

**MULLĀ ṢADRĀ'S POLITICAL LEGACY:
ṢADRĀ'S THEORY OF JUSTICE AND THE RELIGIO-POLITICAL
AUTHORITY IN POST-REVOLUTIONARY IRAN**

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Abstract

Apart from its philosophical attractions, the religio-political potentials in the transcendent philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā Shirāzī (d. 1050/1641) have helped to its dominance in the seminary and university in contemporary Iran. It seems that one of the reasons for the state's support for *al-Ḥikmah al-muta'āliyah* in Iran after the Islamic revolution is the potentials existing in this philosophy to justify the establishment of a religious government based on the discourse of Shī'ī political authority, conspicuously the doctrine of *walāyat-i faqīh* (the guardianship and governance of the jurist). This article aims to demonstrate how Mullā Ṣadrā's theory of moral and social justice could

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have provided an intellectual ground for the establishment of an Islamic state in the Shī'ī sense.

Key Words: Mullā Ṣadrā, justice, moral justice, social justice, authority of the jurist (*walāyat-i faqīh*)

Introduction

In many of his writings, Ṣadr al-muta'allihīn has dealt with transcendent politics (a political system believed to be taken from Transcendental Philosophy or *al-Ḥikmah al-muta'aliyah* which is the school of philosophy founded by Mullā Ṣadrā), while most of his political discussions can be found in *al-Shawāhid al-rubūbiyyah* and *al-Mabda' wa-l-ma'ād*. One should not expect him to rise up and explicitly talk or engage in political issues at an age when he was actually exiled to a small village near Qom - Kahak - due to the expression of some of his beliefs, including the unity of being. How can a scholar who is not allowed to freely express his *scientific* views think of undertaking the country affairs? He must be smart enough to wait for the right opportunity or pave the way for others to benefit from his thought in the future.¹ Having this in mind, we argue that Ṣadrā's method of approaching sociopolitical issues is similar to his method in discussing his special philosophical issues. He does not offer his special ideas in plain wording, but scatter them in different positions with an implicit language; it is up to his followers in later periods to infer and explicate them. In the introduction of *al-Shawāhid al-rubūbiyyah*, he says,

I have deposited some of these issues in dispersed parts of books and treatises. I could not explicitly express many of them because I afraid of becoming famous and prevented them from being spread in all regions, due to the incapacity of the unpurified natures to understand them... And this [misunderstanding] may cause to go astray and to lead others astray.²

¹ See Javādī Āmulī, "Ḥikmat-i Ṣadrā'ī wa-sīyāsāt-i muta'aliyah dar neshastī ba Ayatollah Javādī Āmulī," *Piḡāb-i Ḥawzah* 247, no. 19 (1387 HS).

² Mullā Ṣadrā Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Yaḥyā al-Shīrāzī, *al-Shawāhid al-rubūbiyyah fī l-manābij al-sulūkīyyah*, ed. Jalāl al-Dīn Āshtiyānī, 5th ed. (Qom: Bustān-i Kitāb, 1388 HS) 132; see also Mullā Ṣadrā, *Īqāz al-nā'imīn*, ed. Muḥsin Mu'ayyid (Tehran: Islamic Institute for Research in Philosophy, n.d.), 4; id., "Risālat

A few studies in almost the last three decades have come to discuss the political legacy of Mullā Ṣadrā in modern Iran, especially his influence on one of his commentators in our contemporary time, Ayatollah Khomeini.³ Rizvi asserts that Imām Khomeini has encouraged the linkage of the study of philosophy and mysticism with the political theory of juristic authority or *walāyat-i faqīh* and 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'ī and some of their prominent students have written major works defending the juristic theory in the language of philosophy and mysticism.⁴

In his only official written letter to a foreign leader, on 1 January 1989, Imām Khomeini invited Mikhail Gorbachev, the General Secretary of the Soviet Union, to let their scholars become familiar with transcendental philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā.⁵ Ayatollah 'Abd Allāh Javādī Āmulī, one of Khomeini's major students and one of the contemporary leading tutors of philosophy and exegesis in Iran and above all, the head of the Iranian delegation to deliver this historical letter, argues that "many of the issues in this letter are related to *al-Ḥikmah al-muta'āliyah* and the Iranian deputy did not only deliver it but also *taught* its content in an hour."⁶

Some recent studies have also tried to bring Mullā Ṣadrā's political legacy to light. Sayeh Meisami's *Knowledge and Power in the Philosophies of Ḥamid al-Dīn Kirmānī and Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī* is a good example. Discussing the connection between the concept of knowledge and power in Ṣadrā, she has tried to argue that Ṣadrā's synthetic discourse, either intentionally or unintentionally, has contributed to the formation of the modern theory of religio-political

shawāhid al-rubūbiyyah," in *Majmū'ī rasā'il-i falsafī-yi Ṣadr al-muta'allibīn*, ed. Ḥamid Nāji Iṣfahānī (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Ḥikmah, 1375 HS), 284.

³ Rizvi has cited some of these studies: Sajjad Rizvi, "Only the Imam Knows Best: The Maktab-i Tafkik's Attack on the Legitimacy of Philosophy in Iran," *The Journal of Royal Asiatic Society* 22, no. 3-4 (2012), 490, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1356186312000417>.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Rūḥullāh Khomeini, "Ṣaḥīfa-yi Imām," in *An Anthology of Imām Khomeini's Speeches, Messages, Interviews, Decrees, Religious Permissions, and Letters*. vol. 21, trans. Maṅṣūr Limba, ed. Ḥusayn Karamyār and Ja'far Rāzī Khān (Tehran: Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imām Khomeini's Works, 2008), 224-225.

⁶ Javādī Āmulī, "Siyāsāt-i muta'āliyah az manẓar-i ḥikmat-i muta'āliyah," *Hikmat-i Isrā' 7*, no. 3 (1390 HS), 16.

authority of the jurist or *walāyat-i faqīh* in Iran.⁷ Ṣadrā's influence can also be discussed from a *more political* perspective and that is from the angle of his theory of justice. We try to scrutinize his works to infer and explain his narrative of justice with regard to his philosophy, theology, and commentary on the holy Qur'ān and Shī'ī traditions. At many points amid the discussion, as well as in a separate final section (The Realization of Justice) in particular, we deal with the relationship between Ṣadrā's theory of justice and the philosophical ground it prepares for the establishment of religious authority. We argue that there are undeniable potentials in Ṣadrā's discourse which anticipate the formation of *walāyat-i faqīh*. Also, there are other aspects of Ṣadrā's philosophy which may be connected with the theory of *walāyat-i faqīh* especially in Ayatollah Khomeini's case; for instance, Nasr and Javādī Āmolī have related Khomeini's engagement in political affairs after living an ascetic and gnostic life to the fourth stage of the human's journey to God (*al-asfār al-arba'ah*) upon which the whole structure of *al-Ḥikmah al-muta'āliyah* of Mullā Ṣadrā is based; the fourth stage includes the "return from God to creation with God" (*al-sayr fī l-khalq bi-l-Ḥaqq*) as a mission to help others take on the journey toward Him.⁸

As for the influence of *al-Ḥikmah al-muta'āliyah* on the Islamic revolution, it has been narrated from Ayatollah Khomeini to have said that "The revolution has been formed by two books: *al-Asfār al-*

⁷ Sayeh Meisami, *Knowledge and Power in the Philosophies of Ḥamīd al-Dīn Kirmānī and Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 161, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-71192-8>.

⁸ See Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Theoretical Gnosis and Doctrinal Sufism and Their Significance Today," *Transcendent Philosophy* 1 (2005), 19; Javādī Āmolī, *Walāyat-i faqīh: Walāyat-i feqābah wa-'adālah*, ed. Muḥammad Mehrabī (Qom: Esra International Foundation for Revealed Sciences, 1389 HS), 262-266. Khomeini believes that it is at the fourth state of the journey that the wayfarer "codifies laws, makes the rulings: the outward, formal and the inward, supraformal, reports and communicates on behalf of God, His attributes, His names and His true teachings in proportion to the preparedness of creatures." Khomeini, *The Lamp of Guidance into Vicegerency and Sanctity*, trans. Salam Judy (Tehran: Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imām Khomeini's Works, 2010), 117. Jalāl al-Dīn Āshtiyānī also asserts that the wayfarer at this stage is qualified for establishing the Ideal City and dealing with all the affairs of the human society; see Āshtiyānī, *Sharḥ Muqaddame-yi Qayṣarī bar Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* (Tehran: Amirkabir Publication, 1370 HS), 667-668.

arba'ab by Ṣadr al-muta'allihīn and *Jawbar al-kalām*, by al-Najafī.”⁹ Apart from Imām Khomeini, many other significant founders of the revolution were also influenced by Ṣadrā's philosophy. After Khomeini, we have to mention Ayatollah Morteza Motahhari, who was somehow a reviver of transcendent philosophy by answering the newly emerging philosophical and ideological issues. Being a prominent master in Islamic philosophy and using its principles, especially *al-Ḥikmah al-muta'āliyah*, he confronted those schools of thought that were against that of the founders of the Islamic Revolution in the pre-revolutionary period, especially the schools of capitalism, socialism and Marxism. Therefore, alongside his numerous writings (among them highly specialized works in *al-Ḥikmah al-muta'āliyah* like *Dars-hā-yi Asfār* and *Sharḥ-i Mabsūṭ-i Manẓūmah* stand out), Motahhari had many religious, philosophical, and revolutionary lectures and especially had a serious presence in planning, promoting, and managing the affairs of Hosseinieh Ershad which was finally closed by the Pahlavi regime in 1972. He, like Ṣadrā, considers justice as one of the important goals of establishing a government. Motahhari is in the same story with Mullā Ṣadrā in defining justice and its being based on the existential world. In his view, the true meaning of social justice is to respect the rights of individuals. According to him, the basis of justice is based on rights, and these rights exist inherently in the world of creation and also in the human world.¹⁰

Ayatollah Mohammad Hossein Beheshti¹¹ was another student of 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'i and Imām Khomeini, who played a very important role in the formation and victory of the Islamic Revolution, and in the post-revolutionary period, he had important responsibilities such as the first head of the judicial system and the most influential person to design the constitution and to defend its philosophical and political principles. Studying philosophy both in seminary and university, Beheshti had been directly influenced by Islamic philosophy, especially Transcendent Wisdom. He was one of the attendees at the sessions where 'Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā'i's famous articles,

⁹ “Gozāresh-i neshastha-yi Wujūh-e Siyāsī-yi Ḥikmat-i Muta'āliyah,” *Pigāb-i Ḥawzah* 217, no. 27 (1386 HS), <https://hawzah.net/fa/Magazine/View/3814/4876/40581>, accessed November 15, 2020.

¹⁰ Motahhari, *Collection of Works (in Persian)* (Tehran: Sadra, 1373 HS), I, 80-81.

¹¹ For a detailed narrative of his life and activities, see *Rāst-qāmatān-i Jāwdāne-yi Tāriḫ-i Islām* (Tehran: Bonyād Shahīd, 1361 HS).

later published under the title of *Uṣūl-i Falsafah wa-Rawesh-i Reālism*, were discussed. In his view, in line with the theories of philosophers such as Mullā Ṣadrā, the government is formed to protect the right and justice. This government is established based on the best of schools, i.e. the school of Islam, and follows the model of “ummah and imāmate” in which among from the general public those who gather on the axis of the school of Islam from among the general public have special precedence and priority. The ummah, according to the Islamic ideology, definitely needs Imāmate (leadership in its broad sense which also includes highly qualified scholars) and makes the leader be at the top level of priority to lead the nation.¹² Naturally, such priorities can be compatible with justice-as the goal of establishing government-only if they are rooted in the creation-one of the important facts in Ṣadrā’s theory of justice.

Regardless of the fact that many leaders and thinkers involved in the victory of the Islamic Revolution were among the philosophers of Transcendent Wisdom, the impact of *ḥikmat-i muta‘ālīyah* after the revolution in terms of supporting the intellectual foundations and philosophical principles of the Islamic Republic is also significant. Suffice it to just name some of the Transcendent philosophers who have been supporting the Islamic Republic of Iran and especially the theory of *walāyat-i faqīh* in the post-revolutionary Iran; scholars and philosophers such as Ayatollah Javādī Āmulī, Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdī, Ayatollah Hassan Zadeh Āmolī, Ḥujjat al-Islām Ahmad Ahmadi, Khosropanah, Rashad, Gholamreza Fayazī, Parsania, Yazdanpanah, Rahimpour Azghadī, and many others. Further studies may help to shed light on these aspects of influence Ṣadrā’s philosophy has had on post-revolutionary Iran.

I. Definition of Justice

Muslim scholars have proposed two general definitions for justice; but if they are analyzed accurately, they would be deemed as one. The first definition is “to put everything in its proper position”¹³ and the

¹² Tālebi Darabī, “Insān wa-Jahān dar Niẓām-i Fikrī-yi Shahīd Beheshtī,” *Pigāb-i Ḥawzab* 217, no. 185 (1385 HS).

¹³ Samīḥ Dughaym, *Mawsū‘at muṣṭalaḥāt al-Imām Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī* (Beirut: Maktabat Lubnān Nāshirūn, 2001), 441.

other, "to preserve the rights of the rightful."¹⁴ Nasr considers these meanings for justice to be somehow self-evident when he speaks of justice as "the *intuitive* sense of putting things aright and in their appropriate place, ... [and] of giving each being its due."¹⁵ Rūmī (d. 1273) – the great Persian poet and mystic whose poetry has been repeatedly cited by Mullā Ṣadrā (d. 1640)¹⁶ – has versified the two definitions as follows,

What is justice? To put (a thing) in its right place

What is injustice? To put (a thing) in the wrong place.¹⁷

What is justice? Giving water to trees.

What is injustice? To give water to thorns.¹⁸

It seems that these are not two independent separable definitions; when something or someone is put aright, that has been given its due and right. Mullā Ṣadrā admits both uses; he considers God as "Just" because He has put every being in its appropriate place¹⁹ and, alluding to the *verse of trust*,²⁰ he attributes injustice to humans since he puts

¹⁴ Ḥusayn Tavassulī, *Mabānī-yi Nazārī-yi 'Adālat-i Ijtimā'ī* (Tehran: Bunyād-i Mustaq'afān-i Inqilāb-i Islāmī, 1375 HS), I, 159-175.

¹⁵ Nasr, "Introduction," in *The Sacred Foundations of Justice in Islam: The Teachings of 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib*, ed. M. Ali Lakhani (Bloomington, Ind.: World Wisdom & North Vancouver, B.C., Canada: Sacred Web Pub., 2006), xi.

¹⁶ For instance, see, Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Ḥikmah al-muta'āliyah fī l-asfār al-'aqliyyah al-arba'ab (al-Asfār)* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth, 1981), II, 334. Id., "Iksīr al-'ārifīn," in *Majmū'at al-rasā'il al-tis'ab* (Tehran: n.p., 1302 A.H.), 313; id., *Risālah-yi Se Aṣl*, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr (Tehran: Tehran University, 1340 HS), I, 71-72; id., "Ajwibat al-masā'il al-Kāshāniyyah," in *Majmū'ī Rasā'il-i Falsafī-yi Ṣadr al-Muta'allibīn*, ed. Ḥāmid Nāji Iṣfahānī (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Ḥikmah, 1375 HS), 149-150; Mullā Ṣadrā, *Īqāz al-nā'imīn*, 11, 62, 65, 71; Mullā Ṣadrā, *Kasr aṣnām al-jābiliyyah*, ed. Jahangiri (Tehran: Sadra Islamic Philosophy Research Institute, 1381 HS), 179; id., *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, ed. Muḥammad Khwājāwī (Qom: Intishārāt-i Bīdār, 1366 HS), V, 245.

¹⁷ Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn-i Rūmī, *Mathnawī-yi Ma'nawī*, ed. Tawfiq Subḥānī (Tehran: Organization of Publishing of Ministry of Culture, 1373 HS), 914.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 684.

¹⁹ Mullā Ṣadrā, *Sbarḥ Uṣūl al-Kāfi*, ed. Muḥammad Khwājāwī (Tehran: Mu'assasa-yi Muṭāla'āt wa-Taḥqīqāt-i Farhangī, 1383 HS), III, 285-286.

²⁰ "Indeed, We presented the *Trust* to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they refused to undertake it and were apprehensive of it; but man undertook

the divine trust out of its appropriate place.²¹ As for the other use of justice, the divine providence and mercy is deemed as just since it has paid every being its due (*al-ḥaqq*) and has bestowed upon every talent what it is worthy of;²² on the opposite, people do not let the true justice be observed in this corporeal world by depriving each other of many of their rights,

This world is not the world of residence and stability, neither the place of goodness, completeness, and perfection, nor the source of justice, light, and happiness. For we see that the rights do not reach to those who deserve, but to those who do not deserve.²³

Basically, in Ṣadrā's view, paying dues and rights is equal to the observance of justice, something which is intrinsic and innate in every human being.²⁴ Therefore, justice is a single truth and has got one single meaning with two aspects. Ṣadrā uses terms *‘adl*, *‘adālah*, *i‘tidāl* to refer to justice, and as we will see, he applies justice to a wide scope encompassing three major realms of *creation*, *human soul*, and *community*.

II. The Rationale behind Being Just

Existence or “*wujūd*” is the central issue of Mullā Ṣadrā's philosophy as far as it is recognized as an “existential philosophy.” The most important principle in his Transcendent Philosophy or *al-Ḥikmah al-muta‘aliyah* is the ontological originality and primacy of existence (*aṣālat al-wujūd*). *Aṣālat al-wujūd* is a doctrine rooted in the Avicenna's (d. 1037) distinction between existence and essence in contingent beings. After Avicenna, a controversy emerged in the Islamic East, as to which of the existence or essence is the reality of the things and which is the mere mental abstraction of the reality. Most philosophers especially *Isbrāqīyyūn*, led by al-Suhrawardī (d. 1191), thought essence to be the reality and existence a mere subjective

it. Indeed, he is most unjust and ignorant.” (Q 33: 72). All the English translations of Qur'ānic verses throughout this paper is from *The Holy Qur'ān*, Qara'i, trans.

²¹ Mullā Ṣadrā, “Aḥwibat al-masā'il al-Kāshāniyyah,” 148.

²² Mullā Ṣadrā, “Risālah fi l-wāridāt al-qalbiyyah,” in *Majmū‘at al-rasā'il al-tis‘ab*, 251.

²³ Mullā Ṣadrā, *Maḥātib al-ghayb*, ed. Muhammad Khwājāwī (Tehran: Mu'assasa-yi Taḥqīqāt-i Farhangī, 1363 HS), 441.

²⁴ Mullā Ṣadrā, *Sharḥ Uṣūl al-Kāfi*, IV, 140.

abstraction.²⁵ On the other side, *Muta'allibīn*, led by Mullā Ṣadrā, advocated the originality of the existence, a doctrine that renders the existence the sole reality and the essence a mental abstraction.²⁶ For Ṣadrā, existence is everything and knowledge of existence is the requisite for all knowledge,

Ignorance about the question of being, necessarily makes man ignorant of all the principles of knowledge and foundations because it is through being that everything is known, and ... when someone ignores it, he has ignored everything.²⁷

Therefore, we cannot speak of anything without considering existence. In the world of being, Mullā Ṣadrā introduces justice as an existential thing, even identical with the being. He believes that justice dominates the world of creation, and every object is in its own position and the right of every being is fully granted.²⁸ Coming into existence means getting your right, "it is by existence that any deserving being reaches to its right."²⁹

Therefore, justice is identical with existence and existents. Mullā Ṣadrā explicitly explains this point in *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb*. As for the Divine creational order of 'Be' he says that this order is not by force and constraint but, in fact, it is the Divine permission to include the objects into Divine 'justice' which is identical with the 'existence,' because things seek permission from God to come into being, and God, the All-Merciful, allows them by the creational word of 'Be,'

And His statement *Be* is not by force and constraint, because Allah is indeed free from need of the creatures, nor does He have a need for their existence. Rather, this order is indeed a permission (for them to come into existence), since it is preceded by asking for existence. It is therefore as though the creature has said to his Lord, "Let me enter your

²⁵ For a useful English report of the critics of al-Suhrawardī against the doctrine of the primacy of existence and Ṣadrā's defends, see: Fazlur Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1975), 31-33.

²⁶ Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Asfār*, I, 38-44.

²⁷ Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Shawāhid al-rubūbiyyah*, 141.

²⁸ Mullā Ṣadrā, "Risālah fī l-wāridāt al-qalbiyyah," 251.

²⁹ Mullā Ṣadrā, *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb*, 321.

[realm of] justice which is identical with your [realm of] existence,” and Allah replied, “Be,” or “Enter My realm, I have allowed you.”³⁰

Mullā Ṣadrā along with other Muslim philosophers, admits “the best ordering” in the creation and it seems that his ontology can better support this notion. According to gradation or modulation of existence (*tasbkik al-wujūd*) – another main existential principle in *al-Ḥikmah al-muta‘āliyah* – though one single reality, existence comes in grades, similar to the reality of light in which sunlight and candlelight, for example, are of the same reality yet in different grades. Mullā Ṣadrā says, “The instances of existence are [the same in their reality but] different in terms of intensity and weakness, priority and posteriority, as well as nobility and baseness.”³¹

Therefore, though of the same type, the existents do not enjoy the same grade, but there exists a hierarchy of existence which includes the whole universe. In this hierarchy, the completer and more intense the existent, the higher its position. So that the highest being is the most complete (God) and the last and lowest one enjoys the least portion of perfection and is the nearest to the realm of nothingness (primary matter),

We have already proven that the existence of each thing has a special level of manifestation and a specific degree of actuality and realization, and the ultimate in glory and majesty is self-existent, all-sufficient, necessary, and independent from others, then He qua He, is mere actuality and is sacred from all impurities of potentiality, contingency, imperfection, and deficiencies. Everything other than Him is accompanied by essential contingency and deficiencies in proportion to their diverse degrees and different levels. Therefore, the farther it is from the source of existence and necessity, the more is its contingency and deficiencies until the existence reaches such a level of descent and baseness that its substantial existence becomes its very subsistence in the form that it assumes and its actuality becomes exactly the same as its potentiality [i.e. it has no actuality].³²

Is it not possible for things to be in a position other than what they are now? Mullā Ṣadrā’s answer is obviously negative. Based on the

³⁰ Mullā Ṣadrā, *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb*, 205.

³¹ Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Asfār*, IX, 186; see also F. Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā*, 35.

³² Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Asfār*, I, 339; see also, *ibid.*, V, 2; id., *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb*, 234-235.

gradation of existence, all the beings have the same existential reality and the only difference can be the quantity and the quality of existential perfection they possess, that is, the only difference between existents can be justified and explained merely through possession of different grades and positions as well as different existential characteristics. Thus, the specific position of any existent determines its individuation and cannot be removed or changed. In other words, 1. everything is in its own position in creation (and cannot be other than that), 2. Everything receives its own creational rights or its existential characteristics like knowledge, power, etc. Is it not exactly what justice requires?

Before explaining justice in the human world – including individual justice and social justice – it is necessary to focus on the fact that, in Mullā Ṣadrā's view, this kind of justice is a reflection of existential justice. Although justice is a *normative* concept, it is not a mere mental construct; rather, it is derived from reality and the existent world. Ṣadrā explains the necessity for justice in the human world – both in the human soul (individual justice) and in human society (social justice) – based on the existence of justice in the world of creation. He depicts many aspects of the compatibility of individual and social justice with existential justice. In fact, if we ask Ṣadrā “why should one be just?” he will answer, “because the world of creation is just.” Otherwise, the incompatibility between the inner world (microcosm) and the outer world (macrocosm) will make the person as if he is swimming against the flow of water and, as a result, does not achieve what he wants, or as Mullā Ṣadrā says there would be enmity between the one who is far from justice and the just system of existence, and this enmity will lead to his defeat and his failing to achieve what he aspires,

He who follows the caprice and sensuous appetite, which are contrary to wisdom and justice – while the heavens and earth subsist by wisdom and justice – then the world of existence as it is, is corrupted for him, and woe to him for whom the world [of existence] becomes corrupt and his nature opposes the wisdom of being and the system of existence. The giver of subsistence to the world and the Overhearer of the heavens will take revenge from him because he is the enemy of God and the enemy of the world. So, his state will be as God clarifies by His saying, “Had the truth followed their desires, the heavens and the earth would have surely fallen apart [along] with those who are in them.” (Q 23: 71) So, incontrovertibly, he is prevented from what he covets (and) is veiled from what his caprice calls for, as He the Exalted

said, “And a barrier is set between them and what they desire.” (Q 34: 54)³³

This is not limited to the individual realm, but also includes the social arena, because Ṣadrā, according to the verse “Indeed Allah does not change a people’s lot unless they change what is in their souls,” (Q 13: 11) argues that if the divine potentials and blessings (in a society), are not used for the purposes they are created for (i.e. not used according to justice), the blessings will be taken away.³⁴ On the other hand, the ultimate happiness of the habitants on earth is to obey God and His laws to be able to realize in their society the justice that is established throughout creation and the justice that the heavens subsist by.³⁵

Why should we obey God and His laws? According to Ṣadrā, the answer to this question is another justification for the rationale behind justice. The answer is that since one of the prominent attributes of God is justice (which is manifested in the creation and was already discussed as the “existential or creational justice”), man must be just too. This is rooted in the principle of “becoming similar to God and taking on lordly traits” that is widely accepted by Muslim philosophers.³⁶

Also, in Ṣadrā’s view, all levels of justice in all worlds of creation are derived from the justice that exists in the Divine Presence. Here, we are confronted with a hierarchy of justice any lower level of which is the manifestation of one upper level: the just system in a desirable society is the product of following the justice that is established by the prophets and has been delivered by them to the just rulers through their just religious laws; then, the justice of the prophets and saints is the result of the justice that is with the angels; and their justice is derived from the justice existing in Divine world which is, “The spring of all (just) arrangement, the beginning of all goodness and beauty, and the source of all perfection and moderation.”³⁷ According to the

³³ Mullā Ṣadrā, *Spiritual Psychology: The Fourth Intellectual Journey in Transcendent Philosophy (Volumes VIII and IX of the Asfār)*, trans. Latimah-Parvin Peerwani (London: ICAS Press, 2008), 663. (with little alteration)

³⁴ Mullā Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-karīm*, III, 391.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, II, 248.

³⁶ See Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Asfār*, I, 21-22.

³⁷ Mullā Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-karīm*, I, 140-141.

verse (Q 25: 57), Ṣadrā considers the purpose of sending the prophets and codes of laws to be the establishment of justice in human society, which causes the members to take on the conduct of the archangels and to accompany the prophets and saints in the Holy Residence.³⁸

III. The Criterion for Justice

As we already discussed, according to Ṣadrā, the necessity of being just in the human realm is derived from the existence of justice in the creation and from the fact that true happiness comes true only with knowledge of and compatibility with the world of existence and its laws. As a corollary, to find the criterion of justice, we shall also refer to existential justice. According to the aforementioned definition of justice, justice requires to pay attention and use every faculty of the human soul and also to use every individual or group of the society in their proper place and in proportion to their abilities and potentials; and as it will come later, both in the world of creation (macrocosm) and the world of soul (microcosm), reason and rational beings have the highest degree, and therefore, the individual justice and social justice respectively necessitate the superiority of the reason and the wise over other faculties and members. We will now fully explain this matter in each type of justice.

A. Individual Justice

This kind of justice is a representation of the creational justice in the human soul. In comparison to social justice, we may call it individual justice' and since it is mainly discussed in ethical parts of Islamic philosophy, we may call it ethical (or moral) justice. Ethical justice means a balanced manipulation of faculties which is achieved only through the superiority and control of the reason over all other faculties,

The practical (virtues for the human soul) are the justice and the dominion (of reason) over the faculties of desire (or appetite), anger (or aversion), and theoretical faculties, especially estimate.³⁹

³⁸ Mullā Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-karīm*, I, 278.

³⁹ Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Mabdaʾ wa-l-maʿād*, ed. Jalāl al-Dīn Āshtiyānī (Tehran: Islamic Institute for Research in Philosophy, 1354 HS), 436. See also: *Ibid.*, 361-362; *al-Asfār*, IX, 90, 126-128; *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-karīm*, VII, 64-65; I, 428; *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb*, 687.

On the other hand, corruption and injustice occur when the soul faculties are not manipulated in the purpose they are created for, and the faculties of desire, aversion, and estimate take the control of the soul and dominate the reason.⁴⁰

According to Şadrā, the soul has both practical faculties (*al-quwā l-‘amaliyyab*) and theoretical faculties (*al-quwā l-nazariyyab*).⁴¹ Faculties of sensation (*ḥiss*), imagination (*khayāl*), estimation (*wahm*), and intellect (*‘aql*) or reason are among theoretical faculties⁴² and faculties of desire (*al-quwwab al-shahawiyyab*) and aversion (*al-quwwab al-ghadabiyyab*) are the two motivating (*bā‘ithab*) faculties which – under the effect of information they receive from faculties of imagination, estimation, and intellect –intrigue the acting (*fā‘ilab*) faculty to move the limbs and organs of the body. Desire seeks benefits and interests and aversion relates to disposing of losses, dominating enemies, and getting rid of dangerous events and things.⁴³

The fact is that almost all these faculties – except reason – are common between man and other animals. As a higher state of existence, ‘humanity’ contains every power and faculty that belongs to plants and animals. Vegetation is the most important *differentia* the plants have. Animals possess the vegetative faculty with a host of other qualities missing in plants such as mobility and sensation. Finally, man contains all of these qualities and faculties in addition to intellect (reason) in which plants and animals lack.⁴⁴ Until here, little is exclusive to *al-Ḥikmah al-muta‘aliyyab* of Mullā Şadrā, rather, the

⁴⁰ Mullā Şadrā, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-karīm*, II, 249.

⁴¹ Mullā Şadrā, *al-Mabda’ wa-l-ma‘ād*, 258.

⁴² Faculty of reason perceives universals and faculties of sensation and imagination perceive particular cognitive forms (*al-ṣuwar al-juz’iyyab*). As long as the sensual relation with the external object is still there, the perceived form is sensual, and once there is not such relation, the same form would be imaginative. Estimate faculty perceives particular meanings (*al-ma‘āni l-juz’iyyab*). See Mullā Şadrā, *al-Shawābid al-rubūbiyyab*, 299; id., *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb*, 524, Ṭabāṭabā‘ī, *Bidāyat al-ḥikmah* (Qom: Mu’assasa-yi Intishārāt-i Dār al-‘Ilm, 1382 HS), 276.

⁴³ Mullā Şadrā, *Sharḥ al-Hidāyah al-atbiriyyab*, ed. Muḥammad Muşṭafā Fülādkār (Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Tārīkh al-‘Arabī, 1422 H), 239-240; id., *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb*, 500-501.

⁴⁴ Ibrahim Kalin, *Knowledge in Later Islamic Philosophy: Mullā Şadrā on Existence, Intellect, and Intuition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 112, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199735242.001.0001>.

discussion goes on the principles of philosophical anthropology accepted by most of the Muslim philosophers who owed these principles mostly to Aristotle. What is novel lies in *how* the human soul possesses all these faculties. Again here, Ṣadrā flashes back to the principle of *gradation of existence*, that is the principle of identity in difference and difference in identity. As “being” is a simple reality that contains the multiplicity of its own modification, and that is one and all other things that exist are its different grades, degrees, and modalities, and that these multiple grades and modalities do not exist in themselves as separate realities,⁴⁵ the human soul is also one simple reality that enjoys its own different grades and modalities called faculties which are not separate entities and existents in themselves. There exists a kind of unification between the soul and its faculties, quoting Ṣadrā, “The soul *is* all of the faculties.”⁴⁶ This is not to be understood to mean that the soul is the collection or aggregate of the faculties since an aggregate for Ṣadrā has no existence apart from the particulars which make it up; rather, faculties are the “modes (*shu’ūn*)” or “manifestations (*mazābir*)” of the soul⁴⁷ and its “essential stations.”⁴⁸ This is due to the graded unity of the soul that includes many grades and levels,

We have already informed you that the truth of man is a collective reality (*ḥaqīqah jam‘iyyah*) and it has an inclusive unity (*waḥdah ta’alluḥfiyyah*) like the unity of the world with varying ranks in disembodiment and embodiment, and clarity and opacity. That is why it is called the small world (microcosm) since its wholeness is ordered in line with the levels of the existents of the world (macrocosm), which are, despite their being numerous, categorized in three main classes of intelligibles (‘*aqliyyāt*), imaginables (*mithāliyyāt*) and sensibles (*maḥsūsāt*) ...; by the same token, the human soul also includes something like the intellect (‘*aql*), something like psyche (*nafs*) and something like nature (*ṭab’*) any of which has their own concomitants. The perfection of human soul is to depart from the level of nature to the stage of intellect in order to become one of the dwellers of the realm of Divine Sovereignty. This occurs when its inner reality is enlightened through knowledge and is detached from the

⁴⁵ See Muḥammad Kamal, *Mullā Sadra's Transcendent Philosophy* (New York: Ashgate, 2006), 73.

⁴⁶ See, Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Asfār*, VIII, 51, 221, 226.

⁴⁷ F. Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā*, 172.

⁴⁸ Mullā Ṣadrā, “Risālah fī l-ḥashr,” 344.

(material) world through practice.⁴⁹

He explicitly puts the reason in a higher rank in comparison to other faculties⁵⁰ and claims its perfection to be more important,

As the existents are different, happiness attained through comprehending each of them will also be different. Also, just as the existence of rational faculties is nobler and higher (*asbraf*) than the animal faculties of desire and anger and the faculties of the souls of beasts and other animals, in the same token, the happiness and enjoyment gained through its perfection are nobler and more complete.⁵¹

That is why he believes that the reason must train these animal faculties and prevent them from (being excessively affected by) imaginations and estimations and make them act in a way that the practical reason requires.⁵²

In other words, we are faced with two existential hierarchies – the macrocosmic and microcosmic – in which the rational and intelligible stage is the highest level to gain; it is the real truth of humanity and is his ultimate goal in perfection. For Şadrā, parallel to this existential and creational hierarchy, there exists an ethical hierarchy in which the rational aspect of the human must be the highest faculty that controls and manages all other faculties.

In fact, the creational hierarchy in the macrocosm and microcosm is the ontological ground justifying the ethical hierarchy proposed by Muslim philosophers. Referring back to the beginning of this paper, justice is to put everything – including faculties of the soul – in their proper place. According to Şadrā, every faculty has an innate position (*al-mawḍiʿ al-fiṭrī*) and ethical justice, therefore, requires to use every faculty in what it is created for and let them be in their innate positions

⁴⁹ Mullā Şadrā, *al-Shawābid al-rubūbiyyah*, 428.

⁵⁰ In establishing the ontological status of intelligible forms (and as a result, the faculty of intellect) as “more” and “higher,” Şadrā has also adopted an old Peripatetic principle and identifies the basis of intelligibility as incorporeality and disembodiment (*tajarrud*) and affirmed it by his existential principles, especially, the gradation of existence; for an elaborate discussion, see Kalin, *Knowledge in Later Islamic Philosophy*, 107-118.

⁵¹ Mullā Şadrā, *al-Mabdaʾ wa-l-maʿād*, 363.

⁵² Mullā Şadrā, *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb*, 687.

(*mawāḍi‘uhā l-fiṭriyyah*)⁵³. This entails that one must put the highest faculty -the reason- in its deserving position, higher than other faculties so that it can have control over them. Referring to the parallelism of the macrocosm and microcosm, Sadrā clarifies the issue,

The clarification and revealing of this matter to you requires you to know that God has created you similar to Himself. He has made your body and faculties residing therein – which you manage – a small world [microcosm] comparable to the big world [macrocosm], and there is nothing in the (big) world except there is a sample of it in your small world and your kingdom. But the dominant and influential principles in you are: angelic, savage-like, bestial and satanic characteristics. By means of angelic [characteristics] you practice angelic acts like knowledge, purity, obedience, and closeness to the Almighty, by the aversion faculty, you practice the acts of predators like enmity, hatred, attacking people by beating and revilement, and the love of power and authority, by faculty of desire, you practice the acts of beasts such as gluttony, lewdness and greed, and in terms of satanic power, you practice the actions of demons and work out different aspects of evil by ruse, stratagem, and cheating, and get to the intentions of passion and carnal soul. O’ man, thus, it is as though an assembly of an angel, a devil, a dog, and a pig are gathered in you and inside your integument: [the angel is the intellect,] the dog is the anger, the pig is the desire and the estimate is an example of Satan. If you, then, undergo struggling these three ... by means of the light of rational insight and... make all subjugated to the management of the intellect, at that point, the condition will be just and the justice will be manifested in the government of body and all [the four different aspects and faculties] will move on the straight path.⁵⁴

If so, the motivating faculties will be kept far from their extremes and this leads to balanced actions done by the person – another manifestation of justice. If not under the control of reason, the motivating faculty would go to the extremes of either desire or aversion which is obviously in contrast with justice. This is rooted in Aristotle’s definition of virtue as a condition intermediate (a “golden mean” as it

⁵³ Mullā Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-karīm*, VII, 64-65.

⁵⁴ Mullā Ṣadrā, *Sharḥ Uṣūl al-Kāfi*, IV, 388.

is popularly known) between two other states, one involving excess, and the other deficiency.⁵⁵

B. Social Justice

As we saw in the preceding section, individual justice is a reflection of the creational justice in the realm of the individual soul. The same is true about social justice, except for the arena which is the human society. Mullā Ṣadrā argues that human being is required to establish the Ideal City or Utopia's order following the order that exists in the world of creation and its natural systems, including his or her own physical creation. He likens the Utopia to a healthy and perfect body whose members are ranked according to their innate abilities and serve each other, except for the highest and most honorable organ, which is at the top and is considered as the head and *ruler* of the body. All other natural systems are the same, and anyone who is more honorable and more perfect is in a higher position. Such order, which must also be observed in the Ideal City, is an image of the order in the universal system of creation that represents it in the minor systems,

For the First Cause's relation to all other existents is the same as the relation of the head of the Utopia to all other members of it (and there also exists a hierarchy). Because the intellects disengaged from the material deficiencies rank below the First, then the *animae celestes* (heavenly souls) and the skies are ranked after them, and below them are the material natures and their physical bodies ... Likewise, the Utopia should be as such ... And the head of the Utopia ... (should have) completed his soul and has become an actualized intellect.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ See Richard Kraut, "Aristotle's Ethics," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-ethics/>, accessed October 2, 2020.

⁵⁶ Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Mabda' wa-l-ma'ād*, 490-492. As for the term "actualized intellect," Muslim philosophers consider different levels of perfection for the soul in terms of his noetic potentiality; the last or near the last stage is what they call "intellect *in actu* (*al-'aql bi-l-fi'*)" that the soul, whenever needed, presents the intelligible concepts without the need to contemplate; for instance, see Mullā Ṣadrā, *Maḥāṭib al-ghayb*, 20, 136. It is also important to know that Ṣadrā is highly influenced by al-Fārābī on the concept of Ideal City; cf. Richard Walzer, *Al-Farabi on the Perfect State: Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī's Mabādi' āra'abl al-madīna al-fāḍila* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 233-243. In his *Virtuous City*, al-Fārābī was himself influenced by Plato's Republic. Having "fully acknowledged the political aspects

As in the arena of creation, the order of beings from the noble and perfect to the weak means the realization of justice, likewise, in the ethical domain, the superiority of the noble faculty (intellect) entails the realization of ethical justice. Correspondingly, in the social realm, the most important element of the realization of social justice is the rule of the wise and scholars. According to Mullā Ṣadrā and other Muslim scholars who divide the internal main faculties of humankind into desire, aversion, and reason, people can also be divided into three groups: people of desire, people of aversion, and people of reason.

As within the realm of the individual, justice is actualized when the reason is given rule over other faculties, also in the social scope, the people of the reason (the wise) must be at the head of the society, "When justice is maintained the desires are subject to reason and if injustice rules, the reasons will follow the lusts."⁵⁷ Ṣadrā's view of individual justice and the division of people on this basis can clarify that only those who are most in line with the world of creation, both in the realm of theory and action, deserve to rule and lead the society.

The necessity for rulers of a just society to be qualified in terms of moral justice may be justified by this philosophical principle that, "It is

of Plato's thought" (Walzer, "al-Fārābī," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, 779-780) al-Fārābī had followed his lead in characterizing the chief ruler but had invested him with prophetic qualities in addition to Plato's philosophic traits. (Majid Fakhry, *Al-Fārābī, Founder of Islamic Neoplatonism: His Life, Works, and Influence* [Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2002], 104). Apart from any other developments Ṣadrā might have made to al-Fārābī's ideal city (his novel theory of the soul as a good example), what we will focus here is that Ṣadrā adopted al-Fārābī's Islamizing approach toward Plato's legacy and made it *more* Islamic and even Shī'ī by investing the ruler with more *religious* characteristics and by extending the prophetic authority and traits to Imams and also to religious scholars. To find more about the influence of Plato's political theory on al-Fārābī see, Ishraq Ali and Mingli Qin, "On the Relation of City and Soul in Plato and Alfarabi," *Journal of Arts and Humanities* 8, no. 2 (2019), 27-34, and for an instance of linking between Plato's political legacy and contemporary Iran, see Vanessa Martin, "A Comparison Between Khumainī'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, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jis/7.1.16>.

⁵⁷ Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Shawābid al-rubūbiyyah*, 367.

impossible for the one who lacks a perfection to provide it.”⁵⁸ If a person does not enjoy justice in his inner self, how would he be able to establish justice among others in the society? Never! Because every effect is commensurate with its cause, and every work is similar to its performer. A cause and performer that is unbalanced and unjust, cannot produce a moderate, harmonious, and just effect and action.⁵⁹ How can a person who is unable to resolve the conflict between his intellect and his desire resolve the lawsuits of individuals and set up justice among them?⁶⁰ It is narrated from the first Imām of Shī‘ah, ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, saying, “How can one establish justice among others while being an oppressor himself?”⁶¹ In Mullā Ṣadrā’s description, the conduct of the prophets and the Friends of God (*awliyā’ Allāb*) is that they start from perfecting themselves and after being perfected and guided, they deal with perfecting and guiding others.⁶² Ṣadrā refutes any defect and fault from the prophets because of their privilege of infallibility and considers them as the owners of wisdom and the conclusive speech (*faṣl al-kbiṭāb*)⁶³ which is a sign of government.

In fact, Mullā Ṣadrā’s theory of moral and social justice is influenced by the Shī‘ī doctrine of the Imāmate. Morris considers Ṣadrā’s understanding of the imāmate as a crucial point of intersection between his metaphysics and his political and religious philosophy.⁶⁴

In his view, the role of the imām in the society is equal to the role of the intellective faculty in the human soul in being a just ruler who establishes justice,

⁵⁸ Mullā Ṣadrā, *Sbarḥ Uṣūl al-Kāfi*, IV, 11; for different expressions of this principle, see his *al-Shawāhid al-rubūbiyyah*, 168; id. *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb*, 325; *al-Asfār*, II, 307; *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-karīm*, IV, 355.

⁵⁹ For an elaborate discussion, see Javādī Āmulī, *Ḥaqq wa-taklif dar Islām*, 211-212.

⁶⁰ Javādī Āmulī, *Adab-i Qaḍā’ dar Islām* (Qom: Esra International Foundation for Revealed Sciences, 1390 HS), 155.

⁶¹ ‘Abd al-Wāḥid ibn Muḥammad al-Āmidī, *Gburar al-ḥikam wa-durar al-kalim: Majmū‘ab min kalimāt wa-ḥikam al-Imām ‘Alī*, ed. Sayyid Mahdī Rajā’ī (Qom: Dār al-Kitāb al-Islāmī, 1410 H), 517.

⁶² Mullā Ṣadrā, *Sbarḥ Uṣūl al-Kāfi*, I, 197-198.

⁶³ Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Ḥāshiyah ‘alā Ilābiyyāt al-Sbifā’* (Qom: Intishārāt-i Bidār, n.d.), 40.

⁶⁴ James Winston Morris, *The Wisdom of the Throne: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Mulla Sadra* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 91.

As God has created a standing leader and a just ruler for perceptive faculties to refer to, which can distinguish between the true and false in the particular perceptions, so *a fortiori* He has established in the macrocosm an imām who maintains fairness and rules with justice among human beings as the viceregent of God (*khilāfat^{an} min Allāh*) whom people refer to for their doubts, ignorance, incidences, and general beliefs.⁶⁵

As a Shīʿī scholar, Ṣadrā claims that the twelve Shīʿah Imāms and the prophets are the perfect human beings whose creation enjoys a creational justice and balance which is directly done by God Himself,

Be aware that the man guided by the light of God is the most honorable of all creatures... since God had chosen him to be close to Him and has ascribed him to Himself ... God has created him Himself by blowing into it from His (own) soul and kneading the clay for his body with both of His (own) hands ... And he enjoys [...] blessings such as modification (*taʿdīl*), proportion (*taswīyah*), completeness of creation, good form and balance (*ḥusn al-ṣūrah wa-l-iʿtidāl*), and good character and justice ... These characteristics and dignities such as being specifically the successor of Almighty God in the microcosm and macrocosm are only for the real ideal man (*al-insān al-maʿnawī al-ḥaqīqī*), not for these similitudes (*al-asbbāh*) and likenesses (*al-amthāl*) of the seeming figures [i.e. the ordinary people who only share the same apparent form of humanity] ... The Lord holds every living being by its forelock and its sustenance lies with Him, and He knows its [enduring] abode and its temporary place of lodging ... so it walks, by nature, in a right manner without misguidance; but as for the human being, due to the existence of the free will that resists against his nature and due to the obtrusion made by the estimate faculty ..., misleading is possible ... and then, he needs someone to guide him ... So, truly the guide is God through the Book and the Messenger – may God bless him and his family – and Imāms who stand in his place.⁶⁶

The infallibles have reached the peak of individual justice which makes them be considered as role models for others in ethical justice; according to Ṣadrā, the *ṣirāṭ* (path) on the Day of Resurrection, which is drawn upon the Hell and is the bridge for people to reach Heaven and salvation, has two faces: theoretical perfection of the human soul

⁶⁵ Mullā Ṣadrā, *Sharḥ Uṣūl al-Kāfi*, II, 404.

⁶⁶ Mullā Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-karīm*, I, 106-111.

that entails the perfection of the reason in terms of knowing God and godly intellectual truths, and the practical perfection which entails the attainment of ethical justice. *Şirāṭ* is thinner than hair in terms of the former aspect, and is sharper than sword concerning the latter,

The perfection of man in his travel toward God is dependent on the completion of his powers; as for the scientific [aspect], it depends on reaching the certainty in the accurate theories that are more delicate than hair among the divine signs, and as for the practical [aspect], it depends upon the moderate acting of the faculties of desire, aversion and estimate to achieve the *habitus* of justice, which is sharper than a sword. Therefore, the straight pass (*al-şirāṭ al-mustaqīm*) has two faces: one is more delicate than hair and the other sharper than a sword.⁶⁷

On the other hand, according to Shīʿī hadīths, Sadrā believes that the truth of the straight path (*al-şirāṭ al-mustaqīm*) is the truth of the Imām,

And it is mentioned in the hadith narrated by Mufaḍḍal ibn ʿUmar from Abū ʿAbd Allāh (P.B.BH.), as saying, “The path (*al-şirāṭ*) is the way to know God, the Almighty, and there are two paths, one is in this world and the other in the next world; as for the path that is in this world, it is the Imām whose obedience is obligatory. Those who know him in this world and follow his guidance will pass the path that is the bridge over the Hell in the Hereafter.” ... And also, al-Ḥalabī narrated from Abū ʿAbd Allāh (P.B.BH.) who said, “The straight path is the Commander of the Faithful [i.e. ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib].”⁶⁸ ... and it is [narrated] from them (P.B.U.T.) as saying, “We are the straight path.”⁶⁹ And these hadīths narrated from our masters are compatible in [apparent] meaning and inner [meaning] whose clarification needs an extended explanation, ... but in short, we can say: the human soul, from the beginning point of its creation to the end of its earthly life, goes through mental transformations (*intiḳālāt naḫṣāniyyah*) and substantive changes (*ḥarakāt jawbariyyah*) in its essential modes of being (*nashʿah dbātiyyah*). Hence, every soul is a path (*şirāṭ*) to the Hereafter in one

⁶⁷ Mullā Şadrā, *al-Shawāhid al-rubūbiyyah*, 366; *Mafātiḥ al-ghayb*, 644-645, 691; *al-Asfār*, IX, 285; see also, *Sharḥ Uşūl al-Kāfi*, I, 423; II, 294, 578; *Tafsīr al-Qurʿān al-karīm*, VI, 284, 286.

⁶⁸ Mullā Şadrā, *Sharḥ Uşūl al-Kāfi*, IV, 274.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 152.

sense, ... some are straight, some are oblique, and some are reversed; and among the straight paths some are reaching, some are stopped or suspended; and among the reaching paths some are fast and some are slow; and the most complete among the straight paths is the soul of the Commander of the Faithful, and next are the souls of his infallible sons; this is based on the (degree of perfection of) practical and theoretical faculties that the above hadith referred to as the two paths in the present and the next world. The first [i.e. perfection of the practical faculties] is to obtain justice and a habitual state of moderation, between excess and deficiency, in the practical reason's employment of the faculties of desire, aversion, and estimate ... This does not happen except through submission to the divine law and obedience of the Imām whose obedience is obligatory. This is what it means that "the path in this world is the Imām." The second [i.e. perfection of the theoretical faculties] is for the soul to cross over the [different] levels of existents and the sensible, psychic, and intelligible stages by means of its theoretical faculty and its practical reason, and to depart from the coverts of veils and coverings into the galaxies of the divine lights.⁷⁰

The Imāms are not only the practical aspect of *ṣirāṭ* but also its scientific face, because, in truth, the path of God in terms of knowledge is faith in Him and in the Last Day, and this cannot be achieved except by them and by means of their knowledge. Therefore, they are also the path of God in that sense.⁷¹

The philosophical explanation of this fact that the Imām is the truth of *ṣirāṭ* and the embodiment of justice in such a way that justice has become his very existence can be explained well through Ṣadrā's existential principles: human in Aristotle and his Muslim followers before Ṣadrā is the lowest species (i.e. it cannot be differentiated into

⁷⁰ Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Arshīyyah*, ed. Ghulāmḥusayn Āhanī (Tehran: Mawlā, 1361 HS), 263-265. Khomeini also identifies the true justice with *ṣirāṭ mustaqīm* which is primarily the path of the perfect human –Muhammadan path– and secondarily the path of other prophets and saints; Khomeini, *Sharḥ ḥadīth junūd ‘aql wa-jabl* (Tehran: The Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imām Khomeini's Works, 1395 HS), 152-153; see also, Khomeini, *Tafsīr Sūra-yi Ḥamd* (Tehran: The Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imām Khomeini's Works, 1386 HS), 75-78. He also argues socio-political aspects of *ṣirāṭ mustaqīm* and considers it exclusive to the prophets and saints and after them, the *‘ulamā’*; Khomeini, *Ṣaḥīfa-yi Imām*, XIII, 368-370.

⁷¹ Mullā Ṣadrā, *Sharḥ Uṣūl al-Kāfi*, II, 546.

further species), but according to the transcendent philosophy, the human is an intermediate species (i.e. it can be differentiated into further species⁷²) under which many real species can come into existence like the four general types discussed previously: angelic human, satanic human, dog-like human and pig-like human. That is because the human soul, at first, in relation to various existential actualities, is like substratum (*māddab*) which enjoys only the capacity and potential to acquire them, but in its substantial motion and essential transformation, acquires any forms of such existential actualities. If they gradually penetrate the soul, they become habits (*malakab*) and if this process continues, these perfections and actualities become its constituent *differentia* in such a way that the soul, through those perfections, takes on a new *forma individualis* (specific form) and becomes truly equal to them. In other words, along with the intensifying substantial change⁷³ of human existence, the psychic faculties, modes, characteristics, and actions that exist within him, such as knowledge and justice, undergo change and intensification. Because in the transcendent theosophy, the soul is united with its faculties and their actions and modes like justice. Therefore, just as the soul itself is constantly intensifying in one aspect or another, so are its repeatedly experienced inner states and actions. For example, a just man at first finds justice within himself as a transitory state (*ḥāb*), that is, sometimes he enjoys justice, and sometimes he is out of the just path. If he is steadfast on the path of justice, with experience and practice, he will acquire the “habit” (*malakab*) of justice, and finally, his existence will be equated with justice and, technically speaking, justice will be his constituent *differentia*. Such a just man can be called “justice” without any exaggeration.⁷⁴

⁷² See Paul Studtmann, “Aristotle’s Categories,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2018 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2018/entries/aristotle-categories/>, accessed May 15, 2020; Farīd Jabr et al., *Mawsūʿat muṣṭalaḥāt ʿilm al-mantiq ʿinda l-ʿArab* (Beirut: Maktabat Lubnān Nāshirūn, 1996), 1080.

⁷³ For an overview of the substantial movement in Mullā Ṣadrā, see F. Rahman, *The Philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā*, 82-94.

⁷⁴ For an elaborate discussion, see Javādī Āmulī, *Ṣūrat wa-Ṣirat-i-Insān dar Qurʾān*, ed. Ghulām ʿAlī Amīn al-Dīn (Qom: Esra International Foundation for Revealed Sciences, 1381 HS), 159-163, and his, *Qurʾān-i Ḥakīm az Manẓar-i Imām Riḍā*

As we already saw, Sadrā called the prophets and the imāms, especially Imām ‘Alī, “*al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaḳīm*” and as we will see, he would call them “*mīzān* (just scales).” He argues that,

Any word or action leaves a temporal effect on the soul and leads it to a special transitory state. If the words and actions are repeated, their effects will be affirmed and the states will turn into habits since the difference between state and habit lies in intensity and weakness. The intensification of the quality [soul's state] leads to the existence of a form, that is, a substantial cause in the soul ... When the state of the soul is intensified, it becomes a firmed habit, that is, a psychic form which is the cause of its own special effects ... (In the Hereafter,) the firmed psychic habits become substantial forms, even independent efficient essences in the soul ...⁷⁵ And the human individuals on the Day of Resurrection are resurrected and gathered with different forms (*‘alā ṣuwar mukbtalifab*) which are the forms of their repeated actions in this world, therefore, they become multiple different species; some of them are from beasts, some from predators, some are demons and some are angels.⁷⁶

Therefore, the character and deeds of the Imām is the criterion for measuring the deeds and morals of others, because, they are the manifestation of true justice in the world – justice in terms of thought, opinion, attributes, and actions. Here, Sadrā uses the Qur’anic term of *mīzān* (Scale or Balance) which in his view, also bears the meaning of moral justice.⁷⁷ According to Shiite Hadiths, *mīzān* is equal to the prophets and the Imāms,

The balance is a valid criterion by which the size and weight of a thing are known, ... and the scale in the Hereafter is of a different type in which the books and the scrolls [of deeds and beliefs] are put and by which they are measured. Among the traditions narrated from our Imāms (P.B.U.T.) in this regard, is what Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī ibn Bābawayh has narrated that Hishām ibn Sālīm asked about God's

(P.B.U.H.) (Qom: Esra International Foundation for Revealed Sciences, 1389 HS), 34-35.

⁷⁵ Mullā Ṣadrā, *Asrār al-āyāt* (Manama: Maktabat Fakhr al-Rāzī, 2007), 315-318; see also his *al-Asfār*, IX, 290-293; id., *al-Ḥāshiyah ‘alā Ilābiyyāt al-Shifā’*, 168.

⁷⁶ Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Ḥāshiyah ‘alā Ilābiyyāt al-Shifā’*, 168; see also, *al-Asfār*, IX, 290-293, and *Asrār al-āyāt*, 320-322.

⁷⁷ For a detailed explanation of the meaning of *mīzān* and how it is interpreted as justice and is related to *ṣirāṭ*, see Mullā Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-karīm*, VI, 281, 289.

saying, “We shall set up just scales on the Day of Resurrection” (Q 21: 47), the Imām answered, “they are prophets and their successors.”⁷⁸

It is clear from the above that the infallibles are the most eligible for leading the society towards social justice. They are the successors of God in the macrocosm and microcosm, therefore, the closer we are to the Imām, the closer we are to justice in all its realms. In the next rank after the infallibles, it is the divine wise and scholars who are their best followers and the nearest to them in terms of theory and action. As a *Shī‘ī* believer, Mullā Ṣadrā uses different religious texts to argue that the ‘*ulamā*’ or top *Shī‘ī* scholars are ranked below the Prophets and the Friends of God (*awliyā*³). He ascribes some attributes to the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) the most honorable of which is the knowledge of the divine sciences and the knowledge of the truths of things. He claims that the true scholars, who are the elite among the Prophet’s nation, also inherit this characteristic. That is, they take their knowledge from the prophet and they are epistemically ranked below him; he explicitly says,

This noble prophetic rank is one of the levels that the human soul reaches when its two faculties (both theoretical and practical) are completed with knowledge and obedience, and this occurs primarily to the Muḥammadan soul (*al-naḥs al-Muḥammadiyyah*) – peace and salutations be upon him and his family – and to the elites of his nation and the Friends (*awliyā*³) of God secondarily; [this is] because of His saying, “Say, ‘If you love Allah, then follow me; Allah will love you.’” (Q 3: 31) and His saying, “Whoever obeys Allah and the Apostle they are with those whom Allah has blessed, including the prophets and the truthful ...” (Q 4: 69) It has been narrated, “The scholars are the inheritors of the prophets.” ... and is narrated from the Prophet –peace be upon him and his family –, “God has worshipers who are not prophets [and martyrs] but are envied by the prophets [of the sons of Israel],” and, “The scholars of my nation are like the prophets of the sons of Israel.” O’ You the scholar, unless your sciences are taken from the prophetic niche, you are not a scholar in truth, but by metaphor.⁷⁹

According to Sunnī and Shī‘ī hadīths, Ṣadrā ascribes some characteristics to scholars in his commentary on *al-Kāfi* by Muḥammad ibn Ya‘qūb al-Kulaynī (d. 329/9441), *Sharḥ Uṣūl al-Kāfi*: after the

⁷⁸ Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Arshīyyah*, 271-272.

⁷⁹ Mullā Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-karīm*, VII, 152- 155.

prophets, they rank above all other creatures, and in deep understanding of the religion, they are like the prophets;⁸⁰ they are inheritors of the prophets, trustees of Allah on earth, masters and leaders of people, vicegerents of the Prophet⁸¹ and those whose obedience is obligatory upon the rulers, and not vice versa.⁸²

According to the theory of justice, *‘ulamā’*'s being the best and highest after the prophets is the ground of their guardianship and governance in society over others. Therefore, from Ṣadrā's point of view, there is a direct relationship between knowledge and authority. He explicitly refers to it when explaining the meaning of the Verse of Obedience or *ulū l-amr* verse which reads, "O' you who have faith! Obey Allah and obey the Apostle and those vested with authority among you." (Q 5: 59). He considers the criterion of being the "vested with authority" to be knowledge; even *Ahl al-bayt* (P.B.U.T.) are considered as the examples of the verse because of their knowledge being the highest,

And, based on the most valid interpretations, the referent of *ulū l-amr* is either the scholars of God and the Last Day in general, or the infallible Imāms (peace be upon them) – as it is supported by our fellow believers – *because* they are the most knowledgeable of the scholars; both interpretations go back to knowledge and its perfection.⁸³

He also considers the reason for the sovereignty of *awṣiyā’* (the successors of the Prophet) to be their possession of knowledge,

As for the successors being masters, [this is] due to the fact that they are the most eminent, the best, and the greatest scholars. (On the other hand,) The scholars are the masters of people, because at the level of humanity and in regard with the reality of the human being –i.e. the reason, discernment, and intellection – they are the greatest and most complete. And the superior among the superiors is prior to being the superior and the greatest (of all). The successors – peace be upon them – then, are prior to be the masters of all creatures, except the prophets – peace be upon them.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ *Sharḥ Uṣūl al-Kāfi*, II, 100.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 88-89.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 91.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 91.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 47-48.

IV. The Realization of Justice

From what has been said in the previous section, it can be deduced that according to Mullā Sadrā, the realization of justice is not possible without divine law, and without following the Prophet and the Imāms. This is true of both moral justice and social justice. Sadrā emphasizes that justice finds meaning through “managing the faculties of aversion and desire under the command of *religion* and reason,”⁸⁵ or he says, “that [i.e. justice] is not achieved except through submission to the religious law (*sharī‘ah*) and obedience to the imām whose obedience is obligatory.”⁸⁶ He considers the divine law to be a justice-based rule⁸⁷ and he believes that it is only through obedience to God and submission to His religious laws that social justice can be realized and injustice and unfairness be driven away.⁸⁸

Justifying this view, one may argue that justice is the placement of things in their true position. This requires knowledge of the truth of things. Such knowledge is out of human’s ability, rather, depends on divine revelation through prophets in the form of divine law (*sharī‘ah*). Therefore, the realization of justice requires holding fast to the *sharī‘ah* and its owner which is the Prophet and the Imām. Mullā Sadrā considers every action and thought that occurs within the soul to have a special effect on the soul and believes that recognizing what effect every action and thought has on the soul requires revelatory knowledge brought by the prophets,

To get to know the properties of each of them [actions and thoughts] [and their effect on the human soul] and to have a perfect knowledge of them can appear only from the high horizons (*ma‘āli‘*) of the sayings of the people of Sanctity and Purity among the prophets and saints who take their knowledge from the world of revelation and inspiration and deliver it to the nation in order to inform them of it, due to the impotence of their intellects to get to know the effect of any action, word, thought and intent.⁸⁹

⁸⁵ Mullā Sadrā, *al-Asfār*, IX, 90.

⁸⁶ Mullā Sadrā, *al-‘Arshīyyah*, 264.

⁸⁷ Mullā Sadrā, *al-Mabda’ wa-l-ma‘ād*, 393.

⁸⁸ Mullā Sadrā, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-karīm*, II, 248.

⁸⁹ Mullā Sadrā, *Kasr aṣṅām al-jābiliyyah*, 150.

‘Abd al-Razzāq Fayyāḍ Lāhījī, disciple and son-in-law of Mullā Ṣadrā, brought forth an argument in his *Shawāriq al-ilbām* (Illuminations of the Inspiration) that complements that of his tutor,

The acquisition of the habit of justice ... depends on the knowledge of the effect and the amount of effect of every action and practice in terms of quantity and quality on the soul, which could not be explained in detail by human beings. Rather, it is based on the divine teaching and definition that is achieved by sending prophets and messengers and making religious laws and general regulations. Therefore, obtaining the habit of justice and acquiring the refinement of character traits rest on the existence of prophets and under their direction and guidance - peace be upon them all.⁹⁰

Following Ibn Sīnā, Ṣadrā also considers the existence of social life to rely on the existence of justice, and the realization of justice to depend on the existence of a divine just ruler (prophet) with a just law (*sharī‘ah*).⁹¹

Mullā Hādī Sabziwārī, an eminent Shī‘ī philosopher, gnostic, and jurist in the Qajar period, who ensured the continuation of Mullā Ṣadrā's influence until today, argues that justice requires preferring the superior (*afḍal*) over the inferior (*mafdūl*) [for ruling the society], because the management of the territory should be in accordance with *sharī‘ah* and the law of justice, and this demands great knowledge and justice (in the ruler) which is fully explained in the science of ethics. Therefore, the leader (imām) must be superior to others in terms of knowledge, justice, nobility, courage, and management of the nation.⁹²

Based on Shī‘ī narrations, Ṣadrā considers the prophets and imāms as God's "authority" or "proof" (*ḥujjat Allāh*) focusing primarily on a famous tradition that says, "the earth would not sustain in existence

⁹⁰ ‘Abd al-Razzāq ibn ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Lāhījī, ed. Zain al-‘Abidin Qhorbani (Tehran: Nashr-i Sayeh, 1383 HS), *Shawāriq al-ilbām*, 686.

⁹¹ Mullā Ṣadrā, *Sharḥ Uṣūl al-Kāfi*, II, 392; Abū ‘Alī al-Ḥusayn ibn ‘Abd Allāh Ibn Sīnā, *al-Shifā’*: *al-Ilābiyyāt*, ed. Sa‘īd Zāyid (Qom: Maktabat Āyat Allāh Mar‘ashī, 1404 HD), 441-442; id., *al-Najāt min al-gbarq fī baḥr al-ḍalālāt*, ed. Muḥammad Taqī Dānishpazhūh (Tehran: Tehran University Press, 1379 HS), 709-710.

⁹² Mullā Hādī-yi Sabziwārī, *Asrār al-ḥikam*, ed. Abū I-Ḥasan Sha‘rānī and Ibrāhīm Miṣyānī (Tehran: Islāmiyyah, 1351 HS), I, 439-440; also see id., "Hidāyat al-ṭālibīn fī ma‘rifat al-anbiyā’ wa-l-a’immah al-ma‘šūmīn," in *Rasā’il Ḥakīm Sabziwārī*, ed. Sayyid Jalāl al-Dīn Āshtiyānī (Tehran: Uswah Publication, 1376 HS), 278-279.

without the proof of Allah for His people (*ḥujjat Allāh ‘alā kbalqib*).⁹³ In his view, *khatm-i nubuwwah* or the seal of prophethood (the belief that Muḥammad is the last prophet) does not entail the finality of the presence of God’s proof on earth, rather, it continues its way in the form of Imāmate, with the difference that the Imām does not bring a new divine book including a new legislative revelation. Here, Ṣadrā is using a synthetic discourse of his philosophy and his Shī‘ī theology to explain and prove the absolute authority of the imām.⁹⁴ According to the principles of his philosophy and based on his theory of justice, the true rulers must enjoy the highest levels of knowledge and morality (with the determining criterion of moral justice); as for the religious side, Shī‘ī traditions and thought consider the prophets and imāms as the best creatures of all, with the highest level of knowledge and moral traits, so that, using Ṣadrā’s wording, they are not just persons, but they are “justice.”

A very important point in Ṣadrā’s thought which over the last few decades has been in a better position to devote careful attention is that he extends the divine authority of the Imām to religious scholars, especially at the time of Occultation of the twelfth Imām. Except for his above-mentioned statements about the superiority of the ‘*ulamā*’ (religious scholars) over other groups of people which put them right after the prophets and imāms in rank, there are two more direct clues. The first is a well-known Shī‘ī tradition which is frequently referred to by the proponents of the modern discourse of the guardianship of the jurist (*walāyat-i faqīh*) which means the absolute religio-political authority of top religious scholars or jurists.⁹⁵ This hadith is known as

⁹³ Two chapters of the “Book of the Proof” or “*Kitāb al-ḥujjab*” of al-Kulaynī’s *al-Kāfi* deal with this meaning with different wordings; for Ṣadrā’s commentaries regarding this issue, see *Sharḥ Uṣūl al-Kāfi*, II, 468-508.

⁹⁴ For an elaborate discussion about Ṣadrā’s and his followers’ synthetic discourse regarding the authority of Shī‘ī imām, see Meisami, *Knowledge and Power*, chapters 4-5.

⁹⁵ See Khomeini, *Governance of the Jurist (Walāyat-i faqīh): Islamic Government*, trans. Hamid Algar (Tehran: The Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imām Khomeini’s Works, n.d.), 128-134; id., *Kitāb al-bay‘* (Qom: Ismā‘īliyyān, 1363 HS), II, 638-642; id., *al-Ijtibād wa-l-taqlīd* (Tehran: Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imām Khomeini’s Works, 1426 H), 26-30; Javādī Āmulī, *Walāyat-i Faqīh*, 182, 191-194.

maqbulab (an accepted tradition)⁹⁶ of ‘Umar ibn Ḥanẓalah. The focus of their argument is on this part of hadith that in response to ‘Umar’s question concerning the judicial authority as to whom the Shī‘īs should refer to for judgment, Imām al-Ṣādiq points to the Shī‘īscholars who are well acquainted with Imāms’ ḥadīths and says, “I have made them governor over you. If one rejects what they judge according to our judgment, he has (indeed) belittled God’s judgment and has rejected us, and one who rejects us, has rejected God, and this is as associating ‘others’ with God (*shirk*).”⁹⁷ Ṣadrā simply quotes the narration without any explanation except for a few literary points, and explicitly says that the ḥadīth is so clear which needs no further explanation or commentary.⁹⁸ It seems that *maqbulab* of ‘Umar ibn Ḥanẓalah has been *accepted* by our philosopher, too.

Although here he did not explicitly take a specific position on the theory of *walāyat-i faqīh*, in *al-Shawābid al-rubūbiyyah*, Mullā Ṣadrā emphasizes the authority of the imām and the *‘ulamā’*, specifically jurists, after the closing of the gate of prophethood. Indeed, *ijtibād* (the highly specialized ability of a jurist to deduce the rules of *sharī‘ah* from the accepted sources in the Shī‘ī jurisprudence which are: the Qur’ān, the traditions of the Prophet and his infallible household, consensus, and intellect) is the continuation of prophethood and Imāmate and people are required to refer to the top *mujtabids* during the period of Occultation. Therefore, although after the end of prophecy, the special revelation to the Prophet stops, the nature and function of prophecy (*nubuwwab*) and messenger-ship (*risālah*) continue in the Imāms and *mujtabids*,

[After the Prophet], God preserved the rule (*ḥukm*) of the bringers of good tidings (i.e. God’s messengers) [(Q 4:165)] and the imāms who are immune to errors (*al-a’immah al-ma’ṣūmīn ‘an al-khata’*) – salutations be upon them – and the authority of the jurists (*al-mujtabidīn*). While removing the title [of prophet or messenger] from

⁹⁶ It is called “*maqbulab*” (accepted) because although there are some ambiguities about the reliability of its chains of the transmitters, Shī‘ī scholars have accepted this ḥadīth because of its content and some other reasons. See Khomeini, *al-Ijtibād wa-l-taqīd*, 26; Javādī Āmulī, *Walāyat-i Faqīh*, 389-390. On the other hand, some argue that it cannot prove the absolute religio-political authority of the top jurists; see Mohsen Kadivar, *Ḥukūmat-i Welā’i* (Tehran: Nashr-i Nay, 1377 HS), 297- 306.

⁹⁷ Mullā Ṣadrā, *Sharḥ Uṣūl al-Kāfi*, II, 371-372.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 373.

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-dbikr*) as God said, “If you do not know, ask the people who know the scriptures (*ahl al-dbikr*).” [(Q 21:7)] So, [the jurists] give their expert opinion (*fatwā*) according to their jurisprudence (*ijtibād*) and they could also disagree just like different religious laws (*al-sharāʿi*) disagree as God said “We have assigned a law and a path to each of you.” [(Q 5:48)] Likewise, for every *mujtabid*, He assigned a law and a path (resulting) from his reasoning ... Thus, the prophecy and the messengership in terms of their nature and their function are not stopped or abrogated, rather, only the revelation exclusive to the messengers and the prophets, which includes the descending of the angels to (convey God’s revelation to) their ear and heart, is interrupted, so that neither the *mujtabid* nor the imām are told to be a prophet or messenger.⁹⁹

Basically, guardianship is a divine quality that the Imāms inherit from the Prophet and the scholars inherit from the Imāms and then from each other, throughout history,

Thus *walāyab* (guardianship) is a divine attribute ... Some of the *awliyāʾ* (saints) receive this position from the prophet as a heritage such as the People of the House (*Ahl al-bayt*) – peace be upon them – who saw the Prophet in person, then the religious scholars will take it one after another.¹⁰⁰

This passage is so explicitly attributing the legal-political authority of the prophets and the imāms to jurists which may be a good witness for Mullā Ṣadrā’s contribution to the discursive formation of *walāyat-i faqīh*. Later, confronting the question as to how the Hidden Imām executes his *walāyab* and governs the world during his Occultation, based on this Shīʿī discourse of intermediaries between the imām and the people, Sabziwārī answers,

May people sincerely request the preservation of faith and orthopraxy and knowledge and insight from the “general representatives”

⁹⁹ Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Shawāhid al-rubūbiyyab*, 436. The translation of the quotation is by Meisami, *Knowledge and Power*, 158-159 with modification and addition.

¹⁰⁰ Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Shawāhid al-rubūbiyyab*, 437.

(*nuwwāb-i ʿāmm*) and the guardians of the community (*awliyāʾ-i ummah*), which is possible.¹⁰¹

These explicit statements along with an overall understanding of Ṣadrā's theory of justice may lead us to accept Mullā Ṣadrā's legacy of justice as a "discursive springboard" for the establishment of *walāyat-i faqīh*.¹⁰² Maybe that would be one of the reasons of the attraction of Mullā Ṣadrā's philosophy after the Islamic revolution.

In the end, it is worth mentioning the relationship between *walāyah* and knowledge from Mullā Ṣadrā's point of view, and in this way, trying to more clearly compare his political viewpoint and Khomeini's *walāyat-i faqīh*. Since according to Ṣadrā, there is a direct relationship between *walāyah* and knowledge, and knowledge and scholars are of two types, the *walāyah* will also be of two types:

The *sharīʿah* has both exterior (*ẓāhir*) and interior (*bāṭin*) aspects, and the ranks of scholars are so different in terms of each: some are superior and some are inferior, as well as knowledgeable and more knowledgeable. Those whose relation to their prophet is more complete and their proximity to his soul is stronger, their knowledge of esoteric and exoteric aspect of his *sharīʿah* will be more. And those who know both the exterior and interior are more deserving to be obeyed, due to their extreme nearness to their prophet; then those who are below them in rank, until the ranking descends to the scholars of the exoteric only, and they also have ranks, since the one who knows both the principles and the ramifications is more entitled to be obeyed than those who are expert only in one ... Thus, each of the esoteric and exoteric aspects has its own experts, all of whom are included under the rule of the Caliph (the Infallible Imām), who is the highest knowledgeable in both aspects.¹⁰³

Such categorization is also found in Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, Ṣadrā's pupil and son-in-law, who says that the scholars are of three categories:

¹⁰¹ Sabziwārī, *Asrār al-ḥikam*, I, 452; id., "Hidāyat al-ṭālibīn," 293. Translated in Meisami, *Knowledge and Power*, 194.

¹⁰² Meisami, *Knowledge and Power*, 185, 186. In contrast, Toussi claims that Ṣadrā's discourse on politics does not provide such a discursive springboard, nor does it promote an idea of quietism or that of a fundamental separation of religion and politics; Seyyed Khalil Toussi, *The Political Philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā* (London: Routledge, forthcoming), introduction.

¹⁰³ Mullā Ṣadrā, *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb*, 486.

those who enjoy only the outward knowledge, those who have only the inward knowledge, and those who are masters of both; only the third (originally) deserve to lead the people.¹⁰⁴

Observance of the priority in the authority of the Utopia based on having the highest amount of competency, which is a requirement of justice, is what Ṣadrā has taken from al-Fārābī's political system. According to al-Fārābī, the most deserving person for the governance is the "first head" [comparable to the prophet], followed by the one who is exactly like him and has all his characteristics [comparable to the imām]. However, since al-Fārābī himself was concerned that very few people can enjoy such unachievable levels of qualifications, he suggested that those nearest to them in terms of such qualifications take on this responsibility. For example, they must have the jurisprudence knowledge and be able to deduce unauthorized laws based on the general principles authorized and left by the first head.¹⁰⁵

Therefore, according to Ṣadrā, when there is no prophet or imām, the best scholars who are closest to them should have authority and should be obeyed. What if even the latter did not exist? We should refer to the esoteric scholars in esoteric matters and to the exoteric experts in exoteric matters, "(Even) *al-ulamā'* *al-rāsikhūn* (those firm in (esoteric) knowledge) must obey (refer to) the jurists and *mujtabidīn* in the exoteric knowledge ... but in the esoteric knowledge, the reverse is true."¹⁰⁶

Now, it becomes clear that since according to what was previously quoted from Ṣadrā about the dependence of the realization of justice and governance on the knowledge of *sharī'ah*, in such a matter, we must refer to the jurists, because the jurisprudence is among the

¹⁰⁴ Muḥammad Muḥsin al-Fayḍ al-Kāshānī, *al-Kalimāt al-maknūnah min 'ulūm abi al-ḥikmah wa-l-ma'rifaḥ*, ed. 'Aziz Allāh al-'Uḡarīdī al-Qūjānī (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Farāhānī, 1360 HS), 240.

¹⁰⁵ Abū Naṣr Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Fārābī, *Kitāb al-millab wa-nuṣūṣ ukbar*, ed. Muḥsin Maḥdī (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1991), 73-75; for a more detailed discussion on how Ṣadrā, following al-Fārābī and Ibn Sinā, was made to suggest substitutes for the first head see Mohsen Elahi, "Jāyghāh-i Sīyāsah dar Ḥikmatimuta'āliyah," in *Sīyāsah-i Muta'āliyah az Manẓar-i Ḥikmat-i Muta'āliyah*, ed. Sharif Lakzaei (Qom: Pazhūheshgāh-i 'Ulūm wa-Farhang-i Islāmī, 1390 HS), III, 319-328.

¹⁰⁶ Mullā Ṣadrā, *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb*, 486.

exoteric aspects of religion. It becomes also clear that how, according to *al-Shawāhid al-rubūbiyyah*, *walāyat-i faqīh* is the continuation of *walāyah* of the prophets and imāms. Using Sadrian terminology, *walāyah*, like existence and knowledge, is a graded reality which includes different degrees. The highest degree is *walāyah* of the prophets and imāms, then the scholars of both the esoteric and exoteric aspects of the religion including the spiritual meaning and the legal sides of it. When we get farther from the infallibles (prophets and imāms), there is no concomitance between the esoteric and exoteric knowledge and a scholar may or may not have both. Therefore, we have to talk about two separate kinds of *walāyah*: exoteric and esoteric. Naturally, *walāyat-i faqīh* is related to the exoteric one. The exoteric *walāyah* seems to have been neglected by many, even it has been rarely taken into account when we are thinking of the top *walī* who are the prophets and imāms. Knysh argues that Ṣadrā's description of the four-step spiritual journey – later adopted by Khomeini – is reminiscent of Ibn 'Arabī's concept of the perfect human (*al-insān al-kāmil*) in its particular emphasis on his functions as a “religious leader of the community of believers” – a function some Western scholars have tended to downplay, instead, focusing on the perfect man's role in the all-important cosmic force tying together the origin and the return.¹⁰⁷

Of course, for Ṣadrā, the distinction between exoteric and esoteric realms of *walāyah* and attributing the former to the religious leader does not mean that every expert in the exoteric knowledge like the Islamic jurisprudence deserves to be obeyed, because, in his view, a jurist also is called “*al-‘ālim al-rabbānī*” (the divinely learned)¹⁰⁸ and therefore, must have special ethical and moral merits, as discussed in his theory of justice. The same is true about Khomeini's theory of *walāyat-i faqīh*, in which such distinction does not mean that “any regular” jurist can rule the society! But only a “fully qualified” jurist (*mujtabid jāmi‘ al-sbarā'i*) that in addition to his knowledge of *fiqh*, must have other qualifications, most important of which is enjoying

¹⁰⁷ Alexander Knysh, “Irfan Revisited: Khomeini and the Legacy of Islamic Mystical Philosophy,” *Middle East Journal* 46, no. 4 (1992), 635.

¹⁰⁸ Mullā Ṣadrā, *Sharḥ Uṣūl al-Kāfi*, II, 147, 150.

firmly established characteristics of justice and piety among the spiritual conditions.¹⁰⁹

In line with the distinction between exoteric and esoteric *walāyah*, some other factors and realms of exoteric knowledge must be met by the ruling jurist, like the political insight and social perspicacity which are mentioned in the constitution of the Islamic republic as part of the requisites needed for *walī-yi faqīh*.¹¹⁰ These can be compared to some of the qualifications the head of the Şadrīan Utopia must enjoy, such as: “He must be sharp and smart enough to understand the events and the intentions of others ... He should be eloquent and articulate and be able to express completely and clearly what is in his mind.”¹¹¹ Being persuasive can help him to handle the social chaos since, in the past, the speech was the only way to communicate with both the nation and the administrators of the kingdom, even today; public lecture is one of the best ways for politicians to express themselves and handle different social situations. It also can help him to overcome the enemies in the field of psychological warfare, which is one of the requirements of leadership, along with the ability to handle the physical wars.¹¹²

Conclusion

From the viewpoint of Mullā Şadrā, justice has two related senses – granting the right to the rightful and putting things aright – which can be realized in three realms of creation, the human soul, and human society. Justice in the last two areas is derived from and justified by justice in creation. Creational justice requires the superiority of intellect and intellectual beings to others. The same must take place in the human realm: moral justice entails the superiority and management of the intellective faculty, and social justice requires the leadership of the wise and most knowledgeable.

An accurate overview of Mullā Şadrā’s discourse in justice and the related issues brings forth three basic conditions for the ruler of the society whose goal is to establish justice among people:

¹⁰⁹ Hamid Algar, *Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran* (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1980), 67.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Mullā Şadrā, *al-Shawāhid al-rubūbiyyah*, 420-1.

¹¹² Ibid, 420.

1. To enjoy the highest degree of intellectuality, rationality, and knowledge, because justice requires that everything be in its place, and in Ṣadrā's view, the place of scholars as possessors of intellectuality and knowledge is higher than all.
2. To enjoy the highest level of moral and individual justice, so that he can establish justice among other members of society.
3. To enjoy the highest level of knowledge about religious and Islamic teachings, because without relying on religion and *sharī'ah*, the establishment of justice in the individual and society is not possible.

Based on his Shī'ī beliefs, Ṣadrā claims that these conditions are primarily held by the prophets and the infallible Imāms, peace be upon them, and the next rank is occupied by the religious scholars who inherit the intellectuality, knowledge, and justice from the Imāms. As a corollary, in the case of the absence of the Imāms – such as the absence of the Twelfth Imām – it is the divine scholars who deserve to rule because, after the prophets and imāms, the scholars have the above qualifications. The above three characteristics are very similar to the main qualifications needed for the leading jurist (*walī-yi faqīh*). According to Article 109 of the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, he must: 1. be a highly qualified jurist (fully acquainted with Islamic teachings), 2. be just and pious, and 3. have political insight and social perspicacity (which is usually accompanied by a taste of rationality).¹¹³ Further studies may help to shed more light on the correlation between Mullā Ṣadrā's legacy and the theory of *walāyat-i faqīh*, especially if they focus on real contemporary instances of this mutual relationship.

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¹¹³ Hamid Algar, *Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran* (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1980), 67; see also Javādī Āmulī, *Walāyat-i Faqīh*, 136-140.

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