to carry out his function, namely implementing divine law. Thus, al-Khumaynī emphasizes the worldly power of the jurists next to their knowledge. This is similar to when the political authority of the Prophet is understood as a necessary derivation of his epistemic authority. Thus, the guardian jurist should enjoy both in knowledge and power. The correlation between these two aspects is established ontologically by Mullā Ṣadrā in the following terms:

Know that knowledge (*‘ilm*) and power (*qudra*) are different in the human sphere of existence (*al-nash’ā al-insāniyya*). But in the divine world and the intellectual sphere of existence (*al-nash’ā al-‘aqliyya*) knowledge is the same as power and power is the same as knowledge.¹⁵³

This deep connection between the notions of knowledge and authority in the Shi‘ite context proves the necessity of a philosophical understanding of al-Khumaynī’s theory, which also takes into consideration the religious and political dimensions of his doctrine. In this sense, al-Khumaynī’s religio-political movement serves as a revealing case for how philosophy, religion, and politics—in the sense of a theory of governance—are intertwined.

Al-Khumaynī’s debate on *wilāyat al-faqīh* is split into two routes. The first is the rational framework of the guardianship of the jurist, and the second is its

Ṣadrā’s attribution of the utmost authority to the infallible is especially seen in the chapter of the commentary on “Book of the Proof” or “Kitāb al-Ḥujja,” which is a section in *al-Kāfi* that focuses on the following tradition: “the earth would not sustain in existence without an *Imām* who is the proof of Allāh for His people (*ḥujjat Allāh ‘alā khalqih*).” Mullā Ṣadrā, *Sharḥ Uṣūl al-Kāfi*, 2: 485. In his commentary on al-Kāfi (one of the four most authoritative sources of *ḥadīth* collection in the Shi‘ite tradition) by Muḥammad Ya‘qūb al-Kulaynī (d. 940-41), Mullā Ṣadrā proves the absolute authority of the Shi‘ite *Imām* and the importance of the Imamate using the three sources of his integrative epistemology. See Sayeh Meisami, “Mullā Ṣadrā’s Philosophical Arguments for the Necessity of the Imamate,” *Religion Compass* 10 (2016): 251.

¹⁵³ Mullā Ṣadrā, *Sharḥ Uṣūl al-Kāfi*, 2: 566.

jurisprudential framework. The rational evidence is mainly associated with the notion that reflects the relationship between the government and the governor. He elaborates that a Muslim society is a reflection of its leader, who has to be righteous with his people. Therefore, the ruler cannot be a corrupt tyrant and a disbeliever in God and his teachings. A just government cannot exist under a tyrant leader, as both complete and reflect each other. Al-Khumaynī argues that since the Islamic government is a government that aims to implement the Islamic law, the governor must be an expert in Islamic law. Having the deep knowledge in Islamic law is necessary for the ruler in order to be able to apply all its provisions properly. Accordingly, al-Khumaynī concludes that the position of the governor can only be held by a jurist.¹⁵⁴ As for the jurisprudential evidence, al-Khumaynī claimed—just as the prominent Shi‘ite jurists Mullā Aḥmad al-Narāqī (1772–1829) and al-Muḥammad Ḥusayn al-Gharawī al-Nā‘īnī (1860–1936) did earlier—that a just jurist would have guardianship in all issues, including politics and governance. Al-Khumaynī builds on this notion jurisprudentially to reach his ultimate political theory, *Wilāyat al-Faqīh al-Muṭlaqa* (the absolute guardianship of the jurist). This asserts that each political power and government that is assumed by Prophet Muḥammad or the infallible should be invested in *al-walī al-faqīh*.¹⁵⁵ However, this does not mean that *al-walī al-faqīh* shares the ontological guardianship that God grants to the infallible.¹⁵⁶ For al-Khumaynī, the guardianship of the jurist represents the continuation of the guardianship of the Prophet and the *Imāms* in the role assigned to them, and this does not mean that the guardian jurist is like the

¹⁵⁴ Al-Khumaynī, *al-Ḥukūma al-Islāmiyya*, 52.

¹⁵⁵ Al-Khumaynī, *al-Ḥukūma al-Islāmiyya*, 53.

¹⁵⁶ Al-Khumaynī, *al-Ḥukūma al-Islāmiyya*, 56.

Prophet or the *Imām* in terms of ontological characteristics. *Al-walī al-faqīh* is the deputy of the *Imām* who fulfills his position and takes over the tasks required of the legitimate leadership of the community. Al-Khumaynī says:

The illusion that the Prophet's powers in governance were more than the prerogatives of the Commander of the Faithful, and the authority of the Commander of the Faithful more than the powers of the jurist, is a false delusion. Yes, the virtues of the Messenger, of course, are more than the virtues of all human beings, but the abundance of incorporeal virtues does not increase the authority of governance. The same authority that the Messenger and *Imāms* had in mobilizing armies, appointing rulers and governors, receiving taxes and spending them in the interests of Muslims, have been given by God Almighty to the supposed [Islamic] government these days. The only difference is that the order does not appoint a person in particular, but rather gives him the title of the just scholar.¹⁵⁷

In this way, the guardian jurist is the one who is responsible for implementing Islamic rulings, watching over the Islamic system, and making major political decisions that relate to the community's interests. Furthermore, he is the one who possesses the authority to decide war and peace, and bears the responsibility for the security of people, their money and their honor in the sense of determining the general provisions that must be followed and monitoring their implementation. These responsibilities among others are what will grant the guardian jurist the absolute authority as I will discuss further in Chapter Six. The practical powers, however, are not separate from the qualities that must be possessed by the guardian jurist, which initially include the necessity of having deep knowledge in jurisprudence, acquiring the political and practical capacity for good management, and keeping up with the requirements of society. Furthermore, the guardian jurist must hold attributes of justice and piety that functions as an inner deterrent to remain within legal and moral boundaries.

¹⁵⁷ Al-Khumaynī, *al-Hukūma al-Islāmiyya*,

After proving the need for *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* in order to establish the Islamic government, al-Khumaynī defines the qualities of *al-walī al-faqīh*, the ruler who would govern the Islamic government. He concedes that no individual jurist was chosen by the *Imāms* to lead the government during occultation. However, he argues that regardless of the particular chosen individual, the traits of a legitimate leader exist in most jurists.¹⁵⁸ This governor who will rule throughout the period of occultation must hold the qualities closest to that of the infallible as he has to reflect the role and characteristics of the infallible when ruling the community. The Islamic government’s leader must be one who is pious, honest, wise, just, and is an expert in Islamic teachings. Al-Khumaynī summarizes the following qualities of an eligible ruler of an Islamic government: (1) having deep knowledge of Islamic law and (2) being just.¹⁵⁹ However, a vital requirement for earning the position of governance is the ability to rule the community. A capable jurist in this regard should also possess qualities of maturity, rationality, and administrative skills.¹⁶⁰ The term “justice” (*‘adl*) is also advantageous in this context, because it reflects a state of both individual and public spheres. The guardian should be just from within when dealing with his interior faculties in order for him to judge justly (*yaḥkum bi-‘adl*), especially when his judgment necessitates moral or juridical assertion of right or wrong concerning an action. Al-Khumaynī uses the term “justice” in both its moral and epistemic senses, so he can end up with a political order that reflects reliable moral and epistemic tendencies.

¹⁵⁸ Al-Khumaynī, *al-Ḥukūma al-Islāmiyya*, 52.

¹⁵⁹ Al-Khumaynī, *al-Ḥukūma al-Islāmiyya*, 49.

¹⁶⁰ Al-Khumaynī, *al-Ḥukūma al-Islāmiyya*, 59.

Al-Khumaynī typically speaks of the jurists qualified to the guardianship in the plural, as they collectively are the representatives of the hidden *Imām* and thus have his authorities in the public domain. This, however, could be merely out of political expediency, as in the Khumaynian perspective what is required is not simply to attain the level of *ijtihād* in jurisprudence. In this regard, al-Khumaynī says:

The *ijtihād* (rational legal inference used to derive the law) known in the *hawzas* (Shi'ite seminaries) is not enough. Even if there is a person who is the most knowledgeable in the sciences known in the *hawzas*, but is unable to identify the interest of society, or is unable to identify righteous and useful individuals from those who are not righteous, and generally lacks the correct opinion in the social and political fields and lacks the ability to make decisions, such a person is not diligent in social and governmental matters and cannot take over the reins of society.¹⁶¹

It seems clear that al-Khumaynī is advocating for a set of qualifications that would designate himself as the alleged jurist. I contend that in his formulation of religious and political influence, he remained committed to the mystical concept of the perfect human and his supreme authority. It is true that al-Khumaynī neglected the need for philosophical-theoretical knowledge on the part of *al-walī al-faqīh*. This, however, by no means undermines the philosophical foundation of al-Khumaynī's theory of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh*. I argue that this neglect is derived from the guardian jurist responsibility, which is to implement *Sharī'a* while not receiving divine revelation as the prophets did. Therefore, al-Khumaynī wanted to confirm the need for a perfected practical faculty and not a theoretical one. This could be supported by the Farabian definition of jurisprudence in *Iḥṣā' al-'Ulūm*. There, al-Fārābī notes that the epistemic duty of the jurist is to learn the “purpose” of the lawgiver with respect to the religion that he had established for that particular community. In this respect, he “discovers” or

¹⁶¹ Al-Imām Rūḥullāh al-Mūsawī al-Khumaynī, *Manhajīyyat al-Thawra al-Islāmiyya: Min Ārā' al-Imām*, (Tehran: Mu'assasat Tanzīm wa-Nashr Turāth al-Imām al-Khumaynī, 1996), 163.

“infers” what determinations must be taken with respect to issues that the lawgiver did not specifically state or things that did not happen in his day.¹⁶²

Accordingly, in the Khumaynian revolutionary Islamic ruling system, *al-walī al-faqīh* becomes the image and the mirror of the infallible. This is conditioned, however, by the epistemic and ontological capacity of *al-walī al-faqīh* compared to that of the infallible. In his theory, al-Khumaynī does not deny the essential aim of wisdom in perfecting the soul of the jurist, among others. It is self-evident that the purpose of the perfection of both faculties of the soul (i.e. the faculty of the theoretical intellect and the faculty of the practical intellect) is attaining happiness. This notion is not merely Khumaynian but has its roots in the Islamic philosophical tradition and was influenced greatly by Greek philosophers (e.g. Plato, Aristotle). However, our prominent concern here is to investigate the boundaries between the theoretical faculty and the practical faculty when practicing leadership according to the Khumaynian thought. The discrepancy arises from whether it is the perfect theoretical faculty which is to be held essentially by the supreme leader or the perfect practical faculty; does thought subordinate will or vice versa? Prominent Muslim philosophers such as al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā generally viewed act and will as secondary and dependent issues when examining the lawgiver’s characteristics. According to al-Khumaynī, neither is perfect theoretical knowledge, primary or essential, nor are will and practical knowledge secondary and dependent. Based on this view, al-Khumaynī presents an integrated relationship between theoretical and practical faculties when reflecting the posteriority of infallibility, perhaps following the discussion of Mullā Ṣadrā when describing the

¹⁶² Al-Fārābī, *Iḥṣā’ al-‘Ulūm*, 130-31.

conditions of prophecy examined in Chapter Two.¹⁶³ However, during the absence of the infallible, the priority turns to the practical faculty of knowledge. Al-Khumaynī presents a unique political theory that is in some aspects different from those of his preceding philosophers regarding practical wisdom, political philosophy, and the attributes of the leader of the city/nation. In this respect, *al-walī al-faqīh* has four main characteristics. The first is guardianship (*wilāya*), which jurisprudentially stands for having jurisdiction over others in some life aspects and acting on behalf of some of their affairs. The second is jurisdiction (*al-faqāha*), which means having a deep knowledge of the divine law (*Sharī‘a*). This is necessary for leading an Islamic government, as the management of the Islamic society must be in accordance with Islamic jurisprudence. The third is being appointed, which means being indirectly appointed by the infallible by possessing a number of qualifications. This entails the appointment of the qualified jurist to lead the Islamic government representing the hidden Shi‘ite *Imām*, al-Mahdī.¹⁶⁴ The fourth is absoluteness. This means that religious and political authority of the guardian jurist is absolute, in which it covers matters of the public sphere and interest in addition to state sovereignty. This absoluteness is above human-made law, and even above *Sharī‘a* rulings. In this respect, *al-walī al-faqīh* has the authority to stop any *Sharī‘a* ruling that is against the public interest as his authority is similar to that of the infallible. This latter characteristic will be further explained in Chapter Four and Chapter Six. This theory has similarities with al-Fārābī’s notion of the ‘second sovereign’ (*al-ra’īs al-thānī*) and Ibn Sīnā’s notion of the ‘caliph’ as we will discuss in

¹⁶³ See Mullā Ṣadrā, *Mafātīh al-Ghayb*.

¹⁶⁴ After al-Khumaynī, *al-walī al-faqīh* would be identified and selected by an elected group of Shi‘ite jurisprudential elite, which is known as the Assembly of Experts of the Leadership (*majlis-i khubrigān-i rahbarī*). The Assembly of Experts is a legalistic representative body empowered to appoint and expel the Supreme Leader of Iran.

Chapter Four.¹⁶⁵ This specific discussion will elaborate on theoretical and practical difference between a genuine position held by the infallible during his presence and acting position held by *al-walī al-faqīh* during the absence of the infallible. The first case represents a direct connection between the abstract and the concrete realms through the infallible, while the second case is completely embodied in the concrete realm, indirectly shadowing the abstract foundation of the first stated case. This examination in some sense shows how *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* initially encompasses a philosophical foundation rather than a jurisprudential one. However, I argue that the doctrinal framework of this theory serves as a tangible explanation to the common people and as proof of the theory's deep connection to the exoteric sources of Islam as I will show in more detail in Chapter Four.¹⁶⁶

3.4. The Absence of the Infallible and Presence of *Wilāya*

The term *wilāya* (guardianship) in its general sense includes management and administration. Guardianship in the jurisprudential sense means authority over others

¹⁶⁵ See al-Fārābī, *al-Madīna al-Fāḍila*, 129-30; Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā'*, *al-Ilāhiyyāt*, 251-55.

¹⁶⁶ Common peoples' beliefs are justified by establishing a number of special beliefs, which could be named core beliefs or basic beliefs as the foundationalists call them. These core beliefs are considered to be obviously true by the believer and play a privileged role in her/his belief-forming systems. Basic beliefs are those that do not need to be deduced to be justified. For common people, divine revelation serves as a foundation that supports all other justified beliefs, where an individual's beliefs are linked to one another in a linear relationship. This linear relationship, perhaps, explains the relationship between basic beliefs represented by divine revelation and non-basic beliefs represented by philosophical notions. Now, we consider divine revelation as the basic belief for al-Khumaynī's theorization simply because it is rational for any religious Muslim to hold it without going back to any other form of proof or reasoning. Thus, it is irrational for a religious Muslim not to accept divine revelation as a basic belief in all what is related to religious matters. This is especially true if we take into consideration that this religious person was raised in a religious community of individuals who hold the notion of believing in God epistemically and practically. This will lead this person to follow the doctrine without the need to search for reason for this belief. A similar argument was presented by Alvin Plantinga, see Alvin Plantinga, "Reason and Belief in God," in *Faith and Rationality*, eds. Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 16-93; and *Warranted Christian Belief* (New York: Oxford, 1993). Also, see Watson, "Epistemic Justification."

(i.e. someone or something) in a certain domain, or it is that through which the guardian obtains authority to act in a certain domain. Guardianship also has idiomatic meanings related to theology (imamology) and philosophical Sufism, namely the idea of proximity to God.¹⁶⁷ I will not discuss the detailed terminological aspects of *wilāya* here; rather, I will point out the impact of the notion of *wilāya* itself on the Khomeinian approach to politics and how this notion represents the religious backbone of the Islamic Revolution and jurist guardianship. Al-Khomeynī's understanding of guardianship evokes specific qualifications of legitimate authority. Shi'ites generally assume that the divine roots of guardianship and what derives from it such as legitimate sovereignty and authority, which defines the roles and responsibilities of the infallibles, exist only with the infallible even if others are concretely in power.¹⁶⁸ Thus, the living infallible "remains the one to whom obedience, allegiance and devotion are owed (*al-imām al-muftaraḍ al-ṭā'a*)."¹⁶⁹ According to Shi'ite tradition, Some aspects of this privilege was transferred to the indirect appointees of the infallible, the '*ulamā*', during the occultation of the Twelfth *Imām* al-Mahdī. However, what al-Khomeynī and supporters of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* assert is that this privilege should be completely transferred to *al-walī al-faqīh*. Al-Khomeynī's theory wanted to transfigure the guardianship of the infallible into a modern form of ruling.

¹⁶⁷ For a more comprehensive view of the meaning of the guardianship and its divisions, a detailed view of the interpretations and possibilities put forward about the concept, and a definition of the meaning of the concept of the absolute guardianship in the practical application of al-Khomeynī's theory, see Sa'īd Ḍiyā'ī-Far, *al-Imām al-Khomeynī: Manhajuh fī al-Ijtihād wa-Madrasatuh al-Fiqhiyya*, trans. Ra'd al-Hajjāj (Beirut: Markaz al-Ḥaḍāra li-Tanmiyat al-Fikr al-Islāmī, 2015), 209-71.

¹⁶⁸ For a summarized historical scheme, see Sajjad Rizvi, "Authority in Absence? Shi'ī Politics of Salvation from the Classical Period to Modern Republicanism," *Studies in Christian Ethics* 29, no. 2 (2016): 209-10; and for elongated study see Arjomand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam*.

¹⁶⁹ Rizvi, "Authority in Absence?," 209.

The implementation of the theory of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* in 1979 after the victory of the Islamic Revolution led to a new stage in the Shi‘ite history, where *wilāya*, as a form of abstract and concrete authority and sovereignty, is held for the first by a non-infallible man, al-Khumaynī. Al-Khumaynī who had theorized for *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* did so with a certain interpretation of Islam. As we have seen, he held that being a complete religion, Islam must have provided a specific model for managing the public sphere. In this respect, political power is an essential component of this model. Furthermore, since the Islamic model is based on *Sharī‘a*, only jurists are apparently qualified to lead the model as they are the most knowledgeable in the divine law. Accordingly, establishing the Islamic government through *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* becomes necessary in order to apply God’s will on earth. Thus, for al-Khumaynī, *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* is the only system that can guarantee the implementation of the sovereignty of God on earth through practical politics. It is itself a representative of divine sovereignty in opposition to any other worldly sovereignty, especially the secular sovereignty of the Iranian Shah. However, it is legitimate for us to question this kind of “divine” representation and why it ought to be monopolized by clerical hierarchy.

The concept of *wilāya* is so central in the Shi‘ite tradition. The failure to perceive the true meaning of *wilāya* and to recognize its genuine value does not eliminate the fact that it divinely decreed and that it is the central nexus that connects the concrete world to the heavenly world. Truth is not always believed nor is it always practiced, and thus the belief in *wilāya* cannot be subjected to historical and political conditions.¹⁷⁰ Al-Khumaynī’s *Miṣbāḥ al-Hidāya* would be a good example to show how integrative epistemology works in the hands of al-Khumaynī to address concepts such

¹⁷⁰ Rizvi, “Authority in Absence?,” 206.

as *khilāfa* (vicegerency), *wilāya* (guardianship) and the perfect human combining philosophical, mystical, and revelatory narratives.¹⁷¹ Al-Khumaynī writes:

Know, oh spiritual friend—may God grant you success in obtaining His satisfaction and may He bestow upon you and us a vision of His Names and Attributes!—that this vicegerent (*khilāfa*) is among the loftiest divine ranks and the noblest lordly stations granted by God. It is the main gate of Divine Manifestation (*zuhūr*) and Being (*wujūd*), and the major key to the [world of the] Unseen (*‘ālam al-ghayb*) and the world of Witnessing (*‘ālam al-shuhūd*). This is the station of proximity [to the Godhead] (*taqarrub*) which contains the keys to the Unseen, the keys known to Him and nobody else. By means of those keys the divine Names have made their appearance from their concealment, and the Divine Attributes have come out from their hiding [...] Such vicegerency is the spirit of Muhammadan successorship, its master, its root, and its principle. It is the root from which sprang the vicegerency in all existing worlds. It is simultaneously the vicegerency, the vicegerent, and the one who appoints the vicegerent to the world. [...] This type of vicegerency manifested itself in its most complete form in the presence of God’s Greatest Name, which is the Lord of Absolute Muhammadan Reality (*rabb al-ḥaqīqa al-Muḥammadiyya al-muṭlaqa*), the root of universal divine realities. Therefore, this vicegerency is the root of vicegerency *per se*, while the latter is nothing but its [outward] manifestation.¹⁷²

Al-Khumaynī’s mystical inclination toward worldly guardianship, shows how his background in philosophical Sufism would later influence and empower his political discourse and jurisprudential doctrine of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh*.¹⁷³ Such key mystical and theological notion as *wilāya* is uniquely and in an indirect practical manner connected to jurisprudential *wilāya*. This combination had provided al-Khumayani with an accessible influence to present an imamological view of governance while the infallible is in occultation. *Wilāya* represents not only the foundations of sovereignty and authority in Muslim communities, but also the path to salvation that human beings must

¹⁷¹ For example, see al-Khumaynī, *Miṣbāḥ al-Hidāya*, 102.

¹⁷² Al-Khumaynī, *Miṣbāḥ al-Hidāya*, cited by Knysh, “*Irfan Revisited*,” 646, with minor edits.

¹⁷³ On this inclination, see for example al-Khumaynī, *Miṣbāḥ al-Hidāya*, 133.

follow.¹⁷⁴ This is not to forget that the political and practical applicability of the concept of infallibility plays a pivotal role in al-Khumaynī's theory. Thus, the theory of absolute guardianship is substantiated by what he believes to be the essential and strategic political need of establishing a strong state.

The ultimate *wilāya* (i.e. authority and guardianship) is that of God. His *wilāya* can be seen when it comes to *wilāya takwīniyya* (guardianship in the world of creation) and *wilāya tashrī'iyya* (guardianship in legislation). Part of God's authority is that He creates what He wants, but likewise part of His authority is that He legislates what He desires his creation to obey. This divine authority is manifested and devolved by appointing prophets on earth who mirror part of His guardianship. Al-Khumaynī points out that this reasoning is proven in verses 55-56 of Chapter 5 of the *Qur'ān*, where God says:

Your guardian is none but God and His Messenger and those who have believed—those who establish prayer and give *zakāt* while they bow [in prayer]. | And whoever takes God, His Messenger, and those who have believed as the guardians—indeed, are the party of God—[and] will be the predominant.¹⁷⁵

According to this verse, God is maintaining that part of his *wilāya* is given to the Prophet Muḥammad—as was given to other preceding prophets. This verse shows that God's authority and guardianship is manifested in the form of a prophet who came with true doctrine and clear proofs as guidance, and who act on an authority delegated by God. However, the *wilāya* of prophets and their trustees is not independent, rather it is dependent on God giving them the *wilāya*. Another verse in the *Qur'ān* that set up the boundaries of the guardianship of the prophets is verse 25 of Chapter 57. God says:

¹⁷⁴ For example, see *Qur'ān*, 2:30; 35:39.

¹⁷⁵ *Qur'ān*, 5:55-56.

We have sent Our messengers with clear proofs and sent down with them the Scripture and the scale[s] that the people may maintain [their affairs] in justice [...]¹⁷⁶

This verse shows the legislation guardianship of the prophet that allows him to implement divine law. The prophet's *wilāya* is represented in tasks and responsibilities that encompass epistemic and political spheres, such as establishing laws for people on behalf of God, adjudicating their affairs, looking after the needy and the downtrodden in society (*umūr ḥisbiyya*), solemnizing a marriage or dissolve a marriage, collecting and distributing of *khums* and *zakāt* (form of an Islamic taxes), implementing the penal code of God on earth, and governing the state. According to Shi'ism, these tasks are transferred to the *Imām* after the death of Prophet Muhammad. In the Shi'ite tradition, this is proven through several scriptural sources, most influential of which is verse 55 of Chapter 5. God transferred part of his *wilāya* and manifested it in Prophet Muḥammad, and the prophet did the same to the first *Imām* 'Alī and his eleven descendants. However, as mentioned earlier, after the occultation of al-Mahdī, major questions arose: who is the genuine authority and who would be the guardian of the affairs of Muslims and how far does this guardianship extend? All *uṣūlī* jurists (i.e. jurists who deal with the fundamental principles of jurisprudence) believe in *wilāyat al-faqīh*, in the sense that the jurist is the representative of the infallible during his absence. However, they differ with respect to the scope of *wilāya* and how it is delegated from the Prophet and the *Imāms* to the jurists. In other words, they differ on the limits of authority and the domain of sovereignty of the jurist. The answer to this generally originates from three different jurisprudential opinions. All jurists believe that they possess a specific kind of authority restricted to minor public affairs that cannot be obstructed under any

¹⁷⁶ *Qur'ān*, 57:25.

condition. This authority is called *wilāyat al-faqīh fī al-umūr al-ḥisbiyya* (minimum guardianship of the jurists), and is related to affairs such as overseeing orphanages, solemnizing a marriage or dissolving a marriage, and collecting and distributing of *khums* and *zakāt*. Some jurists believe in a wider scope of authority that covers the entirety of the public domain. This authority is called *al-wilāya al-‘amma li-al-fuqahā’* (the general guardianship of jurists in the public domain) and is related to governmental affairs such as public defense, public order, and public health. However, this kind of guardianship is encompassed by the boundaries of both the public interest (*al-maṣlahā al-‘amma*) and direct *Sharī‘a* ordinances. This means that the authority of the jurist is bounded to public interest and jurisprudence in the sense that it is subordinate to both of them. Lastly, a few jurists argue for a third kind of guardianship, which is greater in scope than the two aforementioned guardianships. This type of guardianship is called the absolute guardianship of the jurist (*al-wilāya al-muṭlaqa li-al-faqīh*). According to this group of jurists, the jurist should rule the Islamic society according to the public interest based on his judgment, which is not restricted to the *Sharī‘a*’s primary and secondary ordinances. This kind of guardianship gives the jurist the authority to issue governmental ordinances (*al-ḥukm al-ḥukūmī*) based on public interest. His ordinances and commands in such matters become *de facto Sharī‘a* ordinances, in a sense that his authority mirrors the authority of the infallible.¹⁷⁷

In his early work *Kashf al-Asrār*, al-Khumaynī wrote extensively on matters related to the relationship between religion and politics, such as the expectations of Muslims of their governments, roles of the *‘ulamā’* in politics, Islamic governance, constitutional state, and the guardianship of the jurist and its scope. There, it is very

¹⁷⁷ On the three kinds of guardianships, see Kadivar, “Ayatollah Khomeini’s Political.”

clear that the young al-Khumaynī theorized for what can be called ‘the absolute guardianship of jurisprudence’ and not for the absolute guardianship of the *jurist*. He writes:

[W]e do not say—and it has been addressed—that the government should be in the hands of the jurist, but rather we say that the government should be administered by the law of God Who knows what is best for the state and the people. This [however], cannot happen without the supervision of the scholar [of religion] (*al-‘ālim*) as the [Persian] constitutional state (*dawlat al-mashrūṭa*) also ratified, and this matter does not clash with the order of the state, the formation of the government, and the interests of the state. Rather, it is through this action that cooperation is achieved among all members of the state without exception [...].¹⁷⁸

This point of view stated by al-Khumaynī corresponds to the viewpoints of Shi‘ite authorities of Najaf during the period of the Constitutional Movement. It reflects to a great extent the view of al-Nā’īnī, which is stated in his masterpiece *Tanbīh al-Umma wa-Tanzīh al-Milla (The Awakening of the [Islamic] Nation and Refinement of the Religion)*, published in 1908. In his seminal book, al-Nā’īnī argued for the legitimacy of a democratic political system, where the parliament and government are elected by the people under the legal supervision of the jurists. Similarly, in *Kashf al-Asrār*, al-Khumaynī argued that the meaning of the guardianship of the jurist does not entail a direct ruling or administration; rather, the supervision of the jurist (*niẓārat al-faqīh*) consists of making sure that legislation conforms to the *Sharī‘a* ordinances. Therefore, the establishment of an Islamic government with no overt governing position for the jurist is possible, as long as the regulatory structure is centered on divine law and the jurists controls the legislative process. This view reflects Article Two of the 1907 amendment to the Constitution of Iran.

¹⁷⁸ Al-Khumaynī, *Kashf al-Asrār*, 210.

However, as discussed earlier, al-Khumaynī will argue later in his *al-Hukūma al-Islāmiyya* that during the occultation, the areas of the guardianship of the infallible are all transferred to the jurist, meaning that the jurist has the authority to implement *Sharī‘a* and govern if that is applicable.¹⁷⁹ For al-Khumaynī, as it is irrational that the Prophet would leave the world without designating someone to manage religious and political authorities; it is also irrational that *Imāms* would leave the world without designating someone to manage these authorities. Accordingly, the guardian jurist is not just someone who gives *fatwās*, but he also governs the state, a necessity that may even take precedence over acts of worship as I will discuss in Chapter Six. However, his orders must come with backing from the times of the infallibles. This, according to al-Khumaynī, would be in the time of occultation when the *wilāya* is manifested in a just jurist who is able to provide the *umma* (nation) with political guidance and sociopolitical dimension. If the guardian has no knowledge of political concerns and circumstances, then how can he guide the nation in the way the Prophet did? Thus, the dividing line is the establishment of an Islamic government, because the last two responsibilities are related to governing. Al-Khumaynī’s evidence for this is rational and not jurisprudential, and thus I argue that his divergence from the traditional jurisprudential trend is based on his philosophical tendency.

Nonetheless, it is essential to ask why we see such a radical turn in al-Khumaynī’s theorization. In other words, why has the guardianship turned from that of jurisprudence to that of the jurist? In my view, this development in al-Khumaynī’s thought is mainly connected to the drastic changes in pre-revolutionary and post-revolutionary sociopolitical conditions. I hold firstly that in his early career, al-

¹⁷⁹ Al-Khumaynī, *al-Hukūma al-Islāmiyya*, 58.

Khumaynī felt that the jurists of his period were incapable of implementing their guardianship, as there was no suitable conditions that would allow a jurist to directly implement law in public life. Practical ramifications that followed the fall of the Shah, the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and the writing of a constitution based on commitment to the notion of *wilāya* as the foundation of government all paved the way for al-Khumaynī's new religio-political approach. Al-Khumaynī's perspective and the application of his theory after the victory of the revolution allowed him have the utmost religious and political authority held by the Prophet, a situation that did not occur for anyone before him in the Shi'ite tradition since the death of Prophet Muḥammad.¹⁸⁰ The second I hold, is that the basis for al-Khumaynī's later political and jurisprudential inclination lies in the pre-eminence of state rulings over sub-Islamic rulings. Absolute guardianship is the most important of divine rulings according to al-Khumaynī, and it takes precedence over all legal rulings due to modern necessities that bounds the ruling of a state.

Therefore, I conclude that for al-Khumaynī, the guardianship (*wilāya*) is the root, while the Islamic government is the branch that derives its divine legitimacy from *wilāya* in order to implement *Sharī'a*. Al-Khumaynī used a combination of perfect jurisprudential language and genuine mystical and philosophical foundation in order to confer the esoteric authority of the infallibles to the jurist during the period of occultation. It is perhaps clear by now how al-Khumaynī was able, as a high-ranked jurist, to secure the authoritative religious attribute of guardianship for himself. Within the philosophical, mystical, and jurisprudential context in which al-Khumaynī operates, it is the *wilāya* aspect of Shi'ism that conserves the hierarchy of authority that al-

¹⁸⁰ This was not the situation for any *Imām* except for the first *Imām* 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (r. 656-660) and for the second *Imām* al-Ḥasan ibn 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (r. 660-661) and for a short period of time.

Khumaynī requires in order to substantiate his revolutionary political thought. It is precisely on account of leaving behind theoretical idealism and an exclusive emphasis on jurisprudential roots that *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* succeeded where the governance of the infallible has historically been a political failure. Is the realm of the infallible possible in the worldly life? This raises the philosophical issue of the possibility of the realization of the governance of the infallible and by extension of the perfect virtuous government, which Muslim philosophers have always theorized. One could say that the inability of the infallible to establish a virtuous government was because he did not possess concrete popular power and not because the virtuous city is itself difficult to achieve, given that it was established—according to Muslims—during the era of the Prophet. During this era, the Prophet had popular support and wielded real political and military power. As for the forms of governance that occurred in the post-Prophetic era, these are primarily related to differences in interpreting the *ḥadīth* tradition on how to define the principles of succession and vicegerency. This last point itself is perhaps in al-Khumaynī’s mind what prevented the infallible Shi‘ite *Imāms* and their followers—a minority at that time—from establishing a virtuous city; they had neither popular support of the majority nor real political power to implement the true interpretation of revelation.

CHAPTER 4

THE PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS OF AL-KHUMAYNĪ'S RELIGIO-POLITICAL THEORY

4.1. *Al-Walī al-Faqīh*: A Farabian Second Sovereign and an Avicennan Caliph

In his writings of political philosophy, al-Fārābī usually insists that the supreme ruler is the one who has mastered the sciences. This can only be found in the person who possesses superior natural dispositions and who is in constant union with the Agent Intellect.¹⁸¹ The administration of this ruler would be considered as “virtuous.”¹⁸² Al-Fārābī further argues that these qualifications should not confine to the founder of the virtuous city/state; rather, they are necessary for his successors, as a virtuous regime will remain standing only as long as it is governed by rulers “with identical qualifications” to those of the founding supreme leader.¹⁸³ Therefore, the perfection of practical faculties alone would not lead to success without being accompanied by outstanding ability in theoretical wisdom. This is because changing situations might entail the removal or reform of existing legislation, and not just the addition of new legislation to plug the gaps left by existing legislation.¹⁸⁴ However, in his *Ārāʾ Ahl al-Madīna al-Fāḍila* (*The Opinions of the Inhabitants of the Virtuous City*), al-Fārābī seems to allow the designation of virtuous rule in cases where the ruler has not acquired the highest level of theoretical and imaginative excellence.¹⁸⁵ In this case, he argues that

¹⁸¹ For example, see al-Fārābī, *al-Madīna al-Fāḍila*, 125-26.

¹⁸² Al-Fārābī, *al-Madīna al-Fāḍila*, 127.

¹⁸³ Al-Fārābī, *Iḥṣāʾ al-ʿUlūm*, 129; al-Fārābī, *al-Milla*, 60.

¹⁸⁴ Al-Fārābī, *al-Siyāsa*, 80-81; al-Fārābī, *al-Milla*, 49.

¹⁸⁵ Al-Fārābī, *Iḥṣāʾ al-ʿUlūm*, 126.

the virtuous city could be ruled by a “second sovereign” (*al-raʿīs al-thānī*) who succeeds the “first sovereign” (*al-raʿīs al-awwal*) but does not have all of his qualifications (i.e. his epistemic capability and authority). Al-Fārābī considers the second sovereign to be known by the following six qualities after reaching maturity (*baʿd kabārih*):

- 1) He will be a wise man (*ḥakīmān*).
- 2) He will know and remember the laws and customs (and rules of conduct) with which the first [sovereigns] had governed the city, conforming in all his actions to all their actions.
- 3) He will excel in deducing [new laws] by analogy where no law of his predecessors has been recorded, following for his deductions the principles laid down by the first *Imāms*.
- 4) He will be adept at deliberating and powerful in his deductive abilities to meet new situations for which the first [sovereigns] could not have laid down any law; when doing this he will have in mind the good of the city.
- 5) He will be skillful in guiding the people by his speech to fulfil the laws of the first [sovereigns] as well as those laws which have been deduced in conformity with their principles after their time.
- 6) He should be of tough physique in order to shoulder the tasks of war, mastering the serving as well as the ruling military art.¹⁸⁶

Al-Farabī also considered the second sovereign to share in 12 necessary qualities of the first sovereign. These qualities were “instilled naturally” (*qad fuṭir ʿalayhā*) in the first sovereign, but which are present in the second sovereign from the time of his early youth.¹⁸⁷ These 12 qualities are:

- 1) He should have limbs and organs which are strong and free from deficiency, and which will make him fit for the actions that depend on them; when he intends to perform an action with one of them, he accomplishes it with ease.
- 2) He should by nature be good at understanding and perceiving everything said to him and grasp it in his mind according to what the speaker intends and what the thing itself demands.
- 3) He should be good at retaining what he comes to know and see and hear and apprehend in general and forget almost nothing.
- 4) He should be well provided with ready intelligence and very bright; when he sees the slightest indication of a thing, he should grasp it in the way indicated.

¹⁸⁶ Al-Fārābī, *al-Madīna al-Fāḍila*, 129-30.

¹⁸⁷ Al-Fārābī, *al-Madīna al-Fāḍila* 127-29.

- 5) He should have a fine diction, his tongue enabling him to explain to perfection all that is in the recess of his mind.
- 6) He should be fond of learning and acquiring knowledge, be devoted to it and grasp things easily, without finding the effort painful, nor feeling discomfort about the toil which it entails.
- 7) He should by nature be fond of truth and truthful men and hate falsehood and liars.
- 8) He should by nature not crave for food and drink and sexual intercourse and have a natural aversion to gambling and hatred of the pleasures which these pursuits provide.
- 9) He should be proud of spirit [*megalopsychos*] and fond of honor, his soul being by his (?) nature above everything ugly and base, and rising naturally to the most lofty things.
- 10) Dirham and dinar and the other worldly pursuits should be of little amount in his view.
- 11) He should by nature be fond of justice and of just people, and hate oppression and injustice and those who practice them, giving himself and others their due, and urging people to act justly and showing pity to those who are oppressed by injustice; he should lend his support to what he considers to be beautiful and noble and just; he should not be reluctant to give in nor should he be stubborn and obstinate if he is asked to do justice; but he should be reluctant to give in if he is asked to do injustice and evil altogether.
- 12) He should be strong in setting his mind firmly upon the thing which, in his view, ought to be done, and daringly and bravely carry it out without fear and weak-mindedness.¹⁸⁸

The main distinction between the second sovereign and the first sovereign in the Farabian sense is that the latter maintains a perfected epistemic capacity and authority and that his soul is constantly in union with the Agent Intellect. In this respect, the first sovereign “holds the most perfect rank of humanity and has reached the highest degree of happiness.” Hence, he knows every action by which happiness can be reached. This is the main condition for being a first sovereign according to al-Fārābī.¹⁸⁹ Al-Fārābī writes explaining the epistemic authority of the first sovereign:

When the [Active Intellect descends] in both parts of [one’s] rational faculty; namely the theoretical and practical faculties, and then in his imaginative faculty (*quwwatih al-mutakhayyila*), then it is this man who receives Divine Revelation, and God Almighty grants him revelation through the mediation of the Active Intellect, so that the emanation from God Almighty to the Active Intellect is

¹⁸⁸ Al-Fārābī, *al-Madīna al-Fāḍila*, 127-29.

¹⁸⁹ Al-Fārābī, *al-Madīna al-Fāḍila*, 125-26.

passed on his Passive Intellect through the mediation of the Acquired Intellect, and then to his imaginative faculty. Thus he is, through the emanation from the [Active Intellect] to his Passive Intellect, a wise man and a philosopher and an accomplished thinker in complete respect (*'alā al-tamām*). And he is, through the emanation from the [Active Intellect] to his faculty of imaginative faculty a prophet, in which he warns of things to come and tells of particular things which exist at present. This human being holds the most perfect rank of humanity and has reached the highest degree of happiness. His soul is united as it were with the Active Intellect, in the way stated by us.¹⁹⁰

Al-Fārābī argues that it is difficult to find all the qualities of the first sovereign united in a single human being; men endowed with this nature will be found once in every era.¹⁹¹ In the case of the absence of a person with such qualities, a second sovereign may succeed the first sovereign in ruling the city.

Al-Fārābī's theory of leadership seems to be reproduced to a great extent in al-Khumaynī's theory of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh*. This is especially true if we regard the philosophical tendency of al-Khumaynī that appears in a jurisprudential theoretical model. Al-Khumaynī would agree with al-Fārābī that the first sovereign is the leader over whom no other human being has any sovereignty.¹⁹² He is the perfect guardian and warner, and he is the one who would establish the virtuous city, is the master the virtuous nation, and is capable of lead the Universal State. On the other hand, the Farabian second sovereign can be regarded as *al-walī al-faqīh*. However, in contrary to al-Fārābī who approached the topic of political ruling in a discursive philosophical manner, al-Khumaynī addressed the same topic in relation to the religious dimensions of the concept of *wilāyat al-faqīh*. Thus, al-Khumaynī could be seen as applying al-Fārābī's theory of the second sovereign, who is the delegate of the first sovereign in the

¹⁹⁰ Al-Fārābī, *al-Madīna al-Fāḍila*, 125-26.

¹⁹¹ Al-Fārābī, *al-Madīna al-Fāḍila*, 129.

¹⁹² Al-Fārābī, *al-Madīna al-Fāḍila*, 127.

Khumaynian sense, i.e. the infallible. This delegate functions as the jurist who interprets the law and the executive authority who implements it, but is not a lawgiver. Therefore, Plato's philosopher-king becomes none other than the prophet-king (the first sovereign) in the Islamic tradition followed by jurist-king (the second sovereign) in the Farabian sense, and guardian jurist (*al-walī al-faqīh*) in the Khumaynian sense.¹⁹³ Al-Khumaynī, following al-Fārābī, wanted to combine both religious and political authority in the ruler; he held that none can handle this task other than a jurist.¹⁹⁴ Therefore, al-Khumaynī argues that in the absence of the first sovereign (the infallible), an established jurist with leadership qualifications would be able to succeed the infallible in leading the Islamic government.¹⁹⁵ By now we can see how for al-Khumaynī the notion of taking the reins of government is built within Islam. In Islam, politics is built into the religion, as Muḥammad, the leader of the religion was also the head of the state.

For al-Fārābī, wisdom seems to be the most pivotal quality of the aforementioned six qualities of the second sovereign. In its absence, the virtuous city would remain without a king (second sovereign), the leader who is actually in charge of this city would not be a king, and thus the city would be on the path of destruction.¹⁹⁶ However, is not clear if by wisdom al-Fārābī intends both theoretical and practical wisdom. In my view, wisdom seems to refer to practical wisdom and not the theoretical one, as it better suits the context of al-Fārābī's theory of leadership. Understanding wisdom as practical wisdom fits into the six qualities of the second sovereign better

¹⁹³ The prophet is initially superior to the philosopher according to al-Fārābī, see al-Fārābī, *al-Madīna al-Fāḍila*.

¹⁹⁴ It should be taken into consideration that al-Fārābī himself considers jurisprudence to be a science that is categorized under the umbrella of political science/philosophy as we will discuss later on.

¹⁹⁵ Al-Khumaynī, *al-Ḥukūma al-Islāmiyya*, 52.

¹⁹⁶ Al-Fārābī, *al-Madīna al-Fāḍila*, 130.

than theoretical wisdom, especially given the fact that the other five qualities are related to the jurisdiction and administrative aspects of the city. In his *Ilāhiyyāt al-Shifā'*, Ibn Sīnā describes the role of this quality in both legislation and governance in a way that would support my interpretation of al-Fārābī's use of the term wisdom. Ibn Sīnā states:

It is necessary that the legislator should also prescribe laws regarding morals and customs that advocate justice, which is the mean. The mean in morals and customs is sought in two things. As for the one, involving the breaking of the dominance of the powers [of the passions], this is for the soul's purification and for enabling it to acquire the power of self-mastery so that it can liberate itself from the body untarnished. The other, involving the use of these powers, is for worldly interests. As for the use of pleasures, these serve to conserve the body and [allow] procreation. As for courage, it is for the city's survival. The vices of excess are to be avoided for the harm they inflict in human interests, while the vices of deficiency are to be avoided for the harm they cause the city. By "wisdom" as a virtue (which is the third of a triad comprising, in addition, temperance and courage) is not meant theoretical wisdom-for the mean is not demanded in the latter-but, rather, practical wisdom pertaining to worldly actions and behavior. For it is deception to concentrate on the knowledge of this wisdom, carefully guarding the ingenious ways whereby one can attain through it every benefit and avoid every harm to the extent that this would result in bringing upon one's associates the opposite of what one seeks for oneself and result in distracting oneself from the attainment of other virtues. To cause the hand to be thus fettered to the neck [means] the loss of a man's soul, his whole life, the instrument of his well-being, and his survival up to that moment at which he attains perfection.¹⁹⁷

I argue that according to this understanding of wisdom, the practical qualities that al-Khumaynī proposes for the position of guardianship and leadership of the community are very similar to those specified by al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā through the faculty of wisdom. It is the practical faculty of the infallible that both al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā identify philosophically, while al-Khumaynī used the religious terminology to chart the practical trajectory for any potential or actual guardian jurist to follow. In this respect, wisdom, the first of the six qualities of the second sovereign, embodies the practical characteristics related to political administration, which in the Khumaynian

¹⁹⁷ Ibn Sīnā, *Kitāb al-Shifā'*, *al-Ilāhiyyāt*, 454-55.

sense pertains to worldly actions and behavior. Through this, the leader can attain every benefit and avoid every harm in society in order to achieve the welfare and flourishing of the state. The second, third, fourth, and fifth qualities reflect in more than one way the legalistic qualities of the jurist (*al-faqāha*) that al-Khumaynī believes is necessary for the guardian jurist. Lastly, the sixth quality could be seen reflected in the practical leadership characteristics that al-Khumaynī argues for when identifying the guardian jurist qualities. This quality includes the ability to hold on to political guardianship which presumes military authority.

Let us return to the twelve qualities that both the first and second sovereign share and which are necessary for the second sovereign to have acquired in his childhood, as al-Fārābī holds. In general, these qualities are those of the Prophet and the *Imāms*, and all of them except for the first quality—related to the physical abilities—confirm the necessity of the infallibility to the infallible. Being a representative of the infallible, the jurist in fact should still embody these qualities, even when he falls short from the perfection of the infallible. Practically speaking, most of these qualities are necessary to be held by any established jurist or any believer who seeks to be a jurist. However, al-Khumaynī does not talk about these qualities explicitly, especially in the way that al-Fārābī does. He seems to consider them as forgone conclusion, in accordance to the religious doctrines taught in the seminaries. The twelve qualities could be reduced to three tracks that lead to three general characteristics which al-Khumaynī believes are necessary to the guardian jurist; namely, jurisdiction (*al-faqāha*), justice (*‘adāla*), and leadership skills. Of the twelve qualities, the second, third, fourth and sixth are necessary for any believer who seeks to achieve jurisdiction. The fifth and the twelfth qualities are part of the leadership skills, and the seventh, eighth,

ninth, tenth, and eleventh qualities are part of an ethical structure that is necessary for a person in order to attain the state of “justice.” Although not fully explained in al-Khumaynī’s theory, the characteristic of “justice” is very pivotal in al-Khumaynī’s scheme of qualities of the guardian jurist. Examining this ‘holding virtue’ from a philosophical perspective can better help us grasp its centrality in his ideal leadership characteristics. In this concern, Ibn Sīnā states:

Since the motivating powers are three—the appetitive, the irascible, and the practical—the virtues consist of three things: [(1)] moderation in such appetites as the pleasures of sex, food, clothing, and comfort, [as well as] other pleasures of sense and imagination; [(2)] moderation in all the irascible passions, such as fear, anger, depression, pride, rancor, jealousy, and the like; [and (3)] moderations in practical matters. At the head of these virtues stand temperance, practical wisdom, and courage; their sum is justice, which, however, is extraneous to theoretical virtue. [But] whoever combines theoretical wisdom with justice is indeed the happy man. And whoever, in addition to this, wins the prophetic qualities becomes almost a human god. Worship of him, after the worship of God, exalted be He, becomes almost allowed. He is indeed the world’s earthly king and God’s deputy in it.¹⁹⁸

If we examine al-Khumaynī’s theory of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh*, we see no difference between the stages of youth and maturity concerning the qualifications of potential guardian jurist candidates. In my view, this betrays a deficiency in al-Khumaynī’s theory in both its philosophical anthropology and philosophy of education. When elucidating his political philosophy, al-Fārābī seems to set up the principles of a philosophy of education. This is a very crucial matter in the preservation of any regime that attempts to reproduce the governance of a philosopher-king. Such a ruling system would not survive and flourish unless there is a continuous line of leaders who enjoy the same skills as the founder ruler.¹⁹⁹ Al-Khumaynī set-up a minimal qualification for leaders but omitted any institutionalization for the education of any specific type of

¹⁹⁸ Ibn Sīnā, *Kitāb al-Shifā’*, *al-Ilāhiyyāt*, 455.

¹⁹⁹ Al-Fārābī, *al-Madīna al-Fāḍila*, 130.

political rulers. It seems that he delegated the matter to the usual promotion and educational progress that occurs within the clerical sector. It is a reinforcement of the role of the religious institution where the informal but acknowledged Shi'ite hierarchy, plays a pivotal role in raising the potential candidates who would lead the political institution of an official structure. If we trace al-Khumaynī's clarifications on the genuine capacity of the 'ulamā' and his affirmation of their true revolutionary role, we notice that the spirit of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* entails that the knowledge of divine revelation, and thus the religious and political authority, is exclusively accessible to those who are trained within traditional religious institutions and were then able to teach and exercise it. Still, al-Khumaynī's theory does not account for the pivotal educational aspect of political rule that prepares leaders to govern, and not just religious authorities to handle religious issues.

One important idea that must be highlighted is al-Khumaynī's ability to bridge the theory of al-Fārābī concerning the first sovereign and his theory concerning the second sovereign. In the theory of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh*, al-Khumaynī was able to better clarify the possible need to revise and perhaps even eliminate existing divine laws in the absence of the lawgiver that al-Fārābī mentions and thought could only be perfectly solved with the qualifications of a first sovereign. Al-Khumaynī's treatment of the supreme leader as *al-walī al-faqīh* contains the potential for significant reinterpretations of the legacy of Islam, depending on how a leader would understand the contents and intentions of the divine revelation and prophetic tradition. Al-Khumaynī presented a distinct reading of religion, focusing on its social and political role, and the role of religious leadership in guiding human beings and the human society at large. The most important effect of believing in the absolute guardianship of the jurist lies in

determining governmental rulings over subsidiary Islamic matters (*al-furū`*) in a context of conflict. Al-Khumaynī did not follow the traditional methodology of understanding the scripture within historical boundaries. Rather, he proceeded from re-situating the position of the community and identifying the responsibility of the '*ulamā`*' in the community. This understanding of al-Khumaynī's orientation allows us to view *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* as encompassing the communal affairs of a nation and the state, rather than being limited to the religious affairs of individual and devotional derivations. Al-Khumaynī's aim was to revive the role of religion in society and to present a unique socio-political role of the jurist in the community. This transformed the legislative output of *al-walī al-faqīh* from a solely religious concept to encompassing wide political implications, where the guardian's verdict may exceed the religious status of the "verdict of guardianship" (*ḥukm walā'ī*) or the "verdict of governance" (*ḥukm ḥukūmī*). In other words, al-Khumaynī equated *al-walī al-faqīh*'s authority with the authority of the Prophet (lawgiver), which implies his recognition of himself (as a jurist) as the infallible's general delegate who enjoys an absolute status of invested authority. This Khumaynian understanding of the role of the guardian jurist could in fact be seen in al-Fārābī's third and fourth qualities which are specific to the second sovereign. In this sense, al-Khumaynī was able to indirectly revive the Farabian political philosophy by his understanding of the role of *al-walī al-faqīh* as manifesting the metaphysical-ontological and practical-political role of the lawgiver. In doing so, he managed to combine traditional political philosophy of Islam, contemporary political theory, and deep social analysis using the kind of jurisprudential tools which are best suited for spreading his thought within the Muslim-Shi'ite community. A unique aspect in al-Khumaynī's theory is that it subordinates the divine law not only to the lawgiver's will

but also to the guardian jurist's will. Within this subordination, the divine lawgiver or his representative would be responsible for implementing the essence of the divine law (i.e. value system) and not merely its exoteric aspects. This itself necessitates the craft of political governance where the leader of an Islamic government must be versed in public, social, political, and managerial matters. Al-Khumaynī's perspective reflects the notion of harmony between a good government and the operation of the political leader, a perspective that is derived from Ibn Sīnā in his most comprehensive discussion of politics at the very end of *Ilāhiyyāt al-Shifā'*.²⁰⁰ Here, Ibn Sīnā presents the ideal philosophical foundation that would support al-Khumaynī's tendency in prioritizing governmental rulings over subsidiary Islamic standards. In tackling a related topic, Ibn Sīnā acknowledges that there is a limit to the laws that cannot be amended and that there are domains of discretion that a jurist can function innovatively. He states:

The legislator must relegate many questions, particularly those pertaining to transactions (*mu'āmalāt*), to the exercise of the rational legal inference (*ijtihād*) [of the jurists]. For different times and circumstances call for decisions that cannot be predetermined. As for the further control of the city—involving knowledge of the organization of guardians, income and expenditure, manufacture of armaments, legal rights, border fortifications, and the like—it must be placed in the hands of the ruler in his capacity as caliph. The legislator must not impose specific prescriptions concerning these. Such an imposition would be defective since conditions change with time. Moreover, it is impossible to make universal judgments that cover every contingency in these matters.²⁰¹

Although al-Khumaynī saw himself as a perfect philosopher in the sense of possessing both theoretical and practical sciences, he did not consider a perfect capacity of theoretical philosophical sciences to be a condition for a jurist in leading the religious community. Al-Khumaynī thought that the state that relies on the rarest human nature

²⁰⁰ See Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā'*, *al-Ilāhiyyāt*, 441-55.

²⁰¹ Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā'*, *al-Ilāhiyyāt*, 454.

for its continued survival is likely to decline into a worse condition than the state that is ruled by an uninspired yet long-lasting leadership of lesser men. He thus comes into conclusion that the Islamic government during the absence of the infallible aims at an incipient but recognizable human good that can suffice with the leadership of a jurist who have a perfect practical capacity for state management. This demonstrates to a degree how al-Khumaynī would favor Ibn Sīnā's perspective to al-Fārābī's, as the former seems to hold that politics depends on rulers that have certain attributes that are likely to be seen in any generation—rather than on rulers whose qualities are exceptional and rare.²⁰² In his *Ilāhiyyāt al-Shifā'*, Ibn Sīnā states that the most appropriate way to appoint the caliph, his specific qualifications, and the means of indicating these qualifications is as following:

Next, the legislator must impose as a duty obedience to whosoever succeeds him. [He must also prescribe] that the designation of the successor can be made only by himself or by a consensus of those who have precedence, on the condition that [the latter] should verify openly to the public that the man of their choice can hold sole political authority; that he is of independent judgment; that he is endowed with the noble qualities of courage, temperance, and good governance; and that he knows the religious law to a degree unsurpassed by anyone else. [This verification] must be made in a clear manner, [must be] openly proclaimed, and must find unanimous agreement by the entire public. [The legislator] must lay down in the law that, should they disagree and quarrel, succumbing to passion and whim, or should they agree to designate someone other than the one possessing virtue and who is deserving, then they would have committed an act of unbelief in God. Designation of the caliph through appointment by testimony is best; it will not lead to partisanship, quarrels, and dissensions.²⁰³

This account appears to suit al-Khumaynī's theorization in two aspects. The first is its emphasis on appointment, where the infallible legislator appoints his successor directly or through indicating his qualities; the second is that it does not firmly denote

²⁰² Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā'*, *al-Ilāhiyyāt*, 451; 455.

²⁰³ Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā'*, *al-Ilāhiyyāt*, 451-52.

the qualifications of the successor. By the latter aspect, I mean that Ibn Sīnā does not demonstrate in detail the qualifications of the leader as al-Fārābī did. In this respect, his method of identifying the leader would better fit al-Khumaynī's project, which does not elaborate when describing the qualifications of the guardian jurist since this would limit the available options and risk not having a candidate for supreme leadership at a specific time.

So far, I have shown how the Farabian and Avicennan political theories are reflected in al-Khumaynī's theory of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* in the sense that the guardian jurist could be seen as the Farabian second sovereign and the Avicennan caliph. In fact, the theories of both al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā would fit together in a Khumaynian scheme in that they prove the necessity of the four aforementioned characteristics that any Islamic supreme leader (guardian jurist) must have, according to al-Khumaynī's theory; namely, guardianship, jurisdiction, appointment-ship, and absoluteness of political power. Still, an essential question arises from this discussion: can we say that the establishment of a utopian political system of ruling is necessary to enact an Islamic social life alongside what is also moral at the individual scale as al-Fārābī presumed? Furthermore, can we hold that al-Khumaynī argued for a specific kind of utopia, or is his theory far from this and is bound rather by a realistic assessment of his socio-political context? In insisting on the imperfection of any Islamic government in the absence of the infallible, it seems that al-Khumaynī was careful as Ibn Sīnā before him to avoid falling back to a completely utopian political doctrine as al-Fārābī did. He was aware that a political system guided by a perfect human being would not be possible as long as the infallible is still in occultation. Therefore, al-Khumaynī's aim was not to implement a utopia; rather he aimed at implementing divine law. It seems that he would

endorse Ibn Sīnā's notion that striving too idealistically would render the political project fragile and run the risk of incessant chaos, if not complete devastation. For al-Khumaynī, the supreme leader orders the life of the state and its citizens so as to secure the attainment of justice on the part of all citizens. All the religious beliefs and political actions that *al-walī al-faqīh* establishes are to ensure that Muslims can tap into their potential to the fullest. In this sense, al-Khumaynī would hold a Farabian perspective wherein cities exist to make men perfect; he would also hold to the Avicennan assumption that citizens are made good so that cities can exist.²⁰⁴ Therefore, we can see how al-Khumaynī's divergence from the Platonic leitmotif appears in his awareness of the instability of a utopian political project during the infallible's absence. This perception is aided with the recognition of the necessity of practicing politics with the aim of seeing the unicity of society in the mirror of the unicity of being. Accordingly, al-Khumaynī reformulates the combination between the practical philosophy of al-Fārābī and that of Ibn Sīnā. This appears in his theoretical and practical religio-political approach that combines the notion of the virtuous city and the notion of virtuous individual, and where the main concern and ultimate goal of politics generally and establishing the presumed political system specifically is not only to achieve virtue but also justice—as I will show in Chapter Five. By the latter, al-Khumaynī can be seen as combining the Farabian notion of the virtuous city and the Avicennan notion of the just city (*al-madīna al- 'ādila*). This philosophical orientation, in turn, led al-Khumaynī to focus on the practical qualifications of the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic and to reject any conditional need for a detailed theorizing of the ideal characteristic of the ruler-jurist, which al-Fārābī following Plato would surely demand. This shows how al-

²⁰⁴ On the Farabian and Avicennan perspectives, see Galston, "Realism and Idealism," 568.

Khumaynī departs from the general utopian position of Plato’s *Republic* that is supported by al-Fārābī.²⁰⁵ In this sense, al-Khumaynī was able to integrate the Farabian distinction between types of virtuous and vicious states, rulers and civic societies, and the Avicennan interpretation of the political features of prophecy and divine law to form a functional political theory. He was able to theorize what distinguishes regimes and how to bring them about. He was also able to theorize the political and epistemic characteristics of the leader who can realistically rule the virtuous state during the absence of the infallible. It was the “messianic moment” of the revolution and the charismatic-prophetic character of al-Khumaynī that allowed him presented himself as the shadow of God on earth. This has strengthened the assessment that al-Khumaynī saw himself as a philosopher-mystic-King in its Shi‘ite version, or a Farabian ‘second sovereign’ and an Avicennan ‘caliph.’ Al-Khumaynī did not get his theory out of nowhere; however, what is innovative in his theory is his reinterpretation that takes into account specific political circumstances that allowed him to theorize through juristic reasoning how to render a political philosophy into a practical model of governance. As a Muslim philosopher, he had surely read Plato, al-Fārābī, and Ibn Sīnā. This perhaps indicates how their notions of political philosophy influenced his religio-political thought and contributed to the theorization of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* in a theological and jurisprudential context.

²⁰⁵ Utopian philosophers consider the most important aim of the ideal political order is to be represented in the active promotion of intellectual perfection in as many people who are capable of the strains of the meditative existence. This consequently necessities an educational function of the virtuous city. Accordingly, al-Fārābī extensively discussed the subject of the theoretical faculty that should be held by the citizens of the virtuous city. He further explained this in the context of the moral virtues that a perfect theoretical faculty imparts and the social and political advantages it presents. For example, see al-Fārābī, *al-Madīna al-Fāḍila*.

4.2. Philosophizing the Proposed Epistemic-Practical Capacity of *al-Walī al-Faqīh*

After discussing the indirect and direct influences of Muslim philosophers on al-Khumaynī, examining al-Khumaynī's initial theory and the scope of the authority of the guardian jurists, I will now discuss what I believe to be the philosophical structure of al-Khumaynī's theory. Firstly, we must ask the following question: what is the source of knowledge in the case of the jurists? As mentioned, al-Khumaynī puts the legal-political authority of *al-walī al-faqīh* on a par with the authority of the infallible, but he does not make it the same when it comes to their varying epistemic authority. The previous discussion has shown the necessity of understanding the relationship between the epistemic system of the infallible and that of a guardian jurist. Building on the examination done in Chapters Two and Three, one can see how while the three epistemic faculties (soul, intellect, and imagination) are static and ideal in the case of the perfect human, the case of a non-infallible person differs, where the epistemic faculties work according to a variable motion depending on the spiritual and rational abilities of each "religious" person. This is why there see no congruence between the three epistemic faculties even among the '*ulamā*'. This clearly appears when they rely on pure reasoning when the revelatory text does not deal directly with a certain issue. Whenever a person approaches the ladder of perfection, his epistemic ability becomes closer to the epistemic ability of the perfect human, in such a way that he can grasp many of theoretical and practical truths through the three epistemic sources of knowledge.²⁰⁶ This person would be considered as an ideal scholar since he is able to truly interpret the speech of God through accessing the sayings of the infallibles. This ultimately results to entering the presence of the Divine Speaker Himself. When this

²⁰⁶ On this, see al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, *al-Ṣāfi*, 1: 33.

journey has been achieved, the scholar will achieve something valuable for the community. Al-Fayḍ al-Kashānī states:

[Such an individual will] take his knowledge directly from God not from teachers. [...] He will thoroughly penetrate the infallible exegetical *ḥadīth* accounts [attributed to the *Imāms*] until it is purified from what purports dust in the lucid (*al-bayān*), and he will thoroughly elucidate it such that it befits the understanding of people of the time.²⁰⁷

Few pages later in *al-Şāfi*, al-Fayḍ al-Kashānī presents a Platonic model that divides reality into intelligible and sensible realms. He states:

[All] things in the sensible-visible world are symbols and emblems of a spiritual reality in the realm of the divine kingdom, which is its disembodied spirit and its pure truth. The intellects of the common people (*jumhūr al-nās*) in reality are emblems and symbols of the intellects of the prophets and saints. [Thus,] the prophets and saints can only talk to them through metaphorical examples, because they were ordered to talk to people according to the level of [the people] intellects.²⁰⁸

Here, we can see how the metaphorical language plays a pivotal role in the epistemic structure of *al-Ḥikma al-Muta‘āliya* to such an extent that in some cases it seems inextricable. Al-Fayḍ al-Kashānī’s text insists on the practical role of addressing both the religious and philosophical discourses to people according to their level of knowledge.²⁰⁹ The role of metaphorical language appears crucial in the thought of prominent figures of *al-Ḥikma al-Muta‘āliya* in the sense that the system attempts to unify the philosophical, mystical, and religious realms in a single synthesized epistemic system. The wide presence of this language in the Islamic scripture and *ḥadīth* helped Mullā Şadrā and his students in presenting a unique interpretation of revelation and the

²⁰⁷ Al-Fayḍ al-Kashānī, *al-Şāfi*, 1: 12.

²⁰⁸ Al-Fayḍ al-Kashānī, *al-Şāfi*, 1: 32.

²⁰⁹ Earlier in medieval Islam, al-Fārābī spoke extensively that its necessary to address common people using metaphors and similes. See Abū Naşr al-Fārābī, *Kitāb al-Ḥurūf*, ed. Muhsin Mahdi (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1990).

role of prophecy in the community that combines both philosophical and mystical notions. This, perhaps, would support the assertion that the use of metaphors stimulates the prospect of having varying interpretations for the same text.²¹⁰ Additionally, using the Platonic division of reality to explain the different classes of people in their comprehension of religion is consistent with our argument that *al-Hikma al-Muta‘aliya*’s epistemology upholds a combination of demonstrative proof, mystical unveiling, and divine revelation. Al-Fayḍ al-Kashānī argues that the natural methods of demonstrative proof and mystical unveiling in the intellect of the majority of people are weak in comparison to the intellect of the prophets and *Imāms* who have direct access to divine revelation. In sum, prophets would receive God’s words and apprehend His commands upon human conditions, while other people, including philosophers and scholars of religion, are not able to receive but are able to apprehend by seeking the prophetic path. Thus, the path of the ‘*ulamā*’ must mirror that of the prophets and the ‘*ulamā*’ must mirror the prophetic station. The latter mirroring should be on both epistemic and practical means. This reflects the notion that while trusting our own rational and spiritual capacities, we should subject any conclusions we yield to higher prophetic authority. In other words, the intellects of the majority of persons that have no divine revelation are still partially developed. They need the help of the non-divine faculties of reason and intuition to understand the depth of the scriptural output of the Prophet and *Imāms*.

Here, it would be helpful to go back to Mullā Ṣadrā. According to Meisami, Mullā Ṣadrā considers three methods for acquiring knowledge: 1) revelation (*wahy*), which belongs to prophets, 2) divine inspiration (*ilhām*), which belongs to the *Imāms*,

²¹⁰ On philosophical understanding of religious metaphors, see Zainab Ali Sabra, “The Truth about Metaphors” (MA thesis, American University of Beirut, 2017), 6-7.

and 3) speculative acquisition (*iktisāb*), which belongs to the speculative religious scholars.²¹¹ According to Mullā Ṣadrā the three epistemic classes are distinct only with respect to the process of knowledge attainment. He writes:

As for acquisition (*al-iktisāb*), it is the way of the speculative [religious] scholars (*al-nuẓẓār min al-‘ulamā’*). And acquisition does not differ from divine inspiration (*al-ilhām*) in the very emanation (*fayaḍān*) of the intelligible forms (*al-ṣuwar al-‘ilmiyya*) and the recipient (*qābil*) of them and the agent (*fā‘il*) or the giver (*muftīḍ*) of them. They only differ in the way that the veil is removed (*zawāl al-ḥijāb*) [between the giver and the recipient] and its direction (*jīha*). [Similarly] revelation (*wahy*) and inspiration do not differ in any of the things mentioned above though they are different in the degree of clarity (*wuḍūḥ*) and luminosity (*al-nūriyya*) and the vision of the angel who bestows the intelligible forms. Thus, according to what came before, the sciences (*al-‘ulūm*) are not attained for us unless through the intermediary of the noetic angels (*al-malā’ika al-‘ilmiyya*) who are the agent intellects (*al-‘uqūl al-fa‘āla*) in different ways. As God said: “It is not [possible] for a human being to have Allāh communicate with him, except through revelation, or from behind a veil, or by sending a messenger-[angel] to reveal by His permission whatever He wills [(*Qur’ān*, 42:5)].”²¹²

Meisami holds that in this passage Mullā Ṣadrā claims complete epistemic authority for the established scholars.²¹³ She posits that Mullā Ṣadrā bases his justification for the epistemic authority of the jurist on distinguishing between the epistemic means that are responsible of obtaining divine knowledge.²¹⁴ Meisami further highlights a pivotal notion, which is that Mullā Ṣadrā neither uses the term “*al-mujtahidīn*” nor “*al-fuqahā*” but the term “*‘ulamā’*” to refer to the epistemic heirs of the infallibles. This is important to note since Mullā Ṣadrā in *Sih Aṣl*, theorizes that the scope of *fiqh* is more general than what the exoteric ‘*ulamā’* (i.e. the *fuqahā*) in the context of Mullā Ṣadrā’s time) had limited it to. For one to be a *faqīh* (jurist), he has to

²¹¹ Meisami, *Knowledge and Power*, 159.

²¹² Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Shawāhid al-Rubūbiyya*, 349.

²¹³ Meisami, *Knowledge and Power*, 160.

²¹⁴ Meisami, *Knowledge and Power*, 159.

be a scholar of all theoretical and practical matters, meaning, he has to be a speculative religious scholar.²¹⁵ This opens the door for a more general notion with wider application that al-Khumaynī would continue to develop. This is where traditional jurisprudence becomes a single category under the initial and revived jurisprudential umbrella that is equivalent to practical philosophy in speculative terms.

In examining the subject of the scope of the *mujtahids* and jurists' knowledge, it is crucial to mention that Mullā Ṣadrā considers genuine epistemic content as being result of the unification of the intellectual soul with the Agent Intellect. This reflects an ontological Ṣadrian position, where knowledge at all its levels is considered to be a form of being that is ontologically prior to the external world.²¹⁶ According to Meisami, this depiction of epistemic content as the site for the ontological advancement of the soul plays a key role in the psychological-epistemic framework that empowers the Shi'ite discourse of authority.²¹⁷ In this respect, Mullā Ṣadrā considers the soul of the *Imām* to be true knowledge itself due to the notion of unification.²¹⁸ The principle of the unification of the knower and the known and its ontological ramification allows the Ṣadrian interpretation of this relationship to support the notion of absolute authority that is emanated from an ontological hierarchy of souls. According to Mullā Ṣadrā, the perfect human becomes “the final end of being,” and “God’s vicegerent on earth;” he is the infallible whom the world would “fall off the rank of existence.”²¹⁹ Building on the Neoplatonic principle of intermediaries between God as the One Transcendent Being

²¹⁵ Mullā Ṣadrā, *Risālat al-Uṣūl al-Thalātha*, 201-202.

²¹⁶ Meisami, *Knowledge and Power*, 128.

²¹⁷ Meisami, *Knowledge and Power*, 132.

²¹⁸ Mullā Ṣadrā, *Sharḥ Uṣūl al-Kāfi*, 2: 551.

²¹⁹ Mullā Ṣadrā, *Sharḥ Uṣūl al-Kāfi*, 2: 487-88.

who is beyond plurality and His creation which is complex and divisible,²²⁰ the existence of the infallible becomes necessary at both ontological and epistemic levels. The first is seen through religious idioms, where the infallibles play the role of intermediaries between God and the worldly creation, representing God on earth (the notion of *khilāfa*)—the intermediary through which the hierarchical process of creation continues to unfold. The second appears at the level of instruction; the infallibles are responsible for transferring knowledge to the sublunary.²²¹ Mullā Ṣadrā expands the scope of the latter to encompass the “the perfect scholars” (*al-‘ulamā’ al-kāmilīn*). He attributes to them the capacity to delve into the difficult sciences (*al-‘ulūm al-ghāmiḍa*).²²² Using the ontological concept of causation Mullā Ṣadrā builds-up his epistemic arguments for the necessity of the Imamate in the chain of perceiving knowledge. He writes:

Verily God establishes things through [intermediary] causes (*asbāb*), so for every being He made a cause (*sabab*), and for every cause an explanation, and for every explanation some knowledge, and for every knowledge a speaking gate (*bāb al-nāṭiq*) by whose recognition one will gain that knowledge, otherwise one will remain ignorant of it.²²³

Mullā Ṣadrā holds that acquiring true knowledge of a thing is impossible without knowing the definition of its cause. This can only be achieved through demonstrative reasoning (*al-burhān*), which is revealed by the infallible, the “speaking gate” (*al-bāb al-nāṭiq*), as Mullā Ṣadrā puts it.²²⁴ Therefore, the infallibles become the only pathways to knowledge in the sense that it is necessary to follow their instructions.

²²⁰ ‘Abdul Raḥmān Badawī, *Aflūṭīn ‘ind al-‘Arab* (Kuwait: Wikālat al-Matḥ ū‘āt, 1977), 134-39.

²²¹ Mullā Ṣadrā, *Sharḥ Uṣūl al-Kāfi*, 2: 509.

²²² Mullā Ṣadrā, *Sharḥ Uṣūl al-Kāfi*, 2: 511.

²²³ Mullā Ṣadrā, *Sharḥ Uṣūl al-Kāfi*, 2: 530.

²²⁴ Mullā Ṣadrā, *Sharḥ Uṣūl al-Kāfi*, 2: 532.

This is because we fallible individuals are believed to be “incapable of understanding intellectual matters” (*al-umūr al-‘aqliyya*).²²⁵ Accordingly, the infallible’s epistemic superiority and his association with absolute knowledge necessitates submission to him if salvation is sought-after. Therefore, the human beings are not only obligated to learn from the infallible, but also to follow his instructions and take commands from him.²²⁶ This absolute epistemic authority and consequently political authority of the infallible is proven by Mullā Ṣadrā through philosophical, mystical, and revelatory means, a method that reflects his unique integrative epistemology.

According to the aforementioned examination, I argue that Mullā Ṣadrā’s philosophy had pivotally contributed to the epistemic absolute authority of religious knowledge and thus to the absolute guardianship of the jurist. If we investigate Mullā Ṣadrā’s method in presenting philosophy in harmony with revelation, through which he backs up his philosophical notions, then he could be seen as a philosopher and scholar of religion whose aim is to philosophize religion and show its deep relation to the divine call.²²⁷ That is why Mullā Ṣadrā insists that epistemic justification should help in the attainment of true religious beliefs that would help in building a perfect individual and a perfect community.²²⁸ Thus, religion does not tackle the individual only but also the communal aspect of human life, that is why understanding the political system is important, because politics is the framework of the application of any communal vision. Mullā Ṣadrā did not directly engage in politics, but he tried to reform its structure by

²²⁵ Mullā Ṣadrā, *Sharḥ Uṣūl al-Kāfi*, 2: 571.

²²⁶ Mullā Ṣadrā, *Sharḥ Uṣūl al-Kāfi*, 2: 584.

²²⁷ Carlos Fraenkel, *Philosophical Religions from Plato to Spinoza: Reason, Religion, and Autonomy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

²²⁸ Mullā Ṣadrā, *Risālat al-Uṣūl al-Thalātha*, 187.

critiquing the deviations of the political and religious authorities and depriving any religious legitimacy from it. He calls for purification of the souls of those who are in power or those who are in charge of influencing them (i.e. *'ulamā'*).²²⁹

In his famous theological work *'Ilm al-Yaqīn (The Knowledge of the Absolute Certain)*, al-Fayḍ al-Kashānī, using a more theological language than his teacher Mullā Ṣadrā, argues for the political authority of the infallible. He holds that in addition to the instructive task of guiding people, the infallible is also responsible of “managing the worldly affairs” and “retaining security in cities.”²³⁰ Despite his *Akhhārī* tendencies, al-Fayḍ al-Kashānī was a *mujtahid* or *faqīh*—not in the *Uṣūlī* form, but rather in the Ṣadrian aspect of the term, meaning he was a scholar of theoretical and practical sciences—who “supported the allocation of important community practices to the *faqīh* during occultation.”²³¹ The most important of these was endorsing Friday prayer under the *'aynī* (obligatory status) position.²³² Al-Fayḍ al-Kashānī was well aware of the strong opposition faced for example by al-Muḥaqqiq al-Karakī and afterwards by his teacher al-Shaykh al-Bahā'ī to extend the *faqīh's* *niyāba* (deputyship) during the

²²⁹ Mullā Ṣadrā, *Risālat al-Uṣūl al-Thalātha*, 183-90.

²³⁰ Muḥammad Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī, *'Ilm al-Yaqīn*, trans. Ḥusayn Ustād-Walī, vol. 1 (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Hikmat, 2014), 484.

²³¹ Newman, “Fayd al-Kashani,” 41.

²³² The authenticity of the Friday prayer service during the occultation is a central issue in the claims regarding the authority of the clergy and their relationship with the Safavid monarchy. There are three possible positions on this topic. Those who classified the prayer as *wujūb takhyīrī* hold that the presence of the *Imām*, or the presence of his deputy, in reference to the *faqīh*, is necessary to lead the Friday prayer. Therefore, the supporters of this position denoted the effort to increase the authority of the *faqīh*, independent from the existing political institution. Those who maintained that the Friday prayer was *'adam wujūb* (not obligatory) or *ḥarām* (forbidden), held that the prayer service was either not mandatory or even forbidden during the Occultation, since the *Imāms* did not provide precise authorization for its performance in their absence. Proponents of the third position argued that the Friday prayer was *wujūb 'aynī* (an individual obligation), in such a way that the presence or absence of a deputy is not a strict condition. Their main concern was to prove that the practice of the Friday prayer performed during the presence of the *Imāms* can be sustained in their absence according to the instructions of the established political institution. Newman, “Fayd al-Kashani,” 34-35.

Imām's Occultation so that it includes establishing and leading the Friday prayer.²³³ Since his early career, al-Fayḍ al-Kashānī supported the necessity of Friday prayer, maintaining the *niyāba* aspect of the prayer; this is a position that could be considered as an unambiguous legitimization of the Safavid political authorities.²³⁴ However, al-Fayḍ al-Kashānī diverges from his teacher Mullā Ṣadrā in the sense of not attributing absolute epistemic authority to jurists.²³⁵ This perhaps could be understood as part of his *Akhbārī* leanings, where the infallible is deemed to be the sole source of religious truth.²³⁶ Thus, by transferring the sociopolitical authority of the infallible to the jurist, al-Fayḍ al-Kashānī nonetheless still maintains the incompleteness of his epistemic authority, given that the three epistemic faculties of this group cannot reach the perfection of that of the infallible. Al-Khumaynī seems to reflect al-Fayḍ al-Kashānī's tendency with respect to this relationship between epistemic and sociopolitical authority. Both clearly designate the infallibles as the only path to knowledge and salvation for the people. However, both are aware that when emulating this path during the absence of the infallible, one should always maintain the status of the deficiency of the current political authority. For them, the post-occultation era is at its most an era of implementing divine law and not an era of receiving it through revelation and inspiration. Therefore, we see that al-Khumaynī is aware of insisting on denying any

²³³ On the question of Friday Prayer during the Safavid period, See Abisaab, *Converting Persia*, 55-56, 71-72, 112, 124-26; Rula Jurdi Abisaab, "Moral Authority in the Safavid State," in *The Shi'i World: Pathways in Tradition and Modernity*, ed. Farhad Daftary, Aryn B. Sajoo, and Shainool Jiwa (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015), 142-48.

²³⁴ Muḥammad Muḥsin al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, *Mafātīḥ al-Sharā'ī*, ed. Mahdī al-Rajā'ī, vol. 1 (Qom: Majma'ī-i Dhakhā'ir-i Islāmī, 1401/1980-81), 17-18.

²³⁵ See Meisami, *Knowledge and Power*, 187.

²³⁶ On *Akhbārīyya* jurisprudential school, see Rula Jurdi Abisaab, "Shi'i Jurisprudence, Sunnism, and the Traditionist Thought (Akhbārī) of Muhammad Amin Astarabadi (d. 1626-27)," *IJMES* 47 (2015): 5-23; and "Was Muḥammad Amīn al-Astarabādī (d. 1036/1626-7) a Mujtahid?," *Shii Studies Review* 2 (2018): 38-61.

independent epistemic authority from the guardian jurist. He simply aims at stating the minimum conditions needed to maintain the continuity of the Islamic Government, as people with high and unique theoretical and practical knowledge as himself might not exist in every era.

This examination forms the basis for a philosophical understanding of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* being a reworking of the theory of prophecy presented by Mullā Ṣadrā. It could be concluded that according to *al-Ḥikma al-Muta‘āliya*, the original evidence for the political guardianship of the Prophets and *Imāms* is the unique kind of knowledge they possess, which permits the establishment of a divine state. This perhaps was able to provide the philosophical foundations for the theory of the political guardianship of the *mujtahids* in the era of the absence of an infallible, given their status as the heirs of the infallibles’ religious knowledge. The guardian jurist becomes a manifestation of the infallible within a very condensed and comprehensive structure, which includes metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, politics, and theology. Understanding the manner by which the epistemic model of imamology permeates the intellectual project of philosophical Shi‘ism allows us to have deeper insight into how epistemology played a central role in the new political-religious project of al-Khumaynī. Al-Khumaynī practically elucidates the comprehensive guardianship of the Prophet and infallible *Imāms*, who have the power to appoint and dismiss all subjects within a political context. Accordingly, for al-Khumaynī this authority is transferred to the guardian jurist. He also explains that this guardianship does not at all signify that the chosen jurist rises to the level of the Prophet Muḥammad or the *Imām*. The authority only becomes equivalent in certain applications, such as in performing the duties of the Prophet or infallible *Imāms* in their absence, provided that the required qualifications

are met. “Guardianship means the governing [of people], managing, and administrating the country. It is not—as some may wrongly assume—a privilege and preference, but rather a very critical and practical duty.”²³⁷ Al-Khumaynī holds that divine laws were set by God with the aim of implementation. Accordingly, I argue that the implementer would need to first possess the suitable epistemic capability to understand these laws through the interpretation of the infallibles’ sayings. In addition, he must have other necessary characteristics, the first being a highly ethical and purified character, which would help him grasp the essence of the infallibles’ knowledge. The second is to have a practical and charismatic leadership style that would help him implement the laws and lead the community. This could clearly be seen in Article Five of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran states the following:

In the time of the absence of *Imām* al-Mahdī (may God Almighty hasten his return), the guardianship of the command and the leadership of the nation (*umma*) in the Islamic Republic of Iran shall be in the hands of the just, pious, visionary jurist, who is courageous and able to administer and manage, according to the article 107.

4.3. Is *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* a Philosophical, Political, or Jurisprudential Theory?

Since the authority of the jurists was established during the Safavid era Shi‘ite political history underwent a vital turning point. Nonetheless, the manner by which al-Khumaynī established the jurists’ authority was unique in its blending of two features. The first is his formulation of the absolute guardianship of the jurist, expanding the jurist’s ruling capacity. The second comes from the fact that the ruling government in the prerevolution time of al-Khumaynī was not only illegitimate, treacherous, and corrupt, but was also pursuing a completely secular state. Al-Khumaynī’s political

²³⁷ Al-Khumaynī, *al-Hukūma al-Islāmiyya*, 53.

thesis would be seen as a critical-fundamental innovation in both the Shi‘ite political and jurisprudential theories. However, it is at the same time a product of a deeply developed relationship between religion and philosophy on the one hand and politics and Shi‘ism on the other, especially taking into consideration the period which preceded the establishment of Safavid Iran. Scholars such as Abbas Amanat have traced al-Khumaynī’s theory to the philosophical-mystical tradition of Islam, arguing that it has a very modest legalistic foundation.²³⁸ A narrower standpoint by Hamid Dabashi understands *al-walī al-faqīh* as the “philosopher king in the Platonic understanding of the term.”²³⁹ However, despite the fact that al-Khumaynī does not hold the possession of supra-rational or mystical characteristics as an essential condition for *al-walī al-faqīh*, his use of Neoplatonist-mystical terminology can be noticed in many of his political writings and his political practice as was noted earlier in this thesis. However, one cannot confine al-Khumaynī’s thought to this specific interpretation, given the very pivotal integrative feature of his intellectual character. Al-Khumaynī’s versatile intellectual character helps in presenting his theory from different perspectives, or at least leads us to see it as developing from an integrative trajectory. In parallel, the unique intellectual character of al-Khumaynī is also an obstacle in tracing the origins of his theory. From a jurisprudential perspective, the *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* theory finds its roots in the Shi‘ite classical tradition. The clear jurisprudential roots of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* could be traced back as early as the Safavid era, where deep relationships started developing between the governing monarchy and the Shi‘ite *mujtahids*. Controversial jurisprudential issues such as the legal status of the Friday prayer had paved the way for

²³⁸ Amanat, “From Ijtihād to Wilāyat-i Faqīh,” 130.

²³⁹ Dabashi, *Theology of Discontent*, 413.

reconsidering the relationship between religion and politics during the occultation of the Twelfth Shi‘ite *Imām*. However, the stage which reflects the indirect establishment of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* jurisprudentially is seen in the writings and practices of Mullā Aḥmad al-Narāqī (1772–1829). Al-Narāqī could be considered as the first theorist of *wilāyat al-faqīh* doctrine in its wide political form, and also the first Shi‘ite jurist to hold that the management of the citizen’s secular matters is the duty of the jurists.²⁴⁰ Thus, the theory is by no means a new jurisprudential innovation by al-Khumaynī, but rather a sophisticated episode of a jurisprudential research. Although *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* might not be completely taken as a “natural continuation of traditional Shi‘ite jurisprudence,”²⁴¹ it still represents a development in Shi‘ite jurisprudence and a deep analytical reconsideration of the role of the ‘*ulamā*’. On the other hand, al-Khumaynī’s theorized political system demonstrated an unprecedented political orientation in the Islamic world with respect to both theory and application. Yet, we still cannot claim that there is a radical break between premodern and modern Islamic political thought, as Namazi suggests.²⁴² Namazi argues that al-Khumaynī’s political theology—or better political jurisprudence—can play a major transitional role, representing the foundational structure of a modern sovereign state, which reflects a new form of secularity.²⁴³ On the contrary, I argue that while critiquing the political engagement of religion in the West (i.e. Spinozian critique) influenced the birth of secular political thought, the development of philosophical and jurisprudential traditions in Islam played a role in

²⁴⁰ For a Literary review on studies that examine *wilāyat al-faqīh* from a jurisprudential perspective, see Taha, “Shiite Ulama,” 86-88.

²⁴¹ Namazi, “Ayatollah Khomeini,” 112.

²⁴² Namazi, “Ayatollah Khomeini,” 112.

²⁴³ Namazi, “Ayatollah Khomeini,” 113-14.

maintaining a deep relationship between religion and politics that led to the establishment of a “modern” Islamic political system in modern Iran, one that would rival Islamic political theorization in the contemporary world.

Throughout al-Khumaynī’s theoretical and practical contribution to the Islamic political theory, a coherence of the three epistemic accounts can be detected, namely between demonstrative proof, mystical unveiling, and divine revelation. The interconnection of these three sources is indirectly presented throughout his political career, with an emphasis on the notion that all knowledge is embodied in the divine revelation. In al-Khumaynī’s thought, the epistemic space of divine revelation is guaranteed by a fusion of both the *Qur’ānic* verses and the main *ḥadīth* texts of the Twelver Shi‘ite tradition. Divine revelation forms the core of any other religious belief. From this, perhaps, we can deduce the manner by which divine revelation forms the basic structure of knowledge, on the basis of which, according to al-Khumaynī, Muslims should legitimize their thoughts and actions. In this concern, one could sense the pivotal role of the concept of reliability with respect to al-Khumaynī’s theory of justification. A theoretical belief is accordingly justified only if it is based on a reliable epistemic indicator. For al-Khumaynī, this indicator is divine revelation. Accordingly, *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* from the Khumaynian perspective definitely has a jurisprudential backbone. However, I consider this backbone to be the foundational structure of a philosophical understanding and critique of the relationship between religion and politics. Re-examining the role of religion in governing society and reinterpreting the role of ‘*ulamā*’ in this process necessitates the presentation of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* in a traditional divine law framework in order to legitimize the process and results of theorization. This is especially true when taking into consideration the fact that Islam

usually presents itself primarily as a religion that regulates human beings' private and public lives through *Sharī'a*. From this perspective, al-Khumaynī's jurisprudential theorization came as a response to urgent social and cultural needs that called for the re-reading of the role of the jurist in society, and not to abstract historical development in a particular concept of jurisprudence. Given that the character of *marja' taqlīd* (source of legal emulation) is the most representative of al-Khumaynī's intellectual status, it is necessary that he addresses his thought from a jurisprudential position in order to establish the necessity of applying his theory into practice.²⁴⁴ Therefore, *fiqh*, the science that embodies deduction, interpretation, and implementation of the scriptural sources, would be responsible for presenting a political theory in a divine manner.

The absolute guardianship doctrine of al-Khumaynī did not rise in a void but was a buildup on the former notion of 'general delegation' (*al-niyāba al-āmma*), which was in turn built on the jurisprudential justification of earlier jurists.²⁴⁵ It should be stated clearly that the guardianship of the jurist is not a new topic in jurisprudence. Prominent scholars had theorized it in different ways since the start of al-Mahdī's occultation. These '*ulamā*' include Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Nu'mān al-'Ukbarī al-Baghdādī (948–1022), better known as al-Shaykh al-Mufīd, Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī (995–1067), known as Shaykh al-Ṭā'ifa, as well as Najm al-Dīn Ja'far ibn al-Ḥasan al-Hudhalī al-Ḥillī (1205–1277), better known as al-Muḥaqqiq al-Awwal or al-Muḥaqqiq al-Ḥillī, Jamāl al-Dīn al-Ḥasan ibn Yūsuf ibn 'Alī

²⁴⁴ *Marja' taqlīd*, or "source to follow" or "religious reference", is a title given to the most established scholars in *Uṣūlī* Shi'ism, whose scholarly rank allows them to make legal decisions within the limits of Islamic law. The *marja'* is considered to be a religious authority who acts as an indirect representative of Twelfth *Imām*, al-Mahdī, responsible for interpreting the divine law. Each *marja'* traditionally publishes a booklet of legal rulings (*risāla 'amaliyya*) that contains his views and inductions related to subjects such as ritual purity, worship, and social issues etc. to guide believers in practical matters.

²⁴⁵ On a summary of the jurisprudential development of *wilāyat al-faqīh* theorem and an over view on *wilāyat al-faqīh* as appears in the classical Shi'ite tradition, see Taha, "Shiite Ulama," 34-40.

ibn al-Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī (1250–1325), better known as al-‘Allāma al-Ḥillī, al-Muḥaqqiq al-Karakī (1461/66–1534), Zayn al-Dīn ibn Nūr al-Dīn ‘Alī al-‘Āmilī al-Juba‘ī (1506–1559), known as al-Shahīd al-Thānī, and the aforementioned Mullā Aḥmad al-Narāqī. In the 19th century, the traditional theory of ‘*wilāyat faqīh* for the administration of necessary social affairs’ went through pivotal reconsideration by prominent Shi‘ite jurists in order to expand its aspects that are related to sociopolitical authority. Scholars such as Muḥammad Ḥasan al-Najafī (1785–1849), better known as *Ṣāhib al-Jawāhir* (the author of *The Jewels*) and Grand Āyatullāh Ḥusayn al-Burūjirdī (1875–1961) expanded the guardianship of the jurist to include all public affairs, which essentially encompasses governance and politics. Afterwards, several modern prominent jurists argued for the theory in different versions, such as al-Shahīd al-Sayyid Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ṣadr (1935–1985), al-Imām al-Khumaynī (1902–1989), and many others of their students.²⁴⁶ However, it is crucial to note that the ‘*ulamā*’ lived in different eras with different sociopolitical circumstances; therefore, although they might have common elements in their political rationales and behavior, they will also have contrasting elements when it comes to laying out religio-political theories. This raises an essential question: what are the factors that influence the political behavior of the ‘*ulamā*’ when dealing with an oppressive government? As Zeina Taha argues, this political behavior is predominantly determined by the presence or absence of a better achievable alternative.²⁴⁷ Therefore, the theory of *Wilāyat Faqīh* could not have appeared in its modern form, with its designation of a high capacity wide-ranging scope of the political roles and responsibilities of the jurist, except with al-Khumaynī. I hold

²⁴⁶ Wabhī, *al-Faqīh wa-al-Sulṭa wa-al-Umma*, 428-42.

²⁴⁷ See Taha, “Shiite Ulama.”

this argument to be correct for three main reasons: 1) The first is the deep rational paradigm al-Khumaynī upheld to prove his notion, which backed-up the theory with philosophical arguments and helped in presenting *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* as a political theory rather than just as a jurisprudential one; 2) The second is the high level of interest that al-Khumaynī maintained toward this theory;²⁴⁸ 3) The third and perhaps most important is the success of the Iranian Islamic Revolution.

As mentioned in Chapter Three, al-Khumaynī advanced a set of rational arguments to support his theory in his *al-Hukūma al-Islāmiyya*, and then built upon them, providing support through scriptural interpretation. The body of al-Khumaynī's *al-Hukūma al-Islāmiyya* witnessed a major methodological shift toward the analyzing of revelatory sources. During this phase, the *Qur'ān* and *ḥadīth* acted as his epistemic substructure upon which the super-structure of reason and intuition were established. This methodological shift represents al-Khumaynī's jurisprudential status and background and reflects his integrative intellectual character in the process of presenting his political theory. Al-Khumaynī's jurisprudential argumentation begins with providing scriptural sources for his theory.²⁴⁹ He considers two popular Shi'ite *ḥadīths* titled "*Mukātabat Ishāq ibn Ya'qūb*" and "*Maqbūlat 'Umar ibn Ḥanẓala*" as providing the most significant scriptural arguments and interprets them as the foundation for the authority of Shi'ite jurists.²⁵⁰ Al-Khumaynī states that these *ḥadīths* clarifies that the infallibles appointed the Shi'ite jurists as delegates of the hidden *Imām*, and that they

²⁴⁸ An example is that he gave a series of lectures during his exile in Najaf, in which he explained his religio-political vision. As stated earlier, the lectures were collected in the book entitled *al-Hukūma al-Islāmiyya*, which is considered to be the theoretical foundation of the Islamic Revolution.

²⁴⁹ Al-Khumaynī, *al-Hukūma al-Islāmiyya*, 60.

²⁵⁰ Al-Khumaynī, *al-Hukūma al-Islāmiyya*, 80-85; 90-96.

ought to carry out the duties of both judgeship and governance, stipulating thereby a government of the jurists. This is a crucial point to be considered, as al-Khumaynī presents a socio-political analysis of the social and political life of the Islamic world generally and Iran in particular. It could be seen as a form of religious legitimization of a political thesis through doctrinal metaphors, which opens the door for a modern way of interpreting the Islamic revelation. Accordingly, I hold that al-Khumaynī founded his political theory and practice of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* on a jurisprudential structure. Nevertheless, trying to distinguish the different approaches of al-Khumaynī and studying each of them separately will end up missing the soul of his intellectual approach which is reflected in his integrative method of dealing with theoretical and practical issues.

What made al-Khumaynī stand out among religious authorities was his attempt to merge certain philosophical concepts with theological issues and the derivation of the law. As such, he upheld the emphasis on revelatory sources without denying the use of demonstrative reasoning and incorporated certain Sufī- *irfānī* precepts with the intention of maintaining and disseminating the transmitted words of the infallibles as reflected in the *ḥadīth* literature. Following philosophers such as Mullā Ṣadrā and al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, al-Khumaynī attempted to synthesize philosophical, mystical, and theological terminology. In my view, al-Khumaynī's ingenuity is best seen in his contributions to political thought. His revolutionary political activity, with its philosophical kernel and its goal in the implementation of *Sharī'a*, is the central element in al-Khumaynī's intellectual personality. Al-Khumaynī begins his *al-Ḥukūma al-Islāmiyya* with a statement that reflects a very influential principle of the Ṣadrian philosophy. He says: "The guardianship of the jurist (*wilāyat al-faqīh*) is a clear

practical idea, which may not require demonstrative proof (*burhān*); for anyone who has known Islam, jurisprudentially and doctrinally, will grasp its intuitive justification (*yarā badāhatahā*).²⁵¹ In this respect, *wilāyat al-faqīh* is considered as intuitive knowledge (*‘ilm badīhī*). This takes us back to the Ṣadrīan philosophical notion of modality of knowing the reality of being (*wujūd*) and its epistemic ramifications. Mullā Ṣadrā holds that when an individual perceives the notion of being, s/he unavoidably confirms its existence.²⁵² It seems that al-Khumaynī builds on this notion to prove that the very conception of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* necessitates its being affirmed (*taṣdīq*).

There are two main pillars of knowledge that interact in al-Khumaynī’s political thought; these are jurisprudence and philosophical Sufism. The first is the judgment with respect to the apparent behavior of humans and represents an exoteric approach to religion; the second reflects the recognition of the esoteric aspects of metaphysics. Investigating the balance between these two fields in al-Khumaynī’s thought necessitates an understanding of their complementarity in the path of God. All of al-Khumaynī’s activities and thought seems to have been firmly based on monotheism (unicity), which is the infrastructure for all Islamic ideas. Monotheism is the theoretical building block on the basis of which all the dimensions of al-Khumaynī’s intellectual system are organized. This vision has all the features of an intellectual, social, and political system, which is based on a universal vision, namely monotheism/unicity. Philosophical Sufism is the nucleus of al-Khumaynī’s thought; all his religio-political positions revolved around the centrality of God and the Sufi notion of *waḥdat al-wujūd*

²⁵¹ Al-Khumaynī, *al-Ḥukūma al-Islāmiyya*, 9.

²⁵² On the evident knowledge in its relationship to the reality of being, see Mullā Ṣadrā al-Shīrāzī, *al-Ḥikma al-Muta‘āliya fī al-Aṣfār al-‘Aqliyya al-Arba‘a*, ed. Muḥammad Riḍā al-Muzaffar, vol. 3 (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, 1999), 431; and *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, 38-44.

(unicity of being). He believed in God's legislative will (*al-irāda al-tashrī'iyya*) and was certain of His creation will (*al-irāda al-takwīniyya*). In addition, he was aware that he who seeks to achieve the implementation of divine law will be aided by the laws of creation. In this respect, the knowledge of God that necessitates his service and love, and which relates to the service of His servants by relying on him and attaching to his will, will all lead to achieving the *Sharī'a*. Accordingly, transcendent esoteric knowledge is that which gives the guardian jurist the prerequisites for realizing and implementing *Sharī'a*. Therefore, I consider that the balance between the exoteric and the esoteric realms (between rational and scriptural sciences) in al-Khumaynī's thought is what gave the theoretical dimension of the Islamic Revolution the possibility and continuity in the historical arena. This shows how the development of political theory in Islam was achieved in the hands of al-Khumaynī according to a non-linear model of progress, where several epistemic sources collaborate to form a hybrid yet coherent political system that could be legitimized through different intellectual perspectives. Accordingly, we are able to see the fundamental relationship between religiousness and politics in al-Khumaynī's thought. On one hand, religiousness reflects the trusted explanation for the meaning of life and is the source for dealing with the metaphysical unseen realms, and, on the other hand, the human being who practices religion is at the center of political life. Is this relationship between religiousness and politics a philosophical and ontological relation or a temporal-accidental relation that is embodied solely in jurisprudence? I have shown how law plays a central role in forming the practical philosophy of al-Khumaynī. It is the essential condition for the realization of political theory. However, the question that emerges here is which law would consolidate the pillars of the transcendent political system that al-Khumaynī is calling

for and which law represents the causes of the system's continuity? As a Muslim jurist-philosopher, al-Khumaynī would axiomatically consider it to be the divine law, or what I would like to philosophically call, the “transcendent law.” Thus, the transcendent law is the law upon which the Khumaynian transcendent political system is based. This intertwined overlapping relationship would be reflected in the Khumaynian sense as such; applying the divine law is the condition for establishing a perfect governmental institution and thus achieving the excellent politics, and similarly establishing the transcendent political system (i.e. the Islamic government) is the condition for the implementation of divine law. Such is the key to attaining human perfection on both individual and communal bases. This integration of epistemic sources in a practical political manner paves the way, in my view to an extension branch of *al-Ḥikma al-Muta‘āliya* in the hands of al-Khumaynī, under what I call a “transcendent political philosophy.” I hold that just as Mullā Ṣadrā was able to take advantage of the Peripatetic discursive philosophy (*mashshā’ī*), the Illuminationist philosophy (*ishrāqī*), philosophical Sufism, and divine revelation to build his transcendent theoretical philosophy, al-Khumaynī was able to build on Mullā Ṣadrā’s tradition in addition to his knowledge of jurisprudence in order to ground for a transcendent political philosophy.

At this stage, it is essential to ask why the name Mullā Ṣadrā, or even his philosophical school of thought, does not appear directly in al-Khumaynī’s political theorization. This is perhaps due to two reasons; the first is the apparent jurisprudential and non-philosophical approach of his *al-Ḥukūma al-Islāmiyya*, the second might be related to the charismatic authority al-Khumaynī wanted to project, whereby it would be more appropriate not to refer to philosophers in order to establish his own

jurisprudential and philosophical theory of religio-political ruling.²⁵³ Al-Khumaynī did not refer to philosophy in his religio-political works, and even deliberately demonstrated that the guardian need not possess philosophical and epistemic qualities, a view which was perhaps a result of the opposition that the study of philosophy faced in Shi‘ite religious seminaries. He wanted to avoid any factor that would undermine the jurisprudential legitimization of his theory. Al-Khumaynī’s reformulation and practical application of political philosophy in jurisprudential terms reveal a specific type of realism that is in line with the Muslim community. His avoidance of directly using philosophical language and principles, especially those articulated by past Muslim philosophers is nothing less than a strategic plan with the end aim of addressing the common people in order to gain wide acceptance of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh*. One specific event that shows the necessity of this maneuver can be seen in the criticism al-Khumaynī faced concerning his letter to Gorbachev, which was discussed in Chapter Two. Al-Khumaynī’s letter was controversial among the clergy in Qom. This due to the fact that al-Khumaynī invited Gorbachev to convert to Islam in a persuasive manner using some philosophical notions of Ibn Sīnā, Suhrawardī, Ibn ‘Arabī, and Mullā Ṣadrā instead of traditional Islamic sources.²⁵⁴ This was an unforgivable offense for the established clergy. It provoked clerics in Qom who belonged to a fringe group called ‘The Jerusalem Protectors,’ who sent al-Khumaynī a letter describing his method as heretical. They wrote:

Your Holiness, you have not referred Mr. Gorbachev to the truth of the holy *Qur’ān*, but have asked him to read [the works of] the condemned heretic Ibn

²⁵³ For a significant psycho-philosophical analysis of the unique leadership character of al-Khumaynī, see Dustin Byrd, *Ayatollah Khomeini and the Anatomy of the Islamic Revolution in Iran: Toward a Theory of Prophetic Charisma* (University Press of America, 2011).

²⁵⁴ Michael Axworthy, *Revolutionary Iran: A History of the Islamic Republic* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press), 301.

Sīnā, the Sunni pantheist and arch-mystic Ibn ‘Arabī, the works of Suhrawardī who was executed by the Muslims for his ideological deviations, and the writings of Mullā Ṣadrā, who was exiled to the village of Kahak near Qom because of his intellectual deviations. Your Holiness’s lectures at the *Fayḍiyya* School were cancelled for exactly the same reason. In view of all this, we fail to understand why you refer the gentleman to deviant philosophers and mystics for the study of Islam. Are there not sufficient reasons in the *Qur’ān* to prove the existence of God and to explain the principles and precepts of religion? Does it mean that the leaders of Islam are unable to explain the truth of the *Qur’ān* without resorting to philosophy and mysticism? You know that both Greek philosophy and Indian mysticism existed long before the advent of either the Prophet Muḥammad or Moses and Jesus. If philosophy and mysticism were sufficient to guide mankind, then was there any need for the Almighty to grace us with the mission of the prophets?²⁵⁵

This indeed irritated al-Khumaynī, who revived his old aforementioned animus against the very traditional and narrowminded clerics who he believed had blocked any genuine renaissance in the Shi‘ite community and condemned for a long time any form of philosophical studies, insisting on teaching solely the exoteric sciences in the *ḥawza*. On February 22, 1979, he responded to the clerics of Qom with a letter that made his views clear:

This old father of yours has suffered more from stupid reactionary mullahs than anyone else. When theology meant no interference in politics, stupidity became a virtue. If a clergyman was able, and aware of what was going on [in the world around him], they searched for a plot behind it. You were considered more pious if you walked in a clumsy way. Learning foreign languages was blasphemy, philosophy and mysticism were considered to be sin and infidelity. In the *Fayḍiyya* [School] my young son Mustafa drank water from a jar. Since I was teaching philosophy, my son was considered to be religiously impure, so they washed the jar to purify it afterwards. Had this trend continued, I have no doubt the clergy and seminaries would have trodden the same path as the Christian Church did in the Middle Ages.²⁵⁶

This shows to a great extent the religio-social tensions that circumstanced al-Khumaynī’s intellectual character and integrative method before and after the revolution. In fact, al-Khumaynī’s critique of the exoteric clerical circles in this letter

²⁵⁵ Cited from Moin, *Khomeini* with some minor edits.

²⁵⁶ Cited by Moin, *Khomeini* with some minor edits. Moin, *Khomeini*, 275-76.

mirrors—although unintentionally—the tone of Mullā Ṣadrā that appears in his critique of the “semi-‘ulamā’” (*ashbāh al-‘ulamā’*) in his introduction to *Sih Aṣl*.²⁵⁷ The issue of the opposition of the ‘ulamā’ to philosophy and mysticism is centuries old and is related to specifying reliable and legitimate epistemic authority in matters of religion. The intellectual and religio-political projects of prominent figures who are both philosophers and jurists such as al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī and al-Khumaynī were greatly affected by this conflict. Al-Khumaynī in the 20th century had faced what al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī faced in the 17th century, but al-Khumaynī’s charismatic personality prevented him from retiring from politics, unlike his predecessor.²⁵⁸ The Iranian philosopher and scholar Mahdī Ḥā’irī describes al-Khumaynī as “a man who saw himself as the truth and believed that, like Hallaj, he had completed the fourth journey which means being with God among the people.” Ḥā’irī holds that “had the orthodox clergy been in charge, Khomeini would have been sent to the gallows as Hallaj was.”²⁵⁹ This perhaps shows why he decided against openly disclosing his philosophical background in developing his jurisprudential theories. He probably wanted to save the state from an inevitable strife, as the end aim, for al-Khumaynī, is the establishment of the Islamic government and not to prove to the common people it in an ideal philosophical manner. Al-Khumaynī may have preferred to address the topic religiously and not philosophically since religion is the most

²⁵⁷ See Mullā Ṣadrā, *Risālat al-Uṣūl al-Thalātha*, 109-11.

²⁵⁸ On the question of authentic religious authority, especially in the views of al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, see Ibrahim, “The Life and Intellectual Output,” 114-21.

²⁵⁹ From an interview by Baqer Moin with Mahdī Ḥā’irī in London. See Moin, *Khomeini*. Maṣnūr al-Ḥallāj (858–922) was a Persian mystic and poet. In addition to be a Sufi preacher, al-Ḥallāj is best known for his statement: *anā al-Haqq* (I am the Truth), which many have seen as a claim to divinity, while others interpreted it as reflection on the unicity of being. He was murdered in 922 based on religio-political grounds following a long time of imprisonment. In fact, the image given by Mahdī Ḥā’irī was mirrored in one of al-Khumaynī’s poems. He says: “Even while I have shunned love of myself // Now truth is none but me // I will see the gallows also // As did Mansur see.” Al-Imām Rūḥullāh al-Mūsawī al-Khumaynī, *Divān-i Imām*, 42, cited by Moin, *Khomeini*.

common epistemic establishment between the religious common people. In this I hold that he saw himself as a real mirror to the infallible, reflecting the prophetic charisma. With respect to this idea, it is helpful to go back to Ibn Sīnā's statement on how the prophet-lawgiver should invite others to the doctrine of monotheism. This would help us better comprehend al-Khumaynī's character and political approach. Ibn Sīnā states:

But [the prophet] ought not to involve [the common people] with doctrines pertaining to the knowledge of God, the Exalted, beyond the fact that He is one, the truth, and has none like Himself [...] For it is only with great strain that they can understand the true states of such matters; it is only [the very] few among them that can comprehend the truth of [divine] unicity and [divine] remoteness. The rest would inevitably come to deny the truth of such an existence, fall into dissensions, and indulge in disputations and analogical arguments that stand in the way of their political duties (*a 'mālihim al-madaniyya*). This might even lead them to adopt views contrary to the city's welfare, opposed to the imperatives of truth. Their complaints and doubts will multiply, making it difficult for a man to control them. For divine wisdom is not easily acquired by everyone.²⁶⁰

Thus, as the theoretical foundations of theological matters were known by the prophet but not spoken commonly, al-Khumaynī seems to have known the philosophical foundations of his theory but chose not to disclose them. Accordingly, he imitated the infallibles in using jurisprudential language to express political notions and theological language to express metaphysical matters. This I argue is very reasonable given the complexity of the philosophical truth embodied by the prophet-lawgiver as Ibn Sīnā rightly describes. It would be more complicated and sensitive in the case of a jurist who does not have the direct metaphysical legitimacy of an infallible, which would provide him protection against intellectual opponents. Therefore, we see that al-Khumaynī did not directly address any mystical and philosophical topic during his guardianship period.²⁶¹ However, it seems that al-Khumaynī had “encouraged the

²⁶⁰ Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā'*, *al-Ilāhiyyāt*, 442-43.

²⁶¹ However, it is noted that his mystical writings, which were written before his exile were later spread after the revolution.

linkage of the study of philosophy and mysticism (*hikmat* and *ʿirfān* in the language of the *hawza*) with the political theory of *vilāyat-i faqīh*,” and some of his prominent students—who influenced the scholarly circles in Qom dominantly—would follow his path in “defending the juristic theory in the language of philosophy and mysticism.”²⁶² In fact, among these is ʿAbdullāh Jawādī Āmulī (b. 1933), an established philosopher and religious authority in modern Iran and one of al-Khumaynī’s prominent student, who himself led the delegation group of al-Khumaynī to Gorbachev and delivered him the politico-philosophical letter of al-Khumaynī.²⁶³

While al-Khumaynī’s philosophical and mystical legacy is proven to him, it is obvious that the non-scriptural components of al-Khumaynī’s epistemic sources were occasionally withdrawn into the background when discussing *Wilāyat al-Faqīh*. Accordingly, I maintain that al-Khumaynī might have aimed at addressing his theory in a way that would make it easier for the majority of people to accept. However, I argue that even though the terminology is seemingly non-philosophical, the main concepts are still philosophically substantial. Accordingly, I hold that al-Khumaynī’s innovation can be seen in two trajectories: the first is that he was able to combine political jurisprudence and theology with political philosophy to indirectly establish a revived political Islamic philosophy.²⁶⁴ The second is that he succeeded in combining the

²⁶² Sajjad Rizvi, “Only the Imam Knows Best: The Maktab-i Tafkīk’s Attack on the Legitimacy of Philosophy in Iran,” *The Journal of Royal Asiatic Society* 22:3–4 (2012): 490. Also, see Hamid Algar, “The Fusion of the Gnostic and the Political in the Personality and Life of Imam Khomeini,” *Al-Tawhīd* 17, no. 2 (2003): 3-17.

²⁶³ ʿAbdullāh Jawādī Āmulī, who is a modern Iranian philosopher of religion and pro-*Wilāyat al-Faqīh*, declared this theory to be conflicting with democracy. See ʿAbdullāh Jawādī Āmulī, *Wilāyat-i Faqīh; Wilāyat-i Faqāhat wa-ʿAdālat* (Qom: Muʿassasa-yi Isrāʾ, 2000).

²⁶⁴ The distinction between political philosophy and political jurisprudence is that the former studies universals related to politics such as justice, liberty, rights, law, authority, in addition to it dealing with topics such as what the law is, what makes a government legitimate, and when it is legitimate to dethrone a government. The discussion of these topics is usually proposed in the frame of a theory. However, political jurisprudence is usually proposed in the frame of a *fatwā*. This is reflected in the usage of a

political notion of Islamic government and the philosophical-jurisprudential notion of *wilāya* in a single political theory which was practiced for over forty years. Therefore, I do not consider the jurisprudential roots of al-Khumaynī's theory of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* as a barrier to its philosophical foundations and modern political dimensions. Al-Khumaynī is not discussing politics from a universal dimension, rather from the particular Islamic one. It is well known that political philosophy examines rulership systems, city structures, and nation formation and actions, having nothing to say directly on topics such as prophecy (divine lawgivers), religion, or jurisprudence. However, jurisprudence (*fiqh*) or rational theology (*kalām*), for example, are categorically Islamic sciences. These two sciences are bounded to a religious system that is based on divine revelation and the notion of prophecy and contain no direct reference to philosophy. An attentive effort is made by al-Khumaynī to integrate two different domains: rational and scriptural; philosophical and religious; a pre-religious political construction and religious sciences that relates to politics through the general aims of divine law for the advancement of the religious community. Thus, al-Khumaynī integrates the non-religious sciences, whose subject matter is articulated rationally, with religious sciences, whose subject matter originated and was largely articulated in Islamic civilization within the bounds of revealed knowledge. This innovative method of integration is built upon the unique philosophical contributions of al-Fārābī and his classification of sciences.

In approaching political theory jurisprudentially, al-Khumaynī was not only able to preserve the genuine traditional classification of political philosophy in the Islamic

terminology that includes jurisprudential concepts such as *wājib* (obligatory), *ḥalāl* (legal), *ḥarām* (forbidden), *mustaḥab* (recommended), *makrūh* (un-favored), *jā'iz* (permissible), *mubāḥ* (permitted) to propose a religio-political theorization.

world but was also able to develop it significantly in theoretical and practical matters. The tradition which was initiated by al-Fārābī in his *Iḥṣā' al-'Ulūm* is distinct from the science of politics as we know it today, i.e. political jurisprudence. It places ethics, rational theology, jurisprudence, and politics altogether within the political philosophy (*al-'ilm al-madanī*) umbrella. Thus, this comprehensive classification of all practical sciences, both philosophical and non-philosophical, already exists in the Islamic civilization. Consequently, we should observe that, from a philosophical perspective, there is nothing wrong with al-Khumaynī's presentation of his political thought in a jurisprudential discursive form, as jurisprudence based on the classical classification of sciences in Islamic philosophy lies within the sphere of political philosophy or civil sciences.²⁶⁵

In *Iḥṣā' al-'Ulūm*, al-Fārābī ignores the principle underlying the classification of all the sciences into rational/philosophical and traditional/religious. There, the religious-traditional sciences of jurisprudence and theology are integrated with the philosophical sciences. The fifth chapter of al-Fārābī's *Iḥṣā' al-'Ulūm* includes three general sciences, namely, political science, the science of jurisprudence, and the science of rational theology. These three sciences are simply indicated and examined without any clear description as to what they share in common, whether theoretically or practically. This can draw attention to a kind of methodological distinctiveness which entails “no ready or conventional answers” as Muhsin Mahdi puts it.²⁶⁶ Therefore, we must ask: why do political science, the science of jurisprudence, and the science of rational theology fall

²⁶⁵ See Muhsin Mahdi, “Science, Philosophy and Religion in Alfarabi's *Enumeration of the Sciences*,” in *The Cultural Context of Medieval Learning*, eds. John Emery Murdoch and Edith Dudley Sylla (Dordrecht: Springer, 1975), 137. Also, see al-Fārābī, *al-Milla*.

²⁶⁶ Mahdi, “Science, Philosophy, and Religion.”

under a single philosophical umbrella according to al-Fārābī? Before answering this question, we should first bear four things in mind; the first is that, jurisprudence and theology cannot be considered as a single universal science as in the case of political philosophy; the second is that as many as there are nations, religions, or divine laws, one can find as many arts of jurisprudence and theology; the third is that jurisprudence and theology do not represent an alternative method that compete with political science in the study of political life; and the fourth is that sacred political aspects in religion do not stand in conflict with the function of political sciences.²⁶⁷ Returning to our question, we must note that political philosophy in the designated Islamic civilization coincides with jurisprudence and theology; this is a prominent historical and cultural fact that was witnessed very early on by al-Fārābī and still cannot be overlooked today. For example, the strictly practical political science, labeled by al-Fārābī as the first account of political science, cannot coexist with jurisprudence and theology in modern Iran without being subordinated to them. This is because their practical subject matter is wider with respect to the cultural aspects of the Iranian society. Thus, practical political science becomes a tool for implementing a special kind of action determined by a specific divine law. In the case of establishing a religious state, divine law is considered as prior to political theory rather than the other way around whereby political theory aims at the establishment of a political system that ensures the implementation of divine law. In a religious state, political philosophy cannot preserve its direct rational independence, because the so-called theoretical opinions of religion, and all other religious actions are categorized according to a superior metaphysical and ontological system. Thus, the political philosophy umbrella in such a situation will encompass both theoretical and

²⁶⁷ On further examination of these four pointers, see Mahdi, "Science, Philosophy, and Religion," 139-40.

practical branches. In addition, it must develop a unique criterion to deal with the relationship between philosophical-theoretical notions of politics and theoretical-practical notions of religion. This is transcendent political philosophy, which deals with human ends and actions from both rational and divine perspectives. It is so while maintaining an essential connection with theoretical sciences of religion that was founded putatively to support the task of leading people to the best possible material and spiritual life, as indicated by Ibn Sīnā.²⁶⁸ Consequently, this broadens the scope of Islamic political philosophy in dealing with both theoretical opinions and practical actions in the aim of satisfying the demands of political life in an Islamic community. Al-Khumaynī was clever to present this specific kind of political philosophy in jurisprudential terminology. This is because unlike any other universal philosophical science, the sciences of jurisprudence and theology exist and are practiced in a specific region and by specific nations. If we look at the theorization presented by al-Khumaynī in comparison to the Farabian classification of sciences, we will find that al-Khumaynī was able to relate and practice the philosophical connections which were innovatively established by al-Fārābī between political science, jurisprudence, and theology. This is because the latter holds that political philosophy (*al-‘ilm al-madanī*) is based on two pillars, the first related to the field of human management, which is associated with kingship, and the second related to divine orders, which is associated with prophecy and divine law.²⁶⁹ Furthermore, al-Khumaynī was able to maintain a deep correlation

²⁶⁸ This connection is better displayed by al-Fārābī in his *Kitāb al-Milla*, in an account which mirrors Chapter Five of *Iḥṣā’ al-‘Ulūm*. See al-Fārābī, *al-Milla*.

²⁶⁹ This notion also appears in Mullā Ṣadrā’s *Sharḥ al-Hidāya al-Athīriyya* and *al-Mazāhir al-Ilāhiyya fī Asrār al-‘Ulūm al-Kamāliyya*. See Mullā Ṣadrā, *Sharḥ al-Hidāya al-Athīriyya*, 4-5; and *al-Mazāhir al-Ilāhiyya fī Asrār al-‘Ulūm al-Kamāliyya*, ed. Sayyid Muḥammad Khāmina’ī (Tehran: Mu’assasat al-Ḥikma al-Islāmiyya al-Ṣadrā’iyya, 1999), 14.

between theory and practice. He presented a theoretical dimension to the relationship between political theory and religious sciences and was later able to fulfill this theory in a practical manner. In this form of affiliation, al-Khumaynī looks at the relationship between politics and religion as being the main structure responsible for re-establishing Islamic political philosophy in the modern world. Even though al-Khumaynī does not say all of this in recorded works and speeches, his effective practice of this theory says more than his explicit speech. He once addressed:

The government in the eyes of the *mujtahid* is in fact the practical philosophy of the entire jurisprudence (*fiqh*) in all angles of human life, as it shows the practical side of jurisprudence itself in every corner, [including] dealing with all social, political, military, and cultural problems and dilemmas. Jurisprudence represents the complete and realistic theory of social administration from the cradle to grave. The basic goal is [knowing] how to apply the basic principles of jurisprudence in the work of the individual and society in which we are able to develop appropriate solutions to problems.²⁷⁰

In this respect, al-Khumaynī maintains that jurisprudence is the ideal model for individual and social administration that is complete and true. Universal practical philosophy is presented as subordinate to the science of jurisprudence. On the other hand, political science is portrayed as being part of jurisprudence. What al-Khumaynī tries to do is philosophize jurisprudence or present a philosophical understanding of traditional jurisprudence. He does not call for the replacement of the traditional jurisprudence by another modernized one; rather he wants to reidentify the traditional jurisprudence itself, revealing the genuine functional scope of jurisprudence. This is done to realign the science of jurisprudence with the aspirations of the true understanding of Islam from a wide perspective, as initially presented by the lawgiver, the Prophet. It is a call for a new understanding of the role of jurisprudence and not a

²⁷⁰ Rūḥullāh al-Mūsawī al-Khumaynī, *Ṣaḥīfa-yi Imām*, vol. 21 (Tehran: Mu'assasat Tanzīm wa-Nashr Turāth al-Imām al-Khumaynī, 1999), 289.

call for a new jurisprudence, as Mohsen Kadivar wrongly claims.²⁷¹ In doing so, I argue that al-Khumaynī wants to link the modern establishment of the Islamic government to the original role of prophecy in leading the community through divine law. This shadows the aforementioned position held by Mullā Ṣadrā in his *al-Shawāhid al-Rubūbiyya* that “the end aim of politics is obedience to divine law (*Sharī‘a*).”²⁷² Al-Khumaynī attempts to show the pivotal aspects of jurisprudence in leading the community and paving the way to a modern role that traditional jurisprudence can play in managing a modern state. This latter role necessitates shedding light on the deep relationship between practical philosophy and jurisprudence, opening the door for new development in both fields toward the establishment of what I call a “philosophical jurisprudence.” In this sense, al-Khumaynī’s theorization for such jurisprudence, which encompasses all theoretical and practical sciences related to the management of the community and political life, typically mirrors al-Fārābī’s classification of *al-‘ilm al-madanī* (political philosophy) in *Iḥṣā’ al-‘Ulūm*. This collective jurisprudence covers all of what practical philosophy encompasses, such as the sciences of ethics, politics, traditional jurisprudence, and theology, and represents a form of modern Islamic political philosophy. It is thus a jurisprudential innovative classification as compared to traditional jurisprudence on one hand, and only a terminological divergence from the Farabian philosophical classification on the other. This is because al-Khumaynī theorizes for a philosophical understanding of genuine jurisprudence and its role. It should by now be clear why Islamic political/practical philosophy would include jurisprudence under its umbrella (or vice versa from a Khumaynian view). In fact, it

²⁷¹ See Mohsen Kadivar, “From Traditional Islam to Islam as an End in Itself,” *Die Welt des Islams* 51 (2011): 459-84.

²⁷² Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Shawāhid al-Rubūbiyya*, 366.

must include jurisprudence, for otherwise it would be hard to understand how a political theory of a political religion could be presented, not only in a theoretical sense, but also in a practical manner. Accordingly, I hold that al-Khumaynī's religio-political notion of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* is a philosophical, political, and jurisprudential theory with a fundamental religious dimension that responds to the social and political situations of contemporary Iran. Furthermore, I hold that this same theory represents a revival of the presentation of Islamic political philosophy in the contemporary world, where political jurisprudence and political philosophy coincides. This, in addition to the evidence of al-Khumaynī's letter to Gorbachev and other proofs discussed in this thesis is sufficient to negate the claim of Charles E. Butterworth that al-Khumaynī seems to dismiss the older philosophers of Islam as having been too influenced by a foreign tradition to be of any assistance in an authentic Muslim undertaking.²⁷³

²⁷³ Charles E. Butterworth, "Political Islam: The Origins," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 524, Political Islam (1992): 35.

Chapter 5

THE TELEOLOGY OF POLITICS IN AL-KHUMAYNĪ'S REVOLUTIONARY THOUGHT

5.1. From Theoretical Ontology to Practical Politics: The Revolutionary Crystallizers

As discussed in the previous chapter, al-Khumaynī was not the first Muslim philosopher, intellectual, or jurist to theorize on either the concept of Islamic government or *wilāyat al-faqīh*.²⁷⁴ However, he had endorsed an order that no previous philosopher or jurist had practically attained. This order is the Islamic Republic under the institution of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh*. A pivotal and unique element in al-Khumaynī's concept of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* is the manner in which he proposed it, namely as an applicable and complete theory of governance rather than an abstract one. It is important to note that both the political changes in Iran and the theological developments in Shi'ite political doctrine have major impact on one another.²⁷⁵ Therefore, I argue that al-Khumaynī's presentation of his political thesis is the result of a socio-political contract that has lasted for five centuries—since the rise of the Safavids—in which the jurists were perceived by the temporal authorities and the people as the legitimate authority of the Shi'ite community in Iran.

Since al-Fārābī, Muslim philosophers have tackled political issues which dealt with the virtuous city. However, they did not seem to seek to achieve it in the practical realm.²⁷⁶ This, however, was not the case with al-Khumaynī, who not only theorized but

²⁷⁴ On the notion of the Islamic Government between tradition and innovation, see Taha, "Shiite Ulama," 113.

²⁷⁵ On the dynamics of the 'ulamā'-state relation in Iran, see Taha, "Shiite Ulama," 28-29.

²⁷⁶ Butterworth, "Political Islam," 33.

also implemented his political views. Perhaps, here we find the important role that jurisprudence played in transforming al-Khumaynī's political-philosophical system from a theoretical system to a practical course of action. He is the philosopher who rationally theorized the guardianship of the *mujtahids* during the absence of the infallible (the first sovereign), and he is the jurist who endeavored to prove his rational theory through religious sources. Thus, he was the philosopher who undertook the guardianship position on behalf of Iranian Muslims through his jurisprudential-practical authority rather than his philosophical-theoretical capacity.

What distinguishes al-Khumaynī from any other philosopher or high ranking religious authority is his revolutionary ontological and sociopolitical thought. Al-Khumaynī was dedicated to establishing a genuine revolutionary trajectory within Shi'ism itself through the use of religious sources. For him, it seems that revolutionary action should be unstoppable, as he considers it to be at the essence of Shi'ism. This he tried to prove by offering various examples of historical events and movements. This conceptualization of the present through the eyes of history opened up al-Khumaynī's thinking to exploring a distinct political form of ruling that merges the foundational message of Islam and satisfies contemporary needs. Al-Khumaynī speaks to the masses in order to awaken them to be self-reliant and conscious adherents of Islam. In this respect, he believes in the necessity of establishing an Islamic government, finding it the only ruling system under which Muslims can live liberally and practice the religion in a complete manner. After legitimizing the political and theoretical foundation of his political project through revelatory sources, the application of his theory becomes necessary under the full weight of God's command. This represents the turning point from theoretical belief to practical belief. In this sense, the matter of philosophizing

religion becomes a historical concrete fact, where practicing religion is no longer limited to praying, fasting, and pilgrimage, but also extends to the establishment of religious values in the community. The tool of establishing these values would be perfectly accomplished through establishing an Islamic government. This correlative relationship between theory and practice was developed by al-Khumaynī. In fact, he develops his own political views in the effort of justifying the rationality of allowing political life to be driven by Islamic principles.

It seems therefore that one of al-Khumaynī's fundamental aims was to formulate a revolutionary interpretation of religion. This does not mean that al-Khumaynī sought to argue for the need for religion to free itself from its ideological subservience in order to become the vehicle of human liberation. Rather, his aim was to enhance the ideological structure within a new establishment that would re-interpret the true aim of religion. He sought to connect the religious doctrine to revolutionary notions and construct a revolutionary vision of religious texts, culture, heritage, and history. For that, al-Khumaynī considers that “many of the Islamic devotional rulings are politically [based], and neglecting this [fact] is what brought us all these misfortunes.”²⁷⁷ In doing so, he went into a trajectory of philosophizing jurisprudence and showing its unlimited practical boundaries as shown in the preceded section. In *al-Hukūma al-Islāmiyya* and in his other works, al-Khumaynī emphasized on clarifying the links between religion and politics in an absolute manner. He states:

If you could understand the concept of religion in our Islamic culture, it would be clearly affirmed for you that there is no contradiction between the religious and political leadership. Rather, just as the political struggle is part of the religious functions and duties, so is leading and directing the political struggle among the functions and responsibilities of the religious leader.²⁷⁸

²⁷⁷ Al-Khumaynī, *al-Waṣīyya*, 34.

²⁷⁸ Al-Khumaynī, *Manhajīyyat al-Thawra al-Islāmiyya*, 138.

After gaining methodological tools from different intellectual sources, of which Shi‘ism was the core, al-Khumaynī went on to develop his own religio-political theory which takes into consideration universal social and cultural aspects. In his creative way, he combines the value system of Islam, Islamic philosophical tradition, and modern political theory into a mosaic structure of what is known as *Wilāyat al-Faqīh*. Although this structure is selective in many cases, this choosing from the schools’ elements is not spontaneous, but rather determined to the extent that it contributes to the process of revolutionary transformation of the human race and society, and its ability to promote social liberation. By doing so, I maintain that al-Khumaynī merged rational philosophical principles and the religious prophetic principles into a single ideology. I consider that the ideology adopted by al-Khumaynī makes clear to people the path between the existing situation and the situation required. In this sense, the ontological idealism of al-Khumaynī turns into practical realism, where he sees reality as embodied in social relations, the building of community, and the movement of history, in contrast to the utopian sense. However, he does not accept reality he sees as it is, rather he tries to change its nature in a revolutionary manner, and this is what led him to take the political path. As previously discussed, the worldly life in the doctrine of transcendent political philosophy is not a goal, but a means to reach salvation in the afterlife. Based on this, it is not permissible to ignore worldly matters, because without engaging in worldly matters, the afterlife cannot be reached. Thus, the required political system, according to al-Khumaynī, is of a religious nature, such that the infallible would be at the head of the political system during the period of his emergence from occultation, while the qualified jurist would be at the head of the political system during the era of occultation. Hence, we find a direct link between al-Khumaynī’s political theory with

an eschatological and ontological dimension of Islam. In al-Khumaynī's Islamic culture, leadership is a policy that is based on revelation and includes all human relations, where the divine direction appears in all institutional and social relations. This reflects a genuine Khumaynian combination between philosophical Sufi notions, theological foundations, and social dimensions.

Al-Khumaynī insists on the need to consolidate unity among Muslims in order to achieve the goal of political unification. He focuses on showing the impact of colonialism in destabilizing Islamic and national unity, calling for a confrontation of colonialism on all fronts. Al-Khumaynī builds this theory on an organic relationship that he sees exists between Shi'ite ontology and political action, whereby the act of unity between all Islamic sects in its political dimension becomes a reflection of the faith in the guardianship of the infallible. He says:

[W]e do not have the means to unify the Islamic nation and liberate its lands from the hands of the colonists, [neither do we have the means] of dropping their agent governments. However, we seek to establish our Islamic government. This in turn will succeed in its actions on the day it can destroy the heads of treachery and destroy idols, human idols, and tyrants that spread injustice and corruption in the world. The formation of the government, therefore, aims to preserve the unity of Muslims after its realization, as was stated in the sermon of Lady Fātima al-Zahrā': "... [O]beying us (*Ahl al-Bayt*) sets order in religion, and [the authority of] our Imamate saves people from division."²⁷⁹

Here is a clear signal from al-Khumaynī once again to return to the concept of the guardianship, linking it with the pivotal aim of saving the oppressed and deprived people. Later, in his *al-Waṣīyya al-Siyāsiyya al-Ilāhiyya (Political Divine Commandment)*, al-Khumaynī would argue from an Islamic dimension to a global political vision that would deal with the issues common to all oppressed people.²⁸⁰

²⁷⁹ Al-Khumaynī, *al-Ḥukūma al-Islāmiyya*, 38.

²⁸⁰ See al-Khumaynī, *al-Waṣīyya*.

Unicity, which is a notion that represents monotheism in a philosophical manner, would be reflected in the belief in the unity of humanity in all its colors, cultures, classes, and races. This “unicity” that will occur at the end of history represents the Shi‘ite perspective of messianism. In this respect, al-Khumaynī tries to present his revolutionary thought as a transient field of internal religions, transient to societies, and transient to doctrines. This is especially evident when addressing the “Third-World” population.²⁸¹ This, perhaps, reflects al-Khumaynī’s own deeply anti-colonial act of “returning to self,” which in one way or another represents his main sociopolitical concerns.

Al-Khumaynī’s political theory appears within a unique philosophical-spiritual framework which seems to oppose the common rational dimension of reading the historical sequence for causes of nation-building and formation of political systems. He calls for a common political approach that eschews individualism: each individual entity must be united with the whole in a way that allows this sacrifice to forge a new collective identity, one that reflects the ontological unicity of being. This sequence of unity within the Iranian community should expand to encompass the whole Islamic nation to achieve the unity of all oppressed people around the world. This concrete unity reflects the abstract concept of monotheism and practically confirms one of the main ontological principles of *al-Ḥikma al-Muta‘āliya*, the unicity of being. Thus, the rationale of developing a political society as a mirror image of divine monotheism renders active political revolution into a mirror of God’s will to fulfill the truth, fight the tyrant, and implement justice. In addition, the faithful revolutionary becomes a reason for establishing the political entity that connects transcendent metaphysical goals

²⁸¹ See al-Khumaynī, *al-Waṣīyya*.

through realistic practical strategies. Accordingly, one major consequence of al-Khumaynī's innovative understanding of the relationship between the abstract and the concrete appears at the first stage in his religio-political theory and then at the second stage in establishing the Islamic government through political revolutionary action.

Accordingly, one should constantly consider the close relationship between the theological and eschatological notions of Shi'ism that al-Khumaynī presents in forming the social bond needed for a "modern" global political system. This kind of relationship is crucial in the process of implementing God's will in the world, which reflects, according to al-Khumaynī, the need for the establishment of an Islamic government. Establishing such a government would consequently lead to the application of God's sacred law. This fulfills the perfect synchrony between religion and politics. The social and political revolution becomes at the first stage a revolution on the religious institution and a revolution on the traditional quietism of the *'ulamā'* toward re-establishing the active role of religion in the community and in building a just state. Accordingly, al-Khumaynī insists on the centrality of a political revolution in that it becomes an obligatory devotion upon every Muslim. Al-Khumaynī says:

[...] There are many texts describing every non-Islamic [political] regime as polytheistic, and its [representative] ruler or [political] authority as a tyrant. Thus, we are responsible for removing the traces of polytheism from our Muslim society and completely extracting them from our lives. At the same time, we are responsible for creating the appropriate atmosphere to educate and nurture a virtuous and faithful generation that would destroy the thrones of tyrants, and eliminate their illegitimate powers, because corruption and perversion grow at their hands. This corruption should be removed and erased, and severe punishment should be imposed on its perpetrators.²⁸²

This statement shows how al-Khumaynī expresses political issues through religious terminology. The non-Islamic political regime becomes a polytheistic regime

²⁸² Al-Khumaynī, *al-Hukūma al-Islāmiyya*, 36.

which is a source for class and ethnic discrimination. According to al-Khumaynī, this state of political sickness in society is what permits the exploitation and domination of the unjust side over the just. Muslims would be participating in the great sin of polytheism (*shirk ‘amalī*) if they fail to answer the call of God to oppose the rule of the *tāghūt* (oppressive ruler) and rather stay subjected under his tyranny. The polytheistic qualification could be seen as a way to justify harsh punishments, the active resistance against polytheists being very clear in the *Qur’ān*.²⁸³

For al-Khumaynī, the unique revolutionary potentials that a true religion has could only function through by getting rid of negative elements that has entered into the religious system due to political agendas. Thus, one should apply true Islamic understanding by rescuing the whole system from internal (i.e. pseudo Islamic) and external (i.e. colonial) negative influences that may mislead Muslims from a true interpretation of their faith. According to this dialectical argument, religion will fight against “religion” for the sake of religion itself. It could be concluded from the foregoing that al-Khumaynī was himself dedicated to establishing a genuine religious revolutionary trajectory within Shi‘ism itself, emphasizing true revolutionary politics within religious boundaries. However, al-Khumaynī did not intend for the revolution to be a purely religious one. It is rather a societal and economic revolution with a metaphysical dimension that aims to display the practical structure of Islam through the establishment of an Islamic government. He adds:

We have no way but to destroy the corrupt and perverting regimes, and to destroy the factions of the treacherous and unjust rulers of the people. This is a duty entrusted to all Muslims wherever they are in order to create a victorious Islamic political revolution.²⁸⁴

²⁸³ For example, see *Qur’ān*, 4:76; 4:84; 8:39; 25:52.

²⁸⁴ Al-Khumaynī, *al-Hukūma al-Islāmiyya*, 37.

I hold that from the aforementioned discussion, one can deduce the ethical boundaries of revolution according to al-Khumaynī's thought. Al-Khumaynī has directly and indirectly discussed the questions of "when to revolt," "how to revolt," "whom to follow," and "what is the role of utility in the revolution." His critical and in-depth usage of the term "tyranny" (*istibdād*) is pivotal in his revolutionary theoretical structure. Struggling against tyranny is one of the core principles of a just revolution. It is concluded from al-Khumaynī's sketch that tyranny is categorized into two interrelated forms: religious and political tyranny.

The correlation between the abstract and concrete wings of Islam is pivotal in al-Khumaynī's theory. This is proven by his insistence on the importance of confirming the implementation of the jurisprudential legislations in the religious community, since in this implementation lies the point of transition from weakness to strength. Therefore, he considers that "the struggle (*al-niḍāl*) to form an [Islamic] government is the counterpart of believing in the Imamate," which is one of the five primary pillars in Shi'ism.²⁸⁵ In holding to this view, al-Khumaynī has raised the political dimension of religion and the theological dimension of religion within a single dynamic template. Building on his interpretation of the essence of Shi'ism, he holds that the revolutionary actions should be unstoppable until human beings achieve the perfect, rational, and just world. In any case, religion for al-Khumaynī becomes the essential condition of ethics, rationality, justice, and especially the perfect state that shall appear at the end of history.

²⁸⁵ Al-Khumaynī, *al-Hukūma al-Islāmiyya*, 23.

5.2. Revolution, Messianism, and the Concept of Justice

Theorizing the Islamic government during the occultation of the infallible represents the core of al-Khumaynī's political understanding of Islam. As I have shown in Chapters Two and Three, al-Khumaynī holds that the task of the '*ulamā*' is prominently reflected in the call of the prophets, which he describes as an example of revolutionary ideas characteristic to the religion of revolution and monotheism. For al-Khumaynī, the '*ulamā*' and religious intellectuals should initiate the revolution, which he views as an event that must always take place while waiting for the Messiah, the Twelver *Imām* of Shi'ism, al-Mahdī. The reader who closely reads al-Khumaynī's *Waṣīyya* notices in its introduction, a focus on the pivotality of the divine revelation and infallibles' epistemic role in the path to establishing the state of divine justice.²⁸⁶

"Justice" was for al-Khumaynī a major political concern, just as it was for Plato and those who followed in his steps among the prominent Muslim philosophers. According to al-Khumaynī,

Islam arose to establish a just government [...] Islam established the government not on the approach of authoritarianism which is based on the arbitration of the opinion of the individual and his psychological tendencies in society, nor on the approach of constitutional or republican [governments], which is founded on human provisions, which impose arbitration of the opinions of a group of people on society. Rather, it is a government that is inspired and derives all its fields from the divine law, where no one of the rulers can dominate according to his opinion, but all the actions of the government and its affairs and conditions must be in accordance with the divine law, even obedience to the rulers.²⁸⁷

Religious commandments are thus not exactly an end since what is in itself an end is the preservation of justice by an Islamic government. Therefore, the ultimate truth is the establishment of an Islamic government. Al-Khumaynī insists on linking the

²⁸⁶ Al-Khumaynī, *al-Waṣīyya*, 7-21.

²⁸⁷ Al-Imām al-Khumaynī, *Kitāb al-Bay'*, vol. 2 (Tehran: Mu'assasat Tanzīm wa-Nashr Turāth al-Imām al-Khumaynī, 2000), 618-19.

unseen realm to the purpose of attaining a just world. This process necessitates a continuous revolution backed by both an Islamic government and a guardian jurist with the aim of securing the people's salvation both in this world and the hereafter. Thus, his call was to apply an active process of awaiting led by heirs of the Prophet and *Imāms*, the '*ulamā*'. In this respect, *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* is concerned with the nexus of authority and justice while being connected to the notion of salvation.

Al-Khumaynī started his *Waṣīyya* by insisting on the role of Islamic government in eliminating grievances and facilitating the attainment of the utmost perfection in humanity.²⁸⁸ Through the end of his *Waṣīyya*, al-Khumaynī calls upon union in order to achieve the establishment of the state that represents the guardianship of the oppressed and their inheritance of earth.²⁸⁹ With this call, al-Khumaynī reflects upon a verse of the *Qur'ān* which is connected in the Shi'ite tradition to the notion of Messianism. The verse is: "And We want to confer favor upon those who were oppressed in the land and make them leaders and make them inheritors."²⁹⁰ This shows how al-Khumaynī situates revolution and messianism within the realm of his thought. In addition, it proves the pivotal role these two components played in theorizing for revolutionary Islam. The triumph of the Shi'ite version of ruling lies in the very fact of waiting for the perfect human to establish the complete political system at the end of time. The fact that the Islamic Republic ruling system is not completely perfect does not detract its essential role in forming an active revolution that would pave the road for the just state of the awaited promised messiah. The very religious goal of al-Khumaynī's theory is thus the

²⁸⁸ Al-Khumaynī, *al-Waṣīyya*, 27-28.

²⁸⁹ Al-Khumaynī, *al-Waṣīyya*, 104-106.

²⁹⁰ *Qur'ān*, 28:5.

implementation of the revelatory notion of *wilāya* practically and not the establishment of a utopian sociopolitical order. In this sense, “modern” Shi‘ite thought represented by al-Khumaynī’s theory and its application signifies a genuine extension of the Shi‘ite tradition. This reading is opposite to that of Sajjad Rizvi, who argues for of a major rupture between modern and traditional Shi‘ite thought.²⁹¹ *Wilāyat al-Faqīh*, I hold, is an effort to establish the apparatus of government, following in the steps of several incidences that took in place in the Shi‘ite history, especially in the hands of the first three *Imāms* (‘Alī, al-Ḥasan, and al-Ḥusayn). These political attempts (e.g. *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* in the modern world), regardless of their success rate keep the revolutionary character of Shi‘ism in motion and represent the rebellious side of Shi‘ism that fights against tyranny. It proves that this fight could not be eventually completed until the awaited Messiah manifests himself in concrete reality and spreads ultimate peace and justice. In this respect, the messianic expectation works as a political crystallizer during occultation in the aim of preparing the suitable ground for the Kingdom of God to come at the end of time. Thus, al-Khumaynī’s theory was not only a political theory that aimed to back-up or lead the Iranian Revolution; it was a rejection of the post-occultation traditional understanding of *wilāya* within Shi‘ism itself.²⁹²

In this respect we see how the notions of revolution, *wilāya* (which represents messianism), awaiting, salvation, and justice are interrelated in al-Khumaynī’s thought. The reality of the concept of awaiting is that there is a kind of divinely legislated historical inevitability for the triumph of justice and the establishment of a global peaceful revolution that will build a humanistic society on the basis of justice, freedom,

²⁹¹ See Rizvi, “Authority in Absence?”

²⁹² On this traditional understanding, see Rizvi, “Authority in Absence?,” 204-209.

equality, and equity. Active waiting is thus a philosophy of rejecting the present reality, which grants people a utopian concept that can only be achieved by the Messiah.²⁹³ Here, the following question might arise: why fight and revolt if the Messiah will come anyway? A summarized answer according to al-Khumaynī's thought would be that the establishment of the just state at the end of the time in the hands of al-Mahdī does not mean that humans should not work hard to achieve as much justice as possible before that eschatological arrival. However, another pivotal issue can be raised, one that questions the status of this assumed assurance: if assurance is rooted in God's will, then surely it must inevitably be without the need of any human action; but if it requires human action, then it would not be rooted in God's will, and would consequently lose all metaphysical support. Al-Khumaynī would refuse this claim, arguing that people are always prepared to fight and reject reality. This is especially true, because his theory advocates for the intervention of the human act in history, implicitly rejecting historical determinism. However, the manner through which al-Khumaynī further defends his reconciliation of the apparent contradiction between human freedom and determinism would be based on theological reasoning. Again, al-Khumaynī aims to prove that Islam is not a religion that prioritizes the hereafter to the exclusion of any consideration of the present world. Establishing a just and divine state on earth has an eschatological dimension, but does not ignore worldly aspects. This is why the basis of al-Khumaynī's theory of Islamic government intensively prioritizes economic and social factors and

²⁹³ This argument is originally based on different theological proofs of the necessity of the coming of the Messiah.

highlights the great importance of scientific development and productive independence from the West and the East.²⁹⁴

It is on the basis of this theological reasoning that al-Khumaynī believes that the Islamic Revolution would become the mirror of divinity and a true expression of monotheism.²⁹⁵ From here, we can notice the reason behind al-Khumaynī’s motive for describing the Revolution as being linked to “faith and reassurance in the metaphysical realm.”²⁹⁶ This also explains the trajectory of the deep connection he made between the Iranian Islamic Revolution and the religious tradition, where the Revolution itself becomes the real achievement of the sacred mission of the prophets and the world reformers.²⁹⁷ This according to the Khumaynian perspective implies that the Islamic Revolution in Iran is (or was supposed to be) the ultimate, ideal, and true form of revolution, unlike other revolutions such as the French and Russian. Therefore, al-Khumaynī would consider the bloody death in the trajectory of establishing the Islamic government as “blood death [that] is sweeter than honey.”²⁹⁸ However, it is crucial to point out that al-Khumaynī holds that the ultimate ideal Islamic government will not be attained until the appearance of the hidden *Imām*. Accordingly, as I previously mentioned, the Islamic Revolution is seen as a tremendous effort in achieving the best

²⁹⁴ Al-Khumaynī, *al-Hukūma al-Islāmiyya*, 24. I will not examine the social, political, and philosophical analysis of the structure of society and the problems that al-Khumaynī has raised, as this falls outside the scope of this thesis.

²⁹⁵ Al-Khumaynī, *al-Waṣiyya*, 104.

²⁹⁶ Al-Khumaynī, *al-Waṣiyya*, 42.

²⁹⁷ Al-Khumaynī, *al-Waṣiyya*, 105.

²⁹⁸ Al-Khumaynī, *al-Waṣiyya*, 105.

system of governance attainable in the absence of the *Imām* in order to stay as proximate as possible to the ideal system.

5.3. The Critical Foundation of al-Khumaynī's Theory

In theorizing for the Islamic government, al-Khumaynī proceeds from a philosophy of religion that espoused that religion is the center of all life.²⁹⁹ The initial motive that calls for the launching of the Islamic Republic and the establishment of the Islamic Government is to understand the consistency between the religious achievements of the '*ulamā*' and their political response. According to al-Khumaynī, this implies a reorientation of the scholarly community to what is believed to be the basis of the prophetic experience, which is to establish a close relationship between religion and politics, where the religious and political apparatus under prophetic authority were one and the same. Al-Khumaynī considers this return to the original Islamic prophetic model as the root justification for expanding the role of the '*ulamā*' in the process of liberating the Islamic community from colonial domination.³⁰⁰ Al-Khumaynī demonstrates the failure of the '*ulamā*' throughout the ages to show the relationship between Islam and the political strength of the community.³⁰¹ He argues that the problem of colonialist antagonism against Islam has nothing to do with the religious rituals of Muslims. Rather, the conflict of imperialism with Islam lies in that Islam presents a genuine rival political structure that undercuts their exploitative objectives to control the fortunes of the oppressed people.

²⁹⁹ Al-Khumaynī, *al-Hukūma al-Islāmiyya*, 23-24.

³⁰⁰ Al-Khumaynī, *al-Hukūma al-Islāmiyya*, 23.

³⁰¹ Al-Khumaynī, *al-Hukūma al-Islāmiyya*, 13.

Building on the aforementioned examination, al-Khumaynī seems to deal with what constitutes internal and external sources of aggression. The first is the political silence of the religious institution and its deviation from the genuine practical destination of Islam, and the second is the colonization of the country by external forces. Thus, it is an identity struggle that deals with both internal and external factors, and is predicated upon the ability of Muslims to understand the true meaning of being Muslim and the various roles they must play in relation to this understanding. It is a struggle that spans geographical, ideological, and cultural horizons. The confrontation here is not the same as confrontations with a clear enemy on a single one front; rather it has many fronts, which requires a variety of conceptual and practical tools to deal with. In the Khumaynian sense, struggling on these fronts is not just about narrating history and analyzing the present, rather it prioritizes the acquisition of knowledge. By “knowing,” we refer to the awareness and consciousness of different eras, and this is where al-Khumaynī begins his reasoning. He seeks to spread awareness of the self and awareness of authentic Islam. Doing this would ensure that Muslims be able to transition from a state of fear and regression to a state of revolution. Thus, al-Khumaynī holds that the condition of revolution is the awareness of the surrounding problems and the conviction of the need to establish an Islamic government that is itself the product of the revolution. For him, revolution is not a series of events, it is not a set of features, and it is not the accumulation of personalities, rather it is the dynamic and spirit that moves toward achieving justice in the world. Revolution, according to al-Khumaynī, would provoke social consciousness that save humans from their prisons (i.e. history, society, materialism). This is an appeal to the primacy of consciousness where social reality depends on consciousness itself. It also explains why changing consciousness is

sufficient for changing reality. In my view, al-Khumaynī was certain that catechisms and street philosophy can be used to transport the public into a state of “social consciousness” or “ideological awareness.” This consciousness consists of two dimensions: knowledge of “what is in society” and knowledge of “what society should be.” This knowledge of the gap between what exists and what must be is what generates an active social movement directed toward liberation and emancipation. Al-Khumaynī sees returning to religion as the realization of the ideal structure of human freedom. His political theory views freedom as liberty from the tyranny of a corrupt and unjust ruler; this is achieved through revolution and establishing the Islamic government. The idea here is limited to liberation from beings or states and does not imply freedom from God or His divine laws.

Al-Khumaynī holds that satisfying the individuals’ subjective interest, needs, and drives, in addition to their opinions and views, is embodied in the activation of rational ends by the individuals themselves. In his proposal for an Islamic government, al-Khumaynī did not only pave the way for a new Islamic political system that keeps pace with the times, but also wanted to present a model of an authentic Islamic revolution, whereby this revolution would also be a revolution on the self in all its social, cultural, and political dimensions. In this way, he emphasized on the self and the return to it with a greater awareness and determination. This analysis offered al-Khumaynī a path that reflects his adherence to his Islamic value system and his endeavor to keep pace with modern time. In this context, al-Khumaynī focused on the escape from pre-existing models of revolution in the East and the West, since depending on such models in his view, means submission to a hidden form of colonialism. He asks how an Iranian Muslim can claim his/her rights that were plundered by the colonizer

using colonial tools. Hence, al-Khumaynī explicitly declared before the stages of the actual revolution that Islam is not incomplete and that the structure of Islam is well-adapted to the establishment and development of an Islamic state. Therefore, there is no need for importing constitutions from England and Belgium, especially if they are based on the endorsement of kingship models and hereditary rule, which is alien to the spirit of Islam and contrary to its value system.³⁰²

Al-Khumaynī's *Waṣiyya* shows the peak of his sociopolitical analysis, where he recommends the transformation of political revolution into a cultural revolution. The political revolution leads to an Islamic government and this government should always in turn maintain a revolutionary status in order to implement the divine law and spread Islamic values. Laws and values at this stage would be in an interconnected relationship with culture. This means that the divine law and the Islamic value system must be integrated into the complexities of modern social life based upon a cultural revolution. It is clear that al-Khumaynī's philosophy is based on the fact that the starting point in building the system that governs the relations of Iranian Muslims should be based on a rational reflection on the background of the community's culture and civilization including religion. From here, I conclude that al-Khumaynī holds that the prosperity of the Iranian Islamic nation could not be based on a foreign system whose features were shaped by the needs of the "Western capitalists" and pioneers of colonialism.³⁰³ In this concern, al-Khumaynī writes: "The basis for the misery of Muslims are the governments that are subjected to the East-West."³⁰⁴ He holds that the nation should be

³⁰² Al-Khumaynī, *al-Ḥukūma al-Islāmiyya*, 13.

³⁰³ Al-Khumaynī, *al-Waṣiyya*, 47-48.

³⁰⁴ Al-Khumaynī, *al-Waṣiyya*, 45.

ruled by a system which reflects its values (i.e. religion and morals), and every system that does not issue from this is a borrowed garment. He calls Muslims once again to proceed “toward self-knowledge, self-sufficiency, and independence in all dimensions.”³⁰⁵

Through this critical engagement, al-Khumaynī succeeded in imbuing religious rituals with political action, and in enabling the ontological and ideological dimensions of Shi‘ism to be the intellectual lever of one of the mightiest revolutions of the twentieth century. In doing so, al-Khumaynī believed that he had restored the religion to its initial Prophetic form. In his view, this was achieved after the ‘*ulamā*’ had for a long time neglected the core of Islam, and after the colonialists had turned the religion into a form of ritualism. The strength of the religious authority that al-Khumaynī portrayed in the doctrinal structure of his political system enabled defenseless people to not only revolt against a monarchy, but also to establish a lifestyle which opposes what was largely built upon a colonialist agenda. The theoretical intellectual dimension of the Khumaynian critical philosophy and the applied dimension of the religious movement it generated led to the massive revolutionary victory of 1979, which saw the establishment of the first Islamic government in the modern sense of that term.

³⁰⁵ Al-Khumaynī, *al-Waṣīyya*, 106.

Chapter 6

FROM THE ISLAMIC REVOLUTION TO THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC

6.1. Modern Republicanism and Absolutism of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh*

In 1979, the Islamic Revolution defeated the Pahlavi monarchy and successfully established the theory of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh*. Nevertheless, there remained the risk of conflict between the governmental and religious authorities. This is especially in the case since divine law lends itself to different interpretations which can hamper the consistency in the implementation of necessary laws for an effective modern state. In his *al-Ḥukūma al-Islāmiyya*, al-Khumaynī was aware of the danger of such conflict between different religious authorities.³⁰⁶ He holds that the guardianship of *al-walī al-faqīh* does not bind other jurists or interfere in their dismissal or appointment. Rather, he maintains that all jurists are uniformly qualified in exercising religious guardianship.³⁰⁷ However, for the guardian jurist to truly take the ruling job, independent of all other religious authorities, al-Khumaynī theorized the necessity of his absolute authority in the sense of reflecting the practical authority of the infallibles. The difference between the religious authority (*al-marja' iyya al-dīniyya*) and the absolute guardianship of the jurist is that the application scope of the first is restricted to the individual, meaning that it is related to private acts of worship and personal dealings with people. While the scope of the second is general and common, meaning that it is related to the *umma* (Islamic community), its interests, war, peace, and general societal direction. Accordingly, believers need a religious reference to follow in his personal

³⁰⁶ Al-Khumaynī, *al-Ḥukūma al-Islāmiyya*, 55.

³⁰⁷ Al-Khumaynī, *al-Ḥukūma al-Islāmiyya*, 55.

life in order to know the legal rulings; but they also need a leader, who is the guardian jurist, in order to define the general policies in the life of the *umma* and the practical role of the believers in implementing the sacred Islamic rulings and ensuring their implementation in the life of the nation. Therefore, al-Khumaynī insisted on the political role of the guardian and his right to decide what religious opinions would be accepted and what interpretation of religion concerning state matters would be upheld. Al-Khumaynī wanted to restrict political authority to the guardian jurist, especially since in traditional Shi‘ism, there are several *marāji‘ taqlīd* (highest religious authorities who are sources of legal emulation) with followers who accept and follow their religious opinions. He sought to show the restriction of *al-walī al-faqīh*’s authority to state issues and insisted that while religion and politics do synthesize, political authority is dominant because it protects the Islamic government and its sovereignty. Thus, the supreme authority of the guardian jurist in political matters was a vital tool for liberating the Islamic government from restrictions that some religious authorities may attempt to exert. In an absolute state, suitable laws and policies can be laid down without limits from external boundaries.³⁰⁸ In doing so, al-Khumaynī aimed to resolve the struggle between obedience to God and the autonomy of a man as a main pretext of sedition.³⁰⁹ He was able to predict the problem that dual authority may pose on the political stability of the young Islamic Republic. Al-Khumaynī’s notion of “absolutism” is based on the sovereignty of the guardian jurist who chooses which divine commands

³⁰⁸ Since the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran, it is evident that there occurred conformation and oppositions between some *marāji‘ taqlīd* and the Iranian political institution. Such oppositions are due to having different interpretations of the divine law and its enforcement actions. On some examples, see Namazi, “Ayatollah Khomeini,” 124.

³⁰⁹ This aspect of sedition was significantly projected by Hobbes. See Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Richard Tuck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 43.

(of social issues, business, and general political affairs) are to be followed and which are to be banned. This makes *al-walī al-faqīh* the authorized interpreter of sacred texts; in this practical sphere he has superiority over other jurists. This kind of supremacy accordingly paves the way for establishing the notion that *al-walī al-faqīh* is a ruling jurist who has practical wisdom and political knowledge, and is more of a charismatic jurist leader than simply a religious authority that deals with politics from a general perspective. In this regard, the current guardian jurist ‘Alī al-Khāmīnā’ī (b. 1939) writes describing the absolute guardianship of the jurist:

What is meant by the absolute guardianship of the qualified jurist (*al-faqīh al-jāmi‘ li-al-sharā’iṭ*) is that the true Islamic religion—which is the seal of the heavenly religions and last before the Day of Resurrection—is the religion of government and the administration of society’s affairs. Accordingly, there should be for the Islamic community in all its classes, a guardian (*waliyyu amrin*), religious authority (*ḥākim shar‘ī*), and leader to preserve the [Islamic] nation from the enemies of Islam and Muslims, to preserve their order and to establish justice between them, to prevent the powerful from encroaching on the weak, and to secure the means for cultural, political and social development and growth, in addition to prosperity for them. These, in place of their practical implementation, may conflict with the desires, ambitions, benefits, and freedom of some people. Thus, the ruler of the Muslims, when carrying out the tasks of leadership in the light of Islamic jurisprudence, must take the necessary measures when determining the need for them.³¹⁰

During the same year of his death (1989), al-Khumaynī wrote to the Constitutional Review Council mentioning that the Islamic Republic’s Leader will be “known and accepted by the majority of the people as the leader.”³¹¹ He also held that the Supreme leader must be a Shi‘ite jurist but does not have to be a *marja‘ taqlīd*

³¹⁰ Al-Imām ‘Alī al-Ḥusaynī al-Khāmīnā’ī, *Ajwibat al-Istiftā’āt*, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Ḥaqq, 1995), 24.

³¹¹ Majlis-i Shūrā-yi Islāmī, *Ṣūrat-i Mashrūḥ-i Mudhākīrāt-i Shūrā-yi Bāznigāri-i Qānūn-i Asāsī-i Jumhūrī-i Islāmī-i Irān*, vol. 1 (Tehran: 1990), 58. In 1989, al-Khumaynī formed a Constitutional Review Council to amend the 1979 Constitution. Later, he sent a letter to the Council, ordering the removal of the condition of *marja‘ iyya* for the position of leadership.

(source of legal emulation).³¹² Moreover, he insisted that the most significant qualifications needed to rule and defend the country are his political position and experience.³¹³ This highlights the priority of political skill compared to legal authority. This, however, should not be seen as going beyond religion, but rather as offering a new and critical understanding of religion where politics becomes in the core of the system. In this sense, religion is not limited to worship, but also covers political practice to reach the ultimate goal commanded by God, which is justice through a just government. Al-Khumaynī wanted to establish the most significant quality that should be prioritized when electing the guardian jurist, namely the practical faculty and its effective capacity. This is because other qualities such as that of legal authority and justice should be common between jurists, as at least every *mujtahid* must hold them. However, most jurists do not have the necessary practical skills to lead the Republic. Therefore, al-Khumaynī dropped the condition of *marja' iyya* and kept that of legal authority, which is linked to the senior *mujtahids* class of '*ulamā*' in order to enlarge the scope of possible candidates, taking into consideration that the skills needed to hold a political authority might not be found in *marja' taqlīd* at all times.

Al-Khumaynī's position that politics is so significant that it can even be superior to traditional religious laws presents a new assessment of the association between *Sharī'a* and politics. By holding this position, al-Khumaynī was able to eliminate the restrictions enforced on the Islamic Republic that had previously strained it in the

³¹² The *marja' iyya* and the guardianship may both be found in one person, as was the case with al-Khumaynī with the victory of the revolution and with the current guardian jurist and Supreme Leader of Iran 'Alī al-Khāmina'ī (b. 1939) shortly after he was elected by the Assembly of Experts of the Leadership (*majlis-i khubrigān-i rahbarī*) to hold the guardianship after the death of al-Khumaynī. Nonetheless, it is essential to note that 'Alī al-Khāmina'ī was a *mujtahid* but not *marja' taqlīd* at the time he was appointed to guardianship.

³¹³ Majlis-i Shūrā-yi Islāmī, *Şūrat-i Mashrūh-i*, 1: 58.

traditional margins of *Sharī‘a*. His philosophical-analytical understanding of the religious text and interpretation of the spirit of God’s message led him to hold that the role of a guardian jurist must reflect the practical role and authority of the infallible. As discussed earlier in different sections of this thesis, al-Khumaynī does not believe that the guardian jurist is infallible, rather he simply tries to establish a government that would clear the path for the eventual appearance the Twelfth *Imām*, al-Mahdī. In this respect, the guardian jurist becomes the ruler who supervises the implementation of *Sharī‘a* in the community in its theoretical and practical dimensions. Furthermore, he has the authority to annul any *Sharī‘a* agreement that is considered conflicting with “the interests of the country or of Islam.” This led al-Khumaynī to propose the notion of “*wilāyat al-faqīh al-muṭlaqa*” (absolute guardianship of the jurist), which represents his ultimate political theory. In 1987, al-Khumaynī clearly made the notion of *wilāya* the cornerstone of the Islamic modern Republic, in the sense that the ordinance of *al-walī al-faqīh* which are made concerning public interest subordinates *Sharī‘a* when necessary. Al-Khumaynī states in his historical declaration of December 1987:

The absolute guardianship of the jurist (*al-wilāya al-muṭlaqa li-al-faqīh*) is the same as the guardianship that God gave the Prophet and *Imāms*. It is one of the most prominent *Sharī‘a* ordinances (*al-aḥkām al-ilāhiyya*) that has priority over all *Sharī‘a* ordinances. The framework of *Sharī‘a* ordinances does not restrict the authority of [Islamic] State. Governance is one of the primary ordinances and is superior to all sub- ordinances (*al-aḥkām al-far‘iyya*) such as prayer (*al-ṣalāt*), fasting (*al-ṣawm*) and Mecca pilgrimage (*al-ḥajj*). The [Islamic] government has the authority to unilaterally cancel the religious agreements with the citizens when those agreements are against the interest of the country or interest of Islam. The [Islamic] government has the authority to stop any practice, regardless whether it is devotional (*‘ibādī*) or non-devotional, when its implementation is opposing the interest of Islam [...]³¹⁴

³¹⁴ Al-Khumaynī, *Ṣaḥīfa-yi Imām*.

Accordingly, al-Khumaynī argues that the guardian jurist has an absolute authority in the public domain, as was for the infallible. This authority is reflected in governmental ordinances, which are issued by the guardian jurist. He argues that when *Sharī‘a* ordinances and governmental ordinances contradict, the latter would gain dominance over the former in accordance with public interest.³¹⁵ For achieving the best interest of Islam, Muslims, or the ruling system, the guardian jurist has the right to suspend the primary and secondary *Sharī‘a* ordinances, including both devotional rituals (*al-‘ibādāt*) and ordinances on public human interactions (*al-mu‘āmalāt*). This was indeed a revolutionary innovation in jurisprudence and a keystone to the modernistic aspect of the Islamic Republic. However, it could not be seen by any means as “the starting point of secularization of Shiite *fiqh*” under the authority of a jurist as claimed by Mohsen Kadivar.³¹⁶ This in contrary, I argue, is one of the ultimate forms of a religious state, where the ruler aims to completely reflect the roles and responsibilities of the infallible. Al-Khumaynī, perhaps does not aim to present the *al-walī al-faqīh* as a supervisor or manager over an Islamic government, rather he wants to implement what I can call a Farabian form of ruling. As discussed earlier in Chapter Four, *al-walī al-faqīh* could be seen as the second sovereign who succeeds the first sovereign (the infallible) in holding his religious and political authority. This authorization shows the core philosophical role of *al-walī al-faqīh* in the sense of understanding the rationale upon which the *Sharī‘a* is based. As a result, its essential purpose is oriented toward the

³¹⁵ This declaration influenced the establishment of the Expediency Discernment Council of the System (*Majma‘-i Tashkīh-i Maṣlaḥat-i Nizām*), for determining public interest. It was initially intended to address disagreements or disputes between the Islamic Consultative Assembly and the Guardian Council. However, its formal power lies more in its advisory role to the Supreme Leader being his constitutional advisory body as described in article 112 of the Islamic Republic’s Constitution. Accordingly, it is granted supervisory powers over all branches of government. See Hooman Majd, *The Ayatollah Begs to Differ: The Paradox of Modern Iran* (New York: Doubleday, 2008), 246-47.

³¹⁶ Mohsen Kadivar, “Ayatollah Khomeini’s Political Theory.”

political order and not devotional rituals. In this sense, the Khomeinist political doctrine presents Islam as a philosophical religion, where rationalization and philosophical analysis of Islamic values become the decisive factor for any sociopolitical issue. A doctrinal problem could arise here, which is how the rule of the jurist can be similar to the rule of the infallible. This is especially true, since the ruling of the infallible is free from doubt, since he is the representative of the true eschatological reality according to the Shi'ite theology. While, on the other hand, the ruling of *al-walī al-faqīh* only mirrors this reality and does not hold a direct ontological basis, given the fact that his epistemic system cannot be perfect. In addition, *al-walī al-faqīh* as a nonperfect human is subject to pride of vanity, personal emotions, economic conditions, and social standing. It is possible to have a jurist who is ascetic and pious, but fall into corruption after attaining power. Here, al-Khomeinī would respond that the authority of *al-walī al-faqīh* is bounded, when necessary, by the authority of other elected and authorized jurists of Assembly of Experts of the Leadership (*majlis-i khubrigān-i rahbarī*), who would decommission him when necessary as they had appointed him before.³¹⁷ According to al-Khomeinī's thesis, this represents a specific and unique political form of ruling that would help differentiate, both politically and terminologically, between absolutism and dictatorship.

At first glance, the absolutism of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* may be conceived as a dictatorship. However, in my view, the Khomeinist political approach through *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* attempts to chart its own political destiny that does not follow the dominant models of the East or the West. This understanding is completely consistent with the term that is currently used to refer to *al-walī al-faqīh*; namely the Leader (*rahbar*),

³¹⁷ On this, see articles 107, 108, and 111 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

commonly known as the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution (*rahbar-i mu'azzam-i inqilāb-i islāmī*).³¹⁸ The Leader, in al-Khumaynī's vision as I understand it, is primarily a guide who aims at steering the general movement of the regime toward the Islamic goals and values. This is what we can detect to be the most important role that al-Khumaynī tried to establish during the period of his leadership of the Iranian Muslim community. This responsibility, which is extremely sensitive and important, according to al-Khumaynī, derives from religious standards and controls that also takes into consideration the will of the people. That is, the controls of leadership and the guardianship of the jurist according to al-Khumaynī's theory (i.e. religious and moral controls) are restricted by popular will (through indirect elections) and established by people's support. The fall of any religious and moral controls or the lack of it, of course, means the fall of the jurist's competence as a guardian even if he had the support of the majority in the country.³¹⁹ On the other hand, the jurist who fulfills these controls and is elected by the votes of the masses indirectly through the Assembly of Experts cannot rule with absolute individual initiative, ignoring the will of the people. This is because his executive will is derived from the will of the people through election. Therefore, giving *al-walī al-faqīh* a wide range of political and religious power does not mean that the political system proposed by al-Khumaynī is one that is modeled as a dictatorship. On the contrary, the Supreme Leader in al-Khumaynī's political system is also charged, like all other people, to work in accordance with divine law and the Islamic value system. When dealing with topics that are not initially stipulated by the lawgiver, he analyzes the situation and comes up with a decision, taking into consideration the spirit

³¹⁸ See articles 89-91 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

³¹⁹ Al-Khumaynī, *al-Hukūma al-Islāmiyya*, 74-75.

of the divine law, consultation of experts in the tackled field, and general consensus. Thus, according to the Khumaynian thought, the divine law and the institutional hierarchy of the Assembly of Experts guarantees the rights of people in such a way as to ensure that the relationship between the guardian jurist and people is never one of absolute power (dictatorship) on the part of the former. As is discussed previously, the primary goal of the Khumaynian political project is guidance, not holding power for the sake of power, as the relationship between morality and politics must be consistent with each other—this being a consistent theme of the Islamic philosophical tradition.³²⁰

However, I hold that the absolutist character of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* still leads to a major problem in contemporary political world. This problem is directly linked to the notion of political and religious subordination to *al-walī al-faqīh* within certain obligatory boundaries. In my view, the problem does not lie in understanding the absolute guardianship of the guardian jurist within the Islamic Republic of Iran. Rather, it lies in understanding its role outside Iranian borders, i.e. its relationship with non-Iranian Shi‘ites who support the theory of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh*. This is crucial in order to investigate the theory’s capability of interacting with the modern political foundations with regard to the borders, sovereignty, and the national security of modern states that is enforced at an international level. Those among the non-Iranian Shi‘ites who support the guardianship of the jurist consider that the domain of *al-walī al-faqīh* has nothing to do with his religio-political authority. According to them, this is proven on the same basis by which any believer differentiates between the domain of religious authority (*marja*) and religious authority (*al-marja* ‘*īyya*).³²¹ Therefore, neither *al-walī al-faqīh*’s

³²⁰ See Gutas, “The Meaning of *madanī*.”

³²¹ For example, see Na‘īm Qāsim, *Ḥizbullāh; al-Manhaj-al-Tajriba-al-Mustaqbal: Lubnān wa-Muqāwamatuh fī al-Wājiha* (Beirut: Dār al-Mahajja al-Baydā’, 2010), 86-90.

country nor his nationality has anything to do with his guardianship qualifications, while taking into account that the limits of his authority vary in accordance with the response of the believers to his commands. In this sense, *al-walī al-faqīh* guides Iran as an administrative entity separate from external entities that presumably owe a doctrinal and ideological loyalty to him.³²² For example, al-Khumaynī as *al-walī al-faqīh* rules the Islamic Republic of Iran, being the leader and guardian of the Islamic system there; but on the other hand, he also sets the political mandate for Muslims in different countries. The latter case is represented in such things as guiding Muslims toward sovereignty and the self-reliance of Muslim countries from colonial powers, supporting the unity of Muslims, especially concerning common issues, rejecting forms of injustice and deviation, taking care of the affairs of the vulnerable, promoting social solidarity among Muslims, and confronting what al-Khumaynī calls the forcibly planted “cancerous gland” in Palestine, i.e. the Zionist regime.³²³

However, a critical note that should be pointed out here is that *al-walī al-faqīh* possesses obligatory political authority in religious matters meaning that all those who support al-Khumaynī’s theory from among the religious Shi‘ites are theoretically obliged to follow his commands. This is because the belief in this theory is mainly based on a jurisprudential foundation that was established by al-Khumaynī himself. Accordingly, the believer’s attachment to guardianship is an obligation and commitment, even when she or he refers to another religious authority in religious matters (traditional jurisprudence). This is because the commanding character (*al-*

³²² Qāsim, *Ḥizbullāh*, 86-90.

³²³ The theoretical and practical aspects of these tasks of *al-walī al-faqīh* were shown directly and indirectly throughout the thesis.

āmiriyyā) is given to the guardian jurist only with respect to the public Islamic ordinances. I will not elaborate more on this issue as it carries more political and religious dimensions than philosophical ones. Nonetheless, I want to note that this specific aspect of al-Khumaynī's theory reveals problems in its relationship to the foundations of modern politics, such as the question of the 'sovereignty' of states whose non-Iranian Shi'ite population believe in the authority of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh*. By this, I mean that a non-Iranian religious citizen who believes in *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* in the Khumaynian sense might be mired in a conflict of interest between two political authorities, the first being that of her/his national government and the second being that of *al-walī al-faqīh*. This dispute practically rises when these two political authorities diverge in their respective approaches to national and international political and social issues. Accordingly, the believer citizen would be in an obligatory position to choose where to stand, taking into consideration the responsibility of what this stand may lead to and its ethical, political, and religious ramifications. One of these, for example, is the following dilemma: if he or she upholds the authority of the national governmental then in what sense would he or she have any commitment to the authority of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh*? Another example is that if he or she upholds *al-walī al-faqīh*'s political authority in opposition to that of the national government, what would citizenship still mean for this person? Accordingly, does nationally-oriented politics subordinate the religiously-oriented politics or vice versa? Those who support *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* argue that there should be no fear of conflict with the fact that adherents to the doctrine live in different countries. That is because the commands of *al-walī al-faqīh* take into account two main conditions; 1) the application of divine law and forbidding anything that contradicts it, and 2) the objective conditions and the specificities of each group or

country that affect the mandate and areas of interest.³²⁴ But still, this is an assumed theoretical framework, while the issue is much more complicated when it comes to the practical applications.

6.2. Establishing the Islamic Republic and Modern Democracy

Nowadays, when al-Khumaynī's theory of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* is discussed from a theoretical perspective, it is usually examined with respect to its compatibility with democracy. This issue can be tackled from different angles, including comparative political theory, political sociology, and political philosophy. In his article "*Wilāyat al-faqih* and Democracy," Mohsen Kadivar presents three positions on this matter and extracts three answers based on different analyses of the theory. The first position tackles the view that the "absolute-appointive *wilāyat al-faqīh*" represents the one and only system of Islamic ruling that should take place during the period of occultation of the infallible *Imām* and should be followed by the people as a religious duty. This type of government would be approved by its people but holds that all decisions in the public sector necessitate authorization by the Supreme Leader, the guardian jurist. This interpretation does not perceive *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* as being in harmony with democracy. The second position is regarded by Kadivar as the interpretation of the traditional reformists (*iṣlāḥ-ṭalabān*). It holds that democracy and *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* are both unsound, and it is important to modify and combine both theories to attain an Islamic democracy that is correctly an "elective-conditional *wilāyat al-faqīh*." This maintains that the people indirectly elect a jurist as the guardian jurist for a restricted period of time to manage societal affairs following *Sharī'a*, which is accepted by the jurists and

³²⁴ For example, see Qāsim, *Ḥizbullāh*, 87.

the people. This position is interpreted and adopted by scholars and reformists who advocate a democratic interpretation of al-Khumaynī's political thought. They highlight the democratic aspects of al-Khumaynī's political discourse during the period of the Revolution and the early stages of the Islamic Republic, even at the expense of the absolutist aspects of his doctrine.³²⁵ This opinion holds that the guardianship of the jurist can be modified according to democratic practices and is not absolute. The third main position can be regarded belonging to Iranian modernists including Kadivar. Kadivar argues that in the political circle, *Wilāyat al-Faqīh*, whether elective or appointive, conditional or absolute, does not have any credible religious proof. He holds that al-Khumaynī's theory is too far from democracy to the extent that it represents a specific kind of religious dictatorship.

I argue against the three aforementioned cases and will tackle them through different perspectives. As for my response to the first position, I hold that the system of guardianship of the jurist is not necessarily the optimal or the only option available, in the sense that the jurisdiction of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* is more specific than that of the Islamic government. If we agree that Islam calls for the establishment of the Islamic government as al-Khumaynī argues, this does not mean that this government should be established exclusively through the implementation of the ruling system of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh*. *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* represents one of several options that could be theorized to implement the Islamic government. This because of the fact that we have different Islamic interpretations of political government and there is no one specific and fixed

³²⁵ Mohsen Kadivar, *Nazarīya-hā-yi Dawlat*, 97-104; Nura Hossainzadeh, "Ruhollah Khomeini's Political Thought: Elements of Guardianship, Consent, and Representative Government," *Journal of Shi'a Islamic Studies* 7, no. 2 (2014): 129-50.

model for the political management of the community.³²⁶ However, this does not mean that I stand with Kadivar's aforementioned opinion that *Wilāyat al-Faqīh*, whether elective or appointive, conditional or absolute, does not have any credible religious proof.³²⁷ With respect to the second position, I hold that an Islamic political theory should not in fact be viewed as having to fit with every system of politics, especially given that different societies in an un-globalized age were not necessarily built upon the same political structure. As such, the proposed comparison with democracy was obviously made without taking into consideration that the modern notion of democracy relies on the detachment of politics from religion,³²⁸ while al-Khumaynī's doctrine is in contrast built on a deep connection between religion and politics in the sense that the practical implication of al-Khumaynī's theory consists of the governance of religion. Therefore, I argue that any positive or negative engagement with al-Khumaynī's theory through the lens of democracy would lead to a vague analysis of his political project and aim.³²⁹ My standpoint at this stage is not from the position of whether al-Khumaynī's political doctrine supports democracy or stands against it; rather mine is a

³²⁶ For example, like many other Shi'ite religious authorities, Grand Ayatullāh 'Alī al-Ḥusaynī al-Sistānī (b. 1930), a religious authority for many Shi'ite believers all over the world, represents a contemporary jurisprudential opinion that opposes the theory of al-Khumaynī. See Vali Nasr, *The Shia Revival: How Conflicts within Islam Will Shape the Future* (New York: Norton, 2006), 173. Also, see Kadivar, *Nazarīya-ha-yi Dawlat*.

³²⁷ I will not engage in an elaborate discussion on this matter, as this claim is beyond the scope of my thesis, but some of what I mentioned in the previous chapters would refute this claim both directly and indirectly. Also, see Taha, "Shiite Ulama."

³²⁸ Contemporary discussions on the relationship between democracy and religion do not call into question this division as it is realistically held; rather, they question various forms of separation and try to determine how the equality of both religious and non-religious citizens in a democratic state can be assured. John Rawls, Jürgen Habermas, and Charles Taylor are among the prominent philosophers who widely attributed to this controversial debate. See Kristina Stoeckl, "The Impact of the Return of Religion on Theoretical Approaches to Democracy and Governance in the Social and Political Sciences," *Sociology Compass* 4/6 (2010): 354-64.

³²⁹ Kadivar, "*Wilayat al-faqih* and Democracy," 207-24.

methodological concern. The practice of some elements of democracy such as elections in the theorized Islamic ruling system does not imply the full application of democracy. In response to the interpretation of the reformists, I reason that it is specifically the absolutist nature of al-Khumaynī's political thesis which promotes the potential for understanding the process of developing an Islamic political philosophy without the need to engage with other "alien" political theories. Thus, it is important to confront common discussions concerning the chances of having liberal democratic rule in the doctrine of al-Khumaynī. This misconception of democracy and *Wilāyat al-Faqīh*'s potential harmony is a result of a misunderstanding of al-Khumaynī's philosophical, jurisprudential, and mystical terminology as well as a lack of comprehension of the concept of democracy. As a political theory with religious dimensions and framework, founded on the divine rights of the guardian jurist mirroring the infallibles' role of governance, *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* is incompatible with democracy, especially in the Western conception of the system. However, this does not mean that *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* is a religious dictatorship, as Kadivar argues. Philosophically, it could be seen as a modern version of Plato's philosopher king theory, where the guardian jurist is a practical philosopher who rules the community through the implementation of perfect divine laws. In this sense, the Assembly of Experts would discharge the guardians' task, as the thoughtful figures authorized to elect and dismiss the Supreme Leader.³³⁰

³³⁰ It is essential to note that all candidates to the elections of the Assembly of Experts must be approved for the election by the Guardian Council of the Constitution. On the other hand, 6 of the 12 Members of the Guardian Council are chosen by the Supreme Leader to serve in the Guardian Council, the other 6 are chosen by the Islamic Consultative Assembly out of candidates nominated by the Chief Justice of Iran who is in turn appointed by the Supreme Leader. Still, all directly-elected members have to be approved by the Supreme Leader before gaining official membership to the Assembly of Experts. That being said, the political system in the Islamic Republic reflects a deep Platonic image of ruling, where governance is almost exclusive reserved for an elite group (i.e. *al-fuqahā*).

The proposed fundamental incompatibility between democracy and *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* theory seems to be the prominent reason for its global rejection as a modern theory in political philosophy. However, this would not form an obstacle to the political management of an Islamic society, according to al-Khumaynī. Al-Khumaynī clearly values the will of the citizens, and regards it as a significant, if not the most crucial principle in the Islamic government. However, maintaining the Socratic approach, al-Khumaynī genuinely believes that sometimes people are unaware of what is good for them. This is especially true if we relate it to al-Khumaynī’s understanding of the duty of people in the revolution, which is to support, follow, and obey the verdicts of a jurist who will form the Islamic government. Basing his argument on revelatory sources, al-Khumaynī considers this support to be one of the most essential legalistic obligations.³³¹ This demonstrates how al-Khumaynī’s theory became the basis of a political administration where the “interest of the Islamic Republic” is implied as what is advantageous for the people and the common good of the society. Therefore, while some democratic elements still appear to hold the lower structure of the political ruling system (i.e. people elect the parliaments and the presidents) enjoying the worldly kind of sovereignty, the higher structure of the system represented by *al-walī al-faqīh* holds a kind of an abstract sovereignty that makes his authority above and beyond that of the electorate to the extent that he becomes almost not accountable to the electorate. This, however, cannot be considered clerical dictatorship as much as it is rather Islamic version of the ideal elitist Platonic Republic. Nevertheless, it is not clear what the picture would look like if there were general public dissatisfaction with the role of the Supreme Leader; if the majority of the people declined to take the advice of *al-walī al-*

³³¹ Al-Khumaynī, *al-Hukūma al-Islāmiyya*, 53.

faqīh on a certain matter, refused to obey his command, and upheld a position that opposes his opinion. In such a situation, would the Supreme Leader resort to intimidation against the will of the people, in order to impose his view? Or would he recognize the public will and the opposition he is facing, and consequently leave his position? The matter is complicated and does not have an obvious answer.

I argue that al-Khumaynī did not in any way consider implementing Western democracy, neither did he aim to synthesize Islam with Western democracy. For al-Khumaynī, Western democracy is not the best kind of political arrangement. Following in the footsteps of a Platonic system that holds that the “philosopher king” is the best leader for his people, in that he makes sure they are “rightly guided,” al-Khumaynī believes that the guardian jurist must maintain the worldly and eschatological salvation of his people. The long historical connection between the Platonic ideal ruling system and Islamic political philosophy since the time of al-Fārābī, in addition to the theological dimensions of the infallible’s political role and the mystical notion of the perfect human, has greatly augmented the reliability of the Khumaynian *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* as the most ideal political regime during the infallible’s occultation. Al-Khumaynī’s refusal to use the term democracy in the establishment of post-Pahlavi Iranian state was clear and explicit, and he expresses this position in several stations. He once said:

Where is the democracy that has filled the world with its name to this extent? And which countries are working according to democracy? Democracy has a different meaning from one country to another; it has a specific meaning in the Soviet Union, a specific meaning in the US, and a specific meaning for Aristotle, and has different meanings for other [philosophers]. We say that it is an unknown thing and it has a specific meaning everywhere, and so we cannot put it in our constitution, where everyone can benefit from one of its meanings

and formulate it in a way that achieves his interests, and therefore we say: Islam, and we are satisfied with it.³³²

In this statement, there are two fallacies that appear, which perhaps were done on the basis of the need of addressing the common people. The first is the misleading interpretation of democracy, and the second is holding that political theory in Islam is apparently so clear and direct that no one would formulate it in a subjective way to suit their own interests and political orientations. Let us suppose that al-Khumaynī's claim concerning the identification of democracy to be true, meaning that every political ideology identifies democracy in a way that suits itself, then why does al-Khumaynī himself not do the same and simply identify his own version of democracy in order to establish the role of popular opinion in the political process? This is especially poignant given the well-known Islamic concept of *shūra* (consultation) in Islamic jurisprudence and how it has been considered to be analogous to democracy but in a more elite form. In addition, if we consider al-Khumaynī's assumption concerning the multi-version aspect of democracy then the same would apply with respect to having multi-versions of interpretations of Islam during the absence of an infallible *Imām*, or even during the absence of the Prophet. What al-Khumaynī himself is theorizing for is not accepted by a wide range of Muslims and even Shi'ites, and many of them would counter his religious and political views. This is because during the absence of the lawgiver, each person could analyze Islam in accordance with his/her own scope of understanding of the revealed sources. In fact, this is apparently proven by what al-Khumaynī himself did, theorizing the modern notion of the Islamic government through *Wilāyat al-Faqīh*. Thus, Islam cannot be a static truth during the absence of the infallible, rather we have

³³² Al-Khumaynī, *Ṣaḥīfa-yi Imām*, 10: 154, from his sermon on 7/11/1979.

several interpretations for different aspects of Islam, the Khomeinist interpretation being one of them.

Another way to understand the conflict of democracy in the post-revolution Iran, is to approach it through the cultural-ideological structure of the revolution and its founder, al-Khomeinī. When establishing the Islamic Republic, al-Khomeinī did not only want to show that modern political notions such as sovereignty and authority are secularized theological conceptions, rather he wanted to take back the initiative to theorize and implement a fully modern political system that is supported by theology.³³³ Apparently, he did not have a problem with what the concept of democracy implies in terms of the participation of the people in governance. Rather, his main problem was with the term in itself because he considers it as a form of cultural and intellectual dependency on what is not Islamic. Another problem is with defining the way by which people may participate in the political process. He did not want the new Iranian constitution to be bounded by any Western influence that would hinder the full application of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh*. In this respect, al-Khomeinī's opposition to the use of democracy as a terminology seems to be a revolt against the historical process in which liberal democracy evolved in the global political sphere, as a notion that backs up secularism, which was invented specifically to diminish religiously influenced political systems. It is a critique of secularism and imperialism and not liberalism in its general sense. An essential question arises here: is democracy necessarily connected to the imperialist version of liberalism that any critique thereof would justify a revival of *quasi*-absolutism? Al-Khomeinī himself replies to this question:

We are not afraid of the West talking about us, [or afraid of] being criticized by someone who claim to be defending human rights. We have to act according to

³³³ On the influence of theology on modernity (i.e. secularism) see Michael Allen Gillespie, *The Theological Origins of Modernity* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

what justice dictates, and we will then show them the meaning of democracy. Western democracy is corrupt, and so is Eastern democracy. Islamic democracy is the ideal democracy, and we will prove to the East and West later, if we can do so, that what we have is a democracy and not what they have. All they have is defending the big capitalists and the big powers, [while] their people are in great repression and suffocation.³³⁴

Al-Khumaynī's cultural defense was a response to the universalization of Western liberalism that is prejudiced against cultural differences and is closely tied to the rise and dominance of colonialism and imperialism.³³⁵ This concept of critique is important to comprehend al-Khumaynī's political approach to ruling, and furthermore signals the presumed end aim of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* (i.e. justice). But the question then arises: if al-Khumaynī's critique of democracy is a critique of secularism and imperialism, then which democracy does al-Khumaynī seek to achieve and does it lead to any kind of liberalism? What is affirmatively noted is that al-Khumaynī's vision of liberalism does not aim to produce a pluralistic agreement of a political contract where multiple groups of society have an equal chance to flourish socially and politically.³³⁶ What is important to al-Khumaynī is justice, and democracy is genuinely linked to the notion of social justice; hence, I hold that what al-Khumaynī means by an Islamic democracy is a kind of social equity and not a political order.

Therefore, I consider al-Khumaynī's motive behind his insistence on rejecting what is non-Islamic as being culturally oriented. This is because al-Khumaynī did not want to present any type of alienation in the new constitution, even at the level of

³³⁴ Al-Khumaynī, *Ṣaḥīfa-yi Imām*, 6: 367.

³³⁵ For a discussion on the aforementioned form of liberalism, see Michael Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982); Domenico Losurdo, *Liberalism: A Counter-History* (London: Verso, 2011); Jennifer Pitts, *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).

³³⁶ For a discussion on the aforementioned form of liberalism, see Kwame Anthony Appiah, *The Ethics of Identity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005); John Gray, *The Two Faces of Liberalism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000).

terminology, one that would lead to the perception and implication that Islam alone is insufficient in the founding of a modern state. Al-Khumaynī was aware that Iran after the Islamic Revolution was at a stage of a new ideological and intellectual birth. Therefore, he thought it was unwise to use borrowed language in articulating the new Iranian Islamic intellectual project. I hold that al-Khumaynī wanted to ensure first and foremost a genuine independence, which is achieved only in reference to one's own values and cultural capabilities. Thus, it is possible that he considered it wrong for a person to examine the interrelations between Islam and any other school of thought, or between the values of the Islamic system derived from his theory and any notions that follow other schools of thought (e.g. democracy). This is because Islam, from al-Khumaynī's point of view, is superior to any ideology, because its source is divine, while other schools of thought derive from mere human thought. Consequently, instead of determining the relative interrelations, al-Khumaynī decided to assume that there is no commonality in the first place between Islamic notions of ruling and democracy. Instead, he went to establish his political thought in a directly Islamic way, and this, in my view, was aimed at strengthening his central idea of restoring Islam and revealing the practical power embodied in it, which was hidden for centuries due Muslims' inability to properly detect it. In this respect, he tried to benefit from Islam as a political ideology. In presenting his aforementioned position, al-Khumaynī not only wants Islam to be the source of identity of Iranian Muslims, but also wants it be the source of all aspects of their social movement and political work. He wants to build the state according to the principles of Islam. Since his early career, al-Khumaynī seemed to reject any direct intellectual engagement with non-Islamic sources especially the modern Western ones. In his early work *Kashf al-Asrār* he criticizes Western

philosophers and their divergence from the Platonic divine wisdom and Aristotelian philosophical tradition:

What does he who has the logic of [Ibn Sīnā's] *The Healing (manṭiq al-Shifā')*, the Philosophy of Illumination (*Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq*), and the Transcendent Philosophy (*al-Ḥikma al-Muta'āliya*), need with the philosophy and logic of Europeans.³³⁷

It is obvious that al-Khumaynī was explicitly aiming for the establishment of a state of divine laws instead of positive laws. According to al-Khumaynī, the legitimacy of the ruler, the legitimacy of governance, and the legitimacy of political authority are all granted by God which naturally correspond to the popular religious trend. I disagree with this famous reading of the religious tradition, as I consider that there is a difference between the metaphysical-theoretical legitimization and the realistic-practical legitimization of the ruler, even in the case of the infallible.³³⁸ Nonetheless, al-Khumaynī handled this issue, albeit in a more practical rather than theoretical manner, whereby he calls for a restricted role of the people in confirming his reading of the religious tradition. This requirement was accepted on the provision that the role stays in harmony with the religion of Islam and *Sharī'a*. In this sense, al-Khumaynī's political theory is intended to reflect a divine ordinance of ruling through the will of people, an approach that could be expressed in the contemporary context as a form of "partial" democracy.³³⁹

³³⁷ Al-Khumaynī, *Kashf al-Asrār*, 59.

³³⁸ This topic goes beyond the research scope of this thesis as it deals with the crucial investigation of the relationship between the infallible's ruling and the pledge of allegiance (*al-bay'a*) in the Islamic tradition. This is an important question given the belief that the effective rule of the infallible cannot possibly rise against the will of the *umma*. God says: "Certainly was Allāh pleased with the believers when they pledged allegiance to you, [O Muḥammad], under the tree, and He knew what was in their hearts, so He sent down tranquility upon them and rewarded them with an imminent conquest." *Qur'ān*, 48:18.

³³⁹ A referendum was held after the revolution by the end of March 1979, where 98.2% of Iranians overwhelmingly voted for an Islamic Republic. Accordingly, no one can say that al-Khumaynī's theory was forced down the Iranians' throat.

According to the aforementioned examination, I hold that it is better to understand al-Khumaynī's theory and practice as an implementation of God's sovereignty through the governance of the people within the framework of religion. This understanding reflects al-Khumaynī's political thought since his early engagement with politics in his *Kashf al-Asrār*, where he claimed that only God has the right to rule over people and legislate laws.³⁴⁰ With this, we can understand what the term "Islamic Republic" denotes: the "Republic" becomes the terminology that represents the sense of popularity in the established state, while "Islamic" on the other hand represents the sense of divine values and the Islamic laws which is embodied in the governance of the Republic. Hence, the concept of the Republic reflects the concern for the belief of the people, their identity, personality, and dignity. Furthermore, the Islamic ideology legitimizes the clear intermarriage between religion and politics. In this way, leadership changes from a worldly leadership as democracy calls for, to a divine leadership that still accepts the popular if it does not oppose the essence of its goal in achieving its values. Accordingly, the Islamic government does not adhere to the masses if their opinions violate divine values, because its legitimacy is not solely derived from them but from the revealed sources that the people believe in. Thus, the system of government that al-Khumaynī asserted was based on a metaphysical conception mixed with a political and social analysis of the present reality and the relationship between this reality and an understanding of the end goal of religion. If we want to place the proposition of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* with political theoretical understanding, then we find that the basis for the legitimacy of the government of *al-walī al-faqīh* is the indirect appointment of a person into this position by God, in line with the *Qur'ānic* notion of

³⁴⁰ Al-Khumaynī, *Kashf al-Asrār*, 210.

the human being's vicegerency of earth. As for forming the government and establishing an applicable political system, the theory will be in the need of people's support. Thus, the establishment of an indirect divine appointment occurs through those who believe in this appointment. This determines the difference between theoretical esoteric sovereignty and practical concrete sovereignty. Accordingly, we find that the political system that al-Khumaynī theorized is based on two main pillars: 1) the divine pillar which is associated with the attainment of metaphysical legitimacy; 2) the popular pillar which is associated with the attainment of worldly legitimacy.

CHAPTER 7

TOWARD A TRANSCENDENT POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

7.1. Al-Khumaynī and the Dimensions of Islamic Political Philosophy

When faced with a society where the majority of its people strongly believe in the significance of religion in all aspects of their lives, including politics, any emerging political philosophy must fit into these notions if it aspires to be accepted by the citizens. This is because any political thought that drastically disregards these notions will fail at building the foundation of a popular regime. Thus, it is important to demonstrate the huge gap between political ruling models offered by the Western political theories and the real needs of people living in the Islamic world. Al-Khumaynī's political experience itself proves that pre-structured models do not present awareness about the relationship between politics and religion in a society, as does the study of real practices. Therefore, instead of solely focusing on the state-religion relationship, al-Khumaynī went to address the connections between the society's religious, cultural, national, and political dimensions. In doing so, he emphasizes the deep interrelations between the government, the religion's metaphysical doctrines, the religious community, and the individual. Al-Khumaynī's theory and practice forms a kind of 'joint governance' between the Godly perspective of ruling and the popular consciousness of individual and his or her communal needs. His intention is to show the correlation between the governance of religion and the effort to establish justice. Accordingly, we can grasp how al-Khumaynī's political philosophy is built upon five foundations: the legislator (i.e. lawgiver), legislation (i.e. divine law), law enforcer (i.e. guardian jurist), citizens (i.e. believers), the end aim of the community and state (i.e.

justice). These foundations reflect the station and role of politics and government in the Khumaynian practical philosophy and religio-political theory of ruling.

It is necessary to know what political philosophy might stand for in the Islamic world instead of using the definition presented by Eurocentric orientations today. This consideration is based on a differentiation between what the field of political philosophy meant in the medieval Islamic world and in the ancient world. Though it is true that Islamic philosophy forms an organic extension of ancient philosophy, it is not an emulation of the ancient thought. While it is crucial to acknowledge that the core role of sources of the Islamic philosophical tradition in the ancient tradition, it is also crucial not to neglect the socio-political conditions taking place in the society. This is especially true if one is investigating a political philosophy that deals with practical issues concerning societal structures that belong to Islamic civilization in general and the *Qur'ān* (divine revelation) and divine law in particular.

In this thesis, I have shown how the existence of political philosophy in the Islamic world is deeply connected with the sociopolitical and religious conditions of the Muslim community, especially since the Islamic religious tradition was the actual influence behind the structure of political ruling in Islam. At any historical stage, the understanding of philosophical notions and integrating these notions with surrounding conditions reflects a social consciousness, whether this consciousness reflects an elite or a popular orientation. This is exactly what should be taken into consideration when discussing the development of practical philosophy in a religious community: how do intellectual components (i.e. ethical theory, epistemic theory, jurisprudential rulings, theological doctrines) integrate with a societal structure to form a specific political system and how did such integration develop throughout history and led to the

formulation of new structures of ruling? Examining this relationship and understanding its socio-intellectual crystallizers allows us to better grasp the development of unique political philosophies in the Islamic world. This method will make us be aware of how political thought developed philosophically by philosophers in the Islamic world, such as al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā, Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (1201–1274), Jalāl al-Dīn al-Dawānī (1426–1502), and their successors in Islamic East afterwards. For example, Mullā Ṣadrā’s philosophical reputation was built upon his metaphysical and ontological notions, which at first glance does not seem to be related to practical philosophy.³⁴¹ However, if one reads his *Sih Aṣl* with an analytical lens one would note how Mullā Ṣadrā’s philosophy could be linked to politics. Mullā Ṣadrā’s epistemic justification system, his ethical notions, and his active refutation of the Safavid monarchy and “the ‘*ulamā*’ of rituals” has contributed to the transformation in Shi‘ite political thought later on and paved the way for a successful contemporary political philosophy as presented by al-Khumaynī.

As a philosopher, al-Khumaynī found himself before an established Islamic tradition of practical philosophy that involves the whole scope of the human ends in this life and the hereafter and seeks to elucidate what an individual and a community ought to do in order to achieve their respective ends. On the other hand, as a religious authority, he was a representative of a religion that holds a complete system of beliefs (i.e. theological, jurisprudential), whose adherents believe would lead them to the achievement of these ends. In order to comprehend why al-Khumaynī was successful in benefiting from both the philosophical and religious inclinations without linking them

³⁴¹ By metaphysical and ontological notions I mean the basic philosophical doctrines of *al-Ḥikma al-Muta‘aliya*, such as the primacy of existence over essence (quiddity); the modulation (*tashkīk*) of existence; the unity of the intellect and the intelligible; substantial motion as a category; the world of the imagination as an independent entity; ontological levels; the similarity between the existence and the light (*al-tashābuh bayn al-wujūd wa-al-nūr*); etc. See Sajjad H. Rizvi, *Mullā Ṣadrā and Metaphysics*.

directly, I have shown how al-Khumaynī's project takes into consideration the Islamic universal model of epistemology and politics. The coexistence of several epistemic dimensions in a single intellectual thought gave birth to a new approach, which I call a "transcendent political philosophy." This philosophy is presented by al-Khumaynī as being compatible with both religious and modern circumstances. Thus, unlike any other form of ruling, al-Khumaynī's ruling system is meant to establish and preserve a modern regime that upholds and implements divine law through the notion of *wilāyā* (guardianship).

In the contemporary world, while the very idea of religious government or the idea of the philosopher type king at the helm maybe seen as something symbolic, al-Khumaynī, though not a "king" or a "philosopher" in the discursive meaning of the words, was able to implement a sort of "philosopher king" into the modern political world. Al-Fārābī holds that when identifying a true philosopher, it would be difficult to differentiate between him and the supreme ruler.³⁴² Accordingly, I hold that al-Khumaynī was the perfect philosopher of his era who perfected both the theoretical and practical sciences and had the capacity to use them for the advantage of the Muslim individual and community. He was able to combine his theoretical philosophy and religious knowledge with deep sociopolitical analysis to present a "modern" Islamic political philosophy. In this sense, he was able to develop political philosophy in the Islamic world into a new arena, where critical and social theory takes up a pivotal place in the system. One of al-Khumaynī's primary concerns was to show the wide scope of religion and its applicability in all times. Al-Khumaynī was able to extract religious concepts from the revealed texts and transform them into principles that innovated

³⁴² Al-Fārābī, *Tahṣīl al-Sa'āda*. For English translation by Muhsin Mahdi, see Ralph Lerner and Muhsin Mahdi, eds., *Medieval Political Philosophy: A Sourcebook* (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1963), 76.

contemporary political culture. Several Muslim philosophers have contributed to Islamic political philosophy. However, none of them clearly went against rulers. They did not advocate for radical change, but aspired to show the rulers what goals they should work toward and what actions would foster such accomplishments.³⁴³ This quietist political orientation was enough for ‘Alī Sharī‘atī (1933–1977), a sociologist, historian, and one of the most prominent ideologues of the Islamic Iranian Revolution, to harshly critique prominent Muslim philosophers such Ibn Sīnā in his masterpiece *Khūd-Āgāhī-i va-Istihmār (Self-Awareness and Donkeyness)* and elsewhere.³⁴⁴ On the other hand, al-Khumaynī as his predecessors considered that the aim of coexisting in a community is to attain the human excellences that cannot be acquired without living together as a society. He thus studied how the examples of Prophet Muḥammad and traditional practices resulting from them results in these principles. However, al-Khumaynī was a philosopher in the practical Socratic sense, as he went to the people to address his political theory advocated for its practical application through revolution. Al-Khumaynī’s writings since his early *Kashf al-Asrār* appear to be part of a specific Khumaynian revolutionary plan that exceeds the boundaries of the religious seminaries and which prepares for both the revolutionary and post-revolutionary periods. Al-Khumaynī was not merely theorizing a religio-political doctrine with jurisprudential language, but was also presenting his theory in a context that calls for a revolution to establish an Islamic government through the implementation of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh*. Accordingly, when a qualified leader who is capable of leading a revolution is in presence, he ensures that the people become responsible before God to follow him.

³⁴³ Butterworth, “Political Islam,” 33.

³⁴⁴ ‘Alī Sharī‘atī, *al-Nabāha wa-al-Istihmār*, trans. Hādī al-Sayyid Yāsīn (Beirut: Dār al-Amīr, 2004), 105.

Al-Khumaynī, who was an Islamic jurist, mystic, philosopher, theologian, poet and a charismatic political leader, had the skills and tools that effectively transformed the inactive inclinations of the Shi‘ite Iranian community. His theory of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* and its implementation made him one of the most influential Shi‘ite figures in history. The intellectual system of al-Khumaynī does not constitute merely an indication of his religious authority or scholarly uniqueness, nor is it purely a personal achievement presented in history, but rather a central pillar in the great civilization transition that al-Khumaynī brought into Islamic history. Instead of arguing for the primacy of an archetypal manifestation of mystic saints as Ibn ‘Arabī did, or rational philosophers as al-Fārābī did, he went further to chart his own course by wedding Ibn ‘Arabī’s mystical notions to the Islamic philosophical notions of politics. He then articulated this theoretical integration to the exoteric language of Shi‘ite theological doctrines to form a unique intellectual trilogy in a jurisprudential structure. In doing so, he seems to follow the epistemic structure and method of *al-Hikma al-Muta‘āliya*, one that upholds the value of presenting a harmony of philosophical, mystical, theological, and jurisprudential approaches in theorizing for a transcendent political philosophy. Thus, through this deep Ṣadrian strategy, al-Khumaynī structures his revolutionary theory of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh*, embodied in a tightly conceptualized theological-jurisprudential paradigm. Accordingly, *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* does not only have philosophical foundations, but also represents a modern interpretation of what has been theorized in medieval Islamic political philosophy. Therefore, I hold that al-Khumaynī’s theory and its application should be seen with the lens of all three forms of Weberian political legitimacy: the traditional authority being reflected in its Islamic aspect (i.e. jurisprudential, theological, philosophical), charismatic authority being reflected in the

charisma of al-Khumaynī, who demonstrates his legitimacy to lead given his unique qualities, and the legal authority being reflected in the system of rules that were applied after the success of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, which appointed al-Khumaynī as guardian jurist and implemented his theory through legal-constitutional procedures.³⁴⁵

7.2. Concluding Remarks

In this thesis, I have shown how al-Khumaynī's political theory represents a synthesis of three epistemic trajectories: philosophical, mystical, and religious. The first trajectory could be seen in *Wilāyat al-Faqīh*, which is analogous to al-Fārābī's theory of 'the second sovereign' and Ibn Sīnā's account of 'the caliph.' In a more general scope, this indicates a modern religious model of Plato's theory of the philosopher king in his *The Republic*. Al-Khumaynī's theory substituted the philosopher with the Islamic jurist. The second trajectory could be seen in *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* adoption of the Akbarian theory of 'the perfect human.' This perfect human possesses absolute guardianship. Al-Khumaynī benefited from this mystical notion and presented the absolute guardianship in a jurisprudential form of maintaining the absolute authority of the just jurist. The third trajectory could be seen in *Wilāyat al-Faqīh*'s embodying the divine leadership of the Prophet and the Twelve *Imāms*. Al-Khumaynī integrated all of these key concepts and reshaped them in a manner that suits his political theory, where the whole method appears to reflect the integrative epistemology of *al-Ḥikma al-Muta'āliya*. He further added the keystone of public interest, so that his theory befits the necessities of a modern state.

³⁴⁵ On Weber's three "pure types" of legitimation used to justify the right of rulers to rule, see Reinhard Bendix, *Max Weber: An Intellectual Portrait* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1977), 294-97.

In this thesis, I have shown how al-Khumaynī reinterpreted Islamic political theory based on an integrative method, without referring explicitly to this integrative method in any of his main works. Nonetheless, this integrative epistemology is expressed in his works and in his theory of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh*. Therefore, I conclude that *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* could be seen as an integrative-collective development of different fields of knowledge driven by religious and philosophical consciousness. In Chapter Two, I examined the epistemic system of the infallible, its political role, and how it affects political life in relation to political authority. Accordingly, I have shown how Mullā Ṣadrā is more important for al-Khumaynī than al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā on epistemic grounds. This is because Mullā Ṣadrā adds the religious dimension more strongly than al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā and shows the epistemic importance of the divine revelation that is the original pillar of jurisprudence, which is in turn a major pillar of al-Khumaynī's political theory. In this respect, I discussed how al-Khumaynī's theory could be seen as a political extension of the epistemic philosophical model of Mullā Ṣadrā, despite the fact that no explicit declaration to this effect was made by al-Khumaynī in his works. In Chapter Four, I further argued that al-Khumaynī's political theory represents a practical implementation of integrative epistemology and showed how philosophy and theology empower the political approach of absolute authority.

In this thesis, I have shown how al-Khumaynī had shifted normative debates in Shi'ite circles about the relationship between religion and politics toward a post-traditional thesis that examines the extent to which a scholar may engage politics. In doing so, he was able to shift the debate about the relationship between religion and politics from '*ulamā*'-state relations to governance. His theory and practice revise the relationship between religion as a divine structure and believers as practitioners; he

attempts to revive the role of religion in serving the needs of humanity and present a new orientation for the role of the 'ulamā' in implementing religious injunctions. His approach is post-traditional in the sense that it connects the philosophical dimensions of religion to the abstract and concrete realms, the ontological and the social, the theoretical and practical, and the worldly and the unworldly. Therefore, I have argued that any exclusion of the philosophical aspect of the Islamic Revolution is not only unhelpful in understanding the theory of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* but may also be misleading. It is true that *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* is based, to a great extent on theological and/or jurisprudential foundations. However, I argue that this foundation is an interpretative one, done to legitimize a philosophical understanding of religion and the role of the Prophet, *Imāms*, and the scholars who succeeded them to the scholarly community and the common people. In this concern, the contemporary Khomeinist discourse of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* is an integration of fundamental theological, jurisprudential, and philosophical concepts into a modern rational political theory, while also being a developed version of a political system established in the name of God. This hidden relationship between religious and philosophical discourses urges us to further examine how al-Khomeinī was able to theorize for a more philosophical religion in a jurisprudential sense. Presenting religion as the state was one of the key innovations of the Islamic Republic. It seems paradoxical to understand how al-Khomeinī, the mystic—who is supposed to be politically quietist—presented Islam as being itself the state. It is only al-Khomeinī's integrative intellectual character that could offer an explanation for his approach, where rationality, esotericism, and exotericism are integrated in a single intellectual project.

In Chapter Four, I showed how al-Khumaynī's political philosophy is idealistic as it rejects any conflict between religious and political activity and seeks to construct a virtuous-just community based on metaphysical-religious principles. On the other hand, it is realistic when it comes to the appointment of the religious-political leader, rejecting the condition of a perfect union of man's theoretical and practical capacities as upheld by al-Fārābī, and focusing in contrast on the practical capacity of the man in being *al-walī al-faqīh*, the Supreme Leader. Al-Khumaynī was distinctive in portraying the Islamic politics and governance as attainable in the modern world, and in renewing interest in the philosophical dimensions of contemporary Islamic political thought. Nonetheless, although al-Khumaynī himself might be seen as a philosopher-king, his theory of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* does not seem to necessitate a philosophical form of ruling. It is even still early to qualify the political system in modern Iran as a philosophical-religious one as this, if true, would need a more thorough demonstration. This thesis only shows that al-Khumaynī's theory of ruling emerges out of a philosophico-religious synthesis. The nature of the Iranian political system remains eminently religious and based on a jurisprudential structure, or at least it has solidified as such. In fact, it may have succeeded precisely because it deliberately understated its own philosophical dimension, as I argued in Chapter Four.

The final goal of al-Khumaynī's political philosophy might be considered idealistic in another sense, namely as sort of Islamic-Platonic form of ruling. However, in the thesis, I have shown that this ideal government cannot possibly be conceived throughout the occultation of the *Imām*. Nevertheless, al-Khumaynī considered the practical devotion of Muslims as encompassing the responsibility of establishing the requisites of this eschatological ideal government. I have shown in Chapter Five how

the notion of *al-walī al-faqīh* as the delegate of the awaited *Imām* played a pivotal role in legitimizing the revolutionary thesis that al-Khumaynī argued for and helped it to be later implemented politically in the Iranian Muslim community. This notion was promoted by al-Khumaynī as an example of active anticipation (*intizār ijābī*), in contrast to the passive anticipation (*intizār salbī*) of the awaited *Imām*, which predominated the Shi‘ite tradition. In this sense, the practical establishment of the theory of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* is seen by al-Khumaynī as a basic step toward the awaited ideal government of the infallible *Imām*.

Al-Khumaynī may have viewed himself “an embodiment of the perfect human of his epoch,” as Alexander Knysh puts it out.³⁴⁶ However, such a conjecture has no clear evidence, but is solely based on al-Khumaynī’s preoccupation with philosophical Sufism. Nonetheless, I consider al-Khumaynī to be a philosopher-mystic who possessed the ability to carry out the implementation of the divine law and a jurist who had exalted his religious authority through proving the political authority to the infallible’s representative. He was able to establish a realistic application of “modern” Islamic political philosophy, regardless of the extent to which the experiment has succeeded so far. He also boosted the confidence of Muslims around the world, rebuilt a dynamic Islamic identity, and developed modern day socio-political and cultural independence for Muslims. His rejection of any form of compromise with the monarchy in Iran and his insistence on the establishment of the Islamic government made him a radical opponent and turned him into a revolutionary icon. Whether we accept al-Khumaynī’s understanding of the relationship between religion and politics or reject it, we cannot

³⁴⁶ For such bold conjentures see Knysh, “*Irfan Revisited*,” 652.

In his *Miṣbāḥ al-Hidāya*, al-Khumaynī argues for the embodiment of the perfect human in the person of the infallibles. His reasoning there prominently reflects philosophical-Sufi notions following in the footsteps of Mullā Ṣadrā. Al-Khumaynī, *Miṣbāḥ al-Hidāya*, 163.

deny his contribution to Islamic political philosophy. The significance of al-Khumaynī's political theory cannot be easily underestimated. He was a supreme religious figure and an influential Shi'ite jurist, who presented a political doctrine that is tightly connected to a modern form of inlaid "absolutism." At its minimum ramifications, the absolute rule of *al-walī al-faqīh* represents a pivotal transitional step from the quietist tendency of the 'ulamā' to the activism-revolutionary status of the 'ulamā'. After presenting my observation, I close by arguing for the need for a new understanding of al-Khumaynī's religio-political thought and a modern analytical approach to examine the structure of Islamic political philosophy. This includes the need to redefine the locus of al-Khumaynī's religio-political thought. Can we limit it to one of the philosophical, jurisprudential, or theological fields? Is it fair to reduce al-Khumaynī's thought to one of these traditions? And if we present al-Khumaynī's thought as an integrative mixture of all of these traditions, would it be reasonable to mix between traditions which strictly oppose each other on many topics? I hold that al-Khumaynī's mixture of jurisprudential, ontological, metaphysical, ethical, and political notions was able to transfer these intellectual disciplines from the state of contradiction and dissonance in the Islamic tradition to a state of integration that allows to approach politics and view the society from different angles. Therefore, I consider that al-Khumaynī's thought should be studied as an independent integrative thought, rather than being linked to a specific intellectual school or method, an approach which often fails to explore his unique intellectual output. I argue that the borders of al-Khumaynī's integrative intellectual characteristics must be examined as a modern practical continuity of the Ṣadrian Transcendent Philosophy that can be referred to as *Khumaynism*. This thesis is a step toward that goal.

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