

KNOWLEDGE AND AUTHORITY IN SHĪ'Ī PHILOSOPHY

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The source of authority in Shī'ism according to Shī'ī philosophy is "knowledge of the Unseen" (*ilm al-ghayb*), described as "extraordinary knowledge" (*ilm al-khawāriq min al-'ādāt*).¹ Knowledge of the Unseen is said to be possessed by the twelve imāms. According to Shī'ī teaching, it may also be obtained by a select number of religious scholars through "inspiration" (*ilhām*). In this paper I discuss how philosophy—specifically the epistemological theory of Knowledge by Presence (*al-ilm al-ḥudūrī*)—and an intellectual (*aqli*) language of discourse have been utilized over the past five centuries to validate this doctrine. I begin by examining Islamic and Shī'ī belief concerning the Unseen. I then show how the institution of *wilāyah* or "Guardianship" originated with the fourth imām 'Alī ibn Ḥusayn's (d. 95/713-4) claim of divine authority, based on the notion of an esoteric dimension of the Qur'ān and "inspiration" and set forth in his *al-Ṣaḥīfah al-kāmilah al-Sajjādīyah*, "The Psalms of al-Sajjād."² I then proceed to the Ishrāqī or "Illuminationist" philosophers, most significantly the great Suhrawardī (executed in 587/1191). The Illuminationists presented a revised concept of

¹ The basic meaning of *ilm* is "knowledge," but also "science," synonymous with Latin *scientia*. Other related terms are *fiqh*, "acquaintance" (with the law), *'irfān*, "gnosis," and *falsafah*, Arabized "philosophy," also signifying "science."

² The same claim is made in the later four canonical Shī'ī books of *ḥadīth*. *Al-Ṣaḥīfah al-Sajjādīyah* has been chosen because it is highly revered by present-day Shī'īs (although not the Ismā'īlīs). The *Ṣaḥīfah* is a compilation of anecdotal tales of the Shī'ī imāms, formulaic blessings, supplications, and prayers, often grouped around a theme and carried by the faithful when on pilgrimage to shrines and mausoleums. Although the Arabic of the *Ṣaḥīfah* is uneven, it is commonly and widely accepted as the actual sayings of the fourth imām, known by his honorific title "Zayn al-'Ābidīn" (Adornment of the Believers) as well as "al-Sajjād" (he who prostrates himself). The edition used here is the bilingual text ed. and trans. by Wm. Chittick (London: Muhammadi Trust, 1988); Chittick believes it likely that not the entire text, but only "the original fifty-four prayers" were written by the Imām himself (*Ibid.*, xx).

knowledge which further reinforced Guardianship. With the further development of Illuminationist thought during the "Scientific Revival" of the seventeenth-century School of Isfahan, Guardianship was given an even broader philosophical foundation, as well as a political application; this led in due course to a novel form of Shī'ī thinking and discourse. Since Suhrawardī's unified epistemology was utilized by the Safavids in their quest for legitimacy, and since it essentially provides the theoretical foundation for the Shī'ī institution of *marj' al-taqlīd* or top legal authority as *valī-i faqīh* (guardian-jurist), the emphasis of the essay falls here. Shī'ī concepts of knowledge and authority were further elaborated in the nineteenth century, most significantly by the philosopher-mathematician Ḥājj Mullā Ḥādī Sabzavārī (d. 1295/1878), creator of a holistic system named *al-ḥikmah al-muta'allihah*, (Persian *ḥikmah-i muta'allihī*) or "Divine Philosophy." It is his thinking which provides the basis for consideration of the problem of knowledge and authority today. Thus I argue that, over the past one hundred and fifty years, Shī'ī philosophical discourse has developed into a support for the institution of Guardianship, which in the twentieth century becomes in turn an indicator of authority for temporal rule (*ḥukūmah*).

I. Knowledge of the Unseen

According to the Qur'ān, knowledge of the Unseen (*ghayb*) is exclusive to God—God alone knows the Unseen (Q. 5:109, 116; 9:78; 10:20).³ The Unseen in the Qur'ān is contrasted with *shahādah*, the "visible" or "seen"; unaided, man can only know, or obtain, what he "sees," that is the world of *shahādah* (Q. 12:81). The Unseen may, however, be obtained through revelation (*waḥī*): "This is the tidings of things hidden (*ghayb*); We reveal it to thee, [Muḥammad]" (Q. 3:44; 11:49; 12:102). Revealed knowledge and its concomitants, such as miraculous powers, are bestowed by God's Will upon His chosen prophets: "And it is not [the purpose] of God to let you know the Unseen. But God chooseth of His messengers whom He will [to receive knowledge thereof]" (Q. 2:179). Thus human *'ilm* may indeed serve both to confirm belief and establish rank. But according to the Qur'ān, it is obtained by time-dependent actions in this world. It is never given to humans suddenly or all at once; it is essentially distinct from God's *'ilm* and never a "mystical," experiential *'ilm* of holistic reality or related in any way to gnosis.

In short, the Qur'ānic edicts leave no doubt that man is incapable by himself of obtaining the treasures of the Unseen. Those who are given this knowledge by God, however, have extraordinary access not only to wisdom but to power. This is confirmed by the association of obtaining of the Unseen with "abundance and wealth" and triumph over adversity (Q. 7:188), Paradise

³ For a fuller account of the Unseen in the Qur'ān, see "Ḥāfez *Lisān al-Ghayb* of Persian Poetic Wisdom" in *God is Beautiful and He Loves Beauty. Festschrift in Honor of Annemarie Schimmel*, ed. J.C. Buergel and Alma Giese (Bern: Peter Lang, 1994), 449-469.

(Q. 19:61), and angels (Q. 6:50; 11:31). This Qur'anic doctrine of the Unseen, including the association with power, has direct bearing on the Shī'ī doctrine of knowledge and authority.

The importance of the Unseen is reflected in all the exegetical literature, whether mystical, juridical, or philosophical and whether Sunnī or Shī'ī. Exegesis confirms that *ghayb* is a foundation of belief, and that revelation and *ghayb* are connected.⁴ In short, *al-ghayb=al-Qur'ān*, "the Unseen is the Qur'ān," and *man āmana bi-Allāh fa-qad āmana bi-al-ghayb*, "who believes in God believes also in the Unseen."⁵ For Shī'īs, however, the Unseen has added significance. For while Sunnīs agree that the Book is a "Clear Text" (*naṣṣ ṣariḥ*), Shī'īs believe that the written word contains an inner dimension necessary to uphold the Law but known only by the Prophet through Gabriel and preserved and passed down through the imāms. This esoteric knowledge includes the Unseen. In fact, knowledge of the Unseen is among the principles of Shī'ī doctrine. It bestows upon the recipient extraordinary power and foresight and the ability to do anything in the best manner in his era; the possessor of such knowledge becomes a veritable and living *axio mundi*. In general, popular Shī'ism accepts that prominent religious figures possess this special knowledge. At present a few select Shī'ī *mujtahids*, *hujjat al-Islāms* and Ayatollahs are thought to possess knowledge of the Unseen, bestowed upon them through mediation of the occulted twelfth imām.

II. al-Ṣaḥīfah al-Sajjādiyāh and the Question of Knowledge

The *Ṣaḥīfah* establishes a number of fundamental principles of the Shī'ī view of knowledge. It is the first to employ such terms as *ilhām* (inspiration) and *al-khawāriq* ("extraordinary" knowledge and powers; in later texts *al-khawāriq min al-ʿādāt*) in laying down the doctrine of *ʿilm*, specifically the esoteric *ʿilm* of the imāms. The most important subsequent juridical sources for the doctrine of *ʿilm* are the four canonical Shī'ī collections of *ḥadīth*

⁴ According to the philosophers and theologians, the "connection" may be through the faculty of imagination (*al-quwwah al-mutakhayyilah*). Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, for example, discusses three qualities of prophets, the second of which concerns the relation between them and the *ghayb*: "The second quality of the prophet is in the strength of his faculty of imagination which [enables] him to see, in his state of wakefulness, the angels of God, to hear the Word of God, and to tell of present, past, and future unseen things (*al-Mabāḥiṭh al-mashriqiyyah*, 2 vols. [Hayderabad, Maṭbaʿat Majlis Dāʾirat al-Maʿārif al-Nizāmīyah, 1343/1924 or 25], II, 523. See also Maybudī, *Kashf al-asrār wa-ʿuddat al-abrār. Maʿrūf bi-Tafsīr-i Khwājāh ʿAbd Allāh Anṣārī* (written by Abū al-Faḍl Rashīd al-Dīn al-Maybudī in 520 A.H. based partially on Anṣārī's work), 10 vols. (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Dānishgāh, 1331-39 H.Sh./ 1952 or 53 - 1960 or 61), I, 45-47; Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Manār*, 12 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Manār, 1367-1375/1948-1956), I, 126-128; Abū al-Fidāʾ Ismāʿīl Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-aẓīm*, ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākīr, 5 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1376/ 1956), I, 69-74; al-ʿAllāmah Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabāʾī, *al-Mizān fi tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, 20 vols. (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-ʿAlamī, 1377/1957 or 58-1974), I, 45-46.

⁵ Rāzī, *Mabāḥiṭh*, II, 523.

(including the most significant commentary on Kulaynī's *al-Kāfi*, *al-Shāfi* by Qazvīnī, and the profound though less-read commentary by Mullā Ṣadrā). These texts aim to "prove" the Shī'ī concept of extraordinary knowledge to be a universal truth. The doctrine is then steadily re-worked over the centuries through a three-fold filter of law (*fiqh*), gnosis (*ʿirfān*), and philosophy until it comes in the nineteenth century to define Shī'ism in theory and practice, including in today's Islamic Republic of Iran where *ʿilm* and *ʿalamīyah*—"superiority in learnedness"—are the basis of hierarchy in the clerical establishment.

There are fifty-four specific statements on knowledge, involving *ʿilm* or a derivative of the verb, in the *Ṣahīfah*. Almost all concern the extraordinary knowledge accessible to the imāms, knowledge which not only proves the legitimacy of Shī'ism but imparts extraordinary power (*qudrah*).⁶ Knowledge is given to the imāms by God and is always obtained through *ilhām*—if the authorship of the text is accepted, one of the earliest if not the earliest use of this essential Shī'ī term beyond its signification in ordinary language and in the Qur'ān.⁷ *Ilhām* serves as the main conduit by which unrestricted knowledge given by God continues after the Prophet's death. As we shall see, *ilhām* was later integrated by the philosophers into the set of technical terms specific to epistemological theory; it denoted an immediate mode of cognition and was employed in the construction of complex syllogistic reasoning. The prevalent philosophical view of *ilhām* was that it is a cognitive mode not unlike revelation (*wahī*), but not solely given by God's choice. Rather humans, especially the philosopher-sages, mystics, and of course the Shī'ī *mujtahids* may obtain inspirational knowledge through learning.

According to the *Ṣahīfah*, the imāms are also interpreters (s. *mufasssir*) of the wonders associated with inspirational knowledge⁸ and their knowledge allows them to attain the highest form of "enlightenment" (*inshirāh*, lit. expansion of the human breast leading to felicity⁹) through the "verification" or "confirmation" of belief (*tahqīq al-maʿrifah*).¹⁰ The imāms' knowledge is more perfect than that of other human beings;¹¹ here is one of the oldest instances in which the superlative "most knowledgeable" (*ʿalam*) is associated with the imāms and indicates an essential difference between them and the rest of humanity.

⁶ The term *qudrah* actually enters in later Illuminationist texts, which elaborate on the idea. See *The Book of Radiance*, ed. and tr. by H. Ziai (Costa Mesa, California: Mazda Publishers, 1998), 84-85. For the sense of *qudrah* in the *Ṣahīfah* see 63:11; 86:3; 118:1; 253-254:2.

⁷ *Ṣahīfah* 4:15.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 134:5. Truly a prophetic quality. What is meant is interpretation of wondrous experiential knowledge, which humans may experience through dreams, visions and other types of extraordinary but real experiences. This doctrine may have been intended to further consolidate the imāms' authority.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 254:2.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 259:2.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 5:18.

Since this knowledge includes, or leads to, extraordinary power, it must be guarded lest it fall into the hands of adversaries and enemies of the imāms.¹² Most importantly, because the members of the House of the Prophet are the receptacles of divinely-inspired knowledge (*al-ilm al-ilhāmī*) and thus the locus of absolute and unrestricted knowledge, they are also given divine authority. This authority is believed to continue along with the Prophet's own esoteric knowledge. He never stated it to any one, with the exception of Fāṭimah (whose special significance is indicated by her honorific *umm abīhā*, "mother of her father") and 'Alī, but it is partially embedded in the inner layer of Qur'ānic words; it has to be "seen" by later select knowing persons who have actualized within their selves the "Nūr Muḥammad," a light that permeates all the universe. Thus the imāms' inspired knowledge is associated with power (*qudrah*) qualified, to borrow from Rudolph Otto, with *tremendum*, *mysterium*, and *fascinans*; it includes an ability to perform superhuman acts and a demeanor (*huḍūr*) which induces dread (*haybah*) and obedience (*tā'ah*).¹³ Only the imāms may legitimately regulate the temporal duties of the faithful and act to secure "the rights of humans," *ḥuqūq al-khalq* (*khalq* may be extended to mean "creatures").¹⁴ The members of the House of the Prophet ask God to inspire them with the best of His knowledge, which allows them to make valid choices and thus guide humankind aright.¹⁵ In other words, they are blessed by God with a "knowledge-based" (*mubtanā 'alā al-ilm*, equivalent to the common notion of *'ilmī*) special ability which allows them to take on social responsibility by becoming "excellent guardians and true guides."¹⁶ Guardianship and guidance may therefore be interpreted as political acts initiated by the imāms for the cause of "just" rule. In fact, the knowledge given to the imāms must be upheld by the sword;¹⁷ this doctrine had great impact on the post-eighteenth-century activity and political action of the clergy. There is no similar Sunnī doctrine that prescribes divinely-sanctioned rule after the Prophet's death based on knowledge. One of the consequences of this theory is that each and every type of rule, including the caliphate, is considered a usurpation of the imamate and Guardianship.

¹² At the time the Umayyad rulers of the first century, who it was said would abuse the knowledge if they gained access to it (ibid., 7:28).

¹³ See note 7.

¹⁴ Ibid., 86:3-4. "The rights of humans" is a concept which, though not widely discussed, is of cardinal importance in Shī'ī thought.

¹⁵ Ibid., 118:1.

¹⁶ Ibid., 74:22.

¹⁷ Ibid., 4:15.

III. Knowledge and Authority According to Illuminationist Philosophy

Philosophy plays a central role in many domains in present-day Iran; to fully understand the current Iranian ethos, it is essential to understand philosophy. It is true that not only Sunnī but also the Shī'ī *'ulamā'* were affected by the devastating blow dealt Islamic Peripatetic philosophy in the early twelfth century by Ghazālī's state-sponsored anti-rationalist text *Tahāfut al-falāsifah* ("The Collapse of the Philosophers"). Thereafter, philosophy as philosophy and not as the handmaiden of theology was marginalized, at best. The Shī'ī *'ulamā'*, however, continued to have access to an emerging "text-book" genre on logical and philosophical techniques which omitted most of Ghazālī's twenty objections to rationalism (especially the three deemed most blasphemous and contrary to Revelation: creation, immortality, and God's knowledge of particulars).¹⁸ Such primers in philosophy are still included in the madrasah syllabi in Iran, Iraq, and parts of India; some of the more famous (there are hundreds of others, nearly all in manuscript) are Abhari's (d. 663/1264) *Hidāyat al-manṭiq*¹⁹ and Īsāghūjī (Isagoge), Dabīrān Kātibī's (d. 657/1276) *Shamsīyah*, and Taftazānī's (d. 791/1389) *Tahdhīb al-manṭiq*. Moreover, Shī'ī jurists in their *uṣūl* studies were adept at semantics, which they studied through philosophy as early as the age of Fārābī (d. 330/950) and the Mu'tazilīs. For instance, Fārābī's theory of "judgements" (*aḥkām*, that is conclusions reached subsequent to review of data) and their modalities includes demonstrated *aḥkām*²⁰ of the kind that might be used in a court case; this is the very stuff of jurisprudence. Nor was there a dearth of creative philosophy among the Shī'ah. Post-Avicennan philosophy in Iran, especially during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, produced numerous texts. Unfortunately, these texts remain largely unknown, and the state of scholarship on philosophy from the twelfth century to the present is so poor that a full assessment cannot be made.²¹

This tradition of philosophy had its origin in the Iranian philosophers' reconsideration of Islamic Peripateticism. The Hellenic Peripatetics had molded Aristotle's views into a "unified" theory by, among other things, adding the principle and name of *noūs poietikós*, the Active Intellect. This became the most famous and widely-discussed principle of Peripatetic philosophy. Many Muslim thinkers, including Avicenna, believed it to be a

¹⁸ See Ghazālī, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, tr. Michael E. Marmura (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1997).

¹⁹ *Hidāyat al-manṭiq* is Part One of *Hidāyat al-ḥikmah*. See GAL sl, 839-844.

²⁰ That is *superasma* as necessarily true *apodeixis* (*Anal. Post. I.1, 79b 9-18*).

²¹ Thousands of manuscripts remain unstudied; hopefully more scholars will become aware of this fact. I have published some and written on others; see for example Shahrzādī, *Sharḥ-i Ḥikmat al-ishrāq/Commentary on The Philosophy of Illumination* (Tehran: Mu'assasah-i Muṭala'āt va-Taḥqīqāt-i Farhangī, 1372 H.Sh./1993); idem, with introduction and notes, Muḥammad Sharif Niẓām al-Dīn Hirawī, *Anwāriyah: An 11th century A.H. Persian translation and commentary on Suhrawardī's Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*, 2d ed. (Tehran: Amīr Kabīr, 1358 H.Sh./1980); idem, *Knowledge and Illumination* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990).

major breakthrough in epistemology; it was thought that this perfect and consistent theory could demonstrate any type of knowledge, including the highest form, revelation. Avicenna subsequently revised and expanded this thought, resulting in his theory of Intellectual Knowledge (*al-ʿilm al-ʿaqlī / al-burhānī*), viewed as one of his greatest achievements. Briefly, Avicenna's epistemological theory functions in a discrete-mechanical universe, moved and regulated by ten of the cosmic separate entities, each being an intellect, Aristotle's *Noûs*. The Active Intellect regulates the sublunar entities and acts as "Giver of Forms" (*wāhib al-ṣuwar*) for a select few who thus gain absolute knowledge. This epistemological mode was immediately equated with prophethood.²² Moreover, most significant and Avicenna's greatest achievement of all, a few minds upon meeting certain rigorous conditions²³ are elevated to the rank of "Union" (*ittiḥād*) or "connection" (*ittiṣāl*)²⁴ with the Active Intellect which in its capacity of Giver of Forms bestows such minds with the Forms of all knowables, taking them from passivity to actuality. Stated in ordinary language, such knowledge is revelation. Avicenna was widely accepted by the *ʿulamāʾ* because:

[H]e attached the name prophecy to a broader range of phenomena than Alfarabi did. He recognized the possibility of man's attaining instantaneous scientific knowledge without following scientific procedures, something rejected by Alfarabi and to be rejected by Averroes. Through insight, the human soul establishes conjunction with the active intellect effortlessly, and from the active intellect's emanation the soul immediately receives the middle terms of syllogisms, the syllogisms themselves, and their conclusions. The ability to attain broad instantaneous scientific knowledge through insight is the "highest of the powers of prophecy."²⁵

We can readily see Avicenna's appeal for the Shīʿah. And indeed, Avicennan philosophy continued to attract some seventeenth-century Shīʿī *ʿulamāʾ*, for instance Mīr Findiriskī (d. 1050/1640) and Shaykh Bahāʾī (d. 1031/1622). Nevertheless, a reaction to Peripatetic and Avicennan philosophy emerged in the form of the Ishrāqī or "Illuminationist" school. The founder of this school, Mīr Dāmād (d. 1040/1631), realized that Avicenna was essentially an Aristotelian and his famous philosophic encyclopedia *Shifāʾ* an

²² The so-called Active Intellect was actually named by Aristotle himself as a kind of independently thinking *noûs* (*De Anima* III, 5, 430a), but the commentator Alexander of Aphrodisias introduced *noûs poietikós*.

²³ See Fazlur Rahman, *Avicenna's Psychology* (Oxford U.P., 1952), 10-17; 147ff.

²⁴ These and other terms were used rather loosely in discussing the important concepts of "sameness," "equality," "unity," and connection as a kind of identity or sameness—for the Peripatetics paid no attention to basic distinctions among what-is-sameness, what-is-identity, what-is simple numerical, and other types of equality. This major metaphysical problem caused many errors in Peripateticism, from its origins in late Antiquity through its Arabic version, and then as European vernacular replaced Latin. The prime example is Ficino's (d. 1499) Italian commentaries on Plato's *Dialogues* and his studies of Platonism and of philosophy in general.

²⁵ See Herbert Davidson's seminal study *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes on Intellect* (New York: Oxford U.P., 1992), 123.

elaboration of the Aristotelian scientific method. Eventually, through the writings of Suhrawardī (one of the formative influences of the school), as well as Shahrāzūrī (d. after 688/1288), Ibn Kammūnah (d. 683/1284), Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī (d. 710/1311), Maṣṣūr Dashtakī (d. 948/1541), Jalāl al-Dīn Davvānī (d. 908/1501) and Muḥammad Sharīf Nizām al-Dīn Hirawī (d. 11th/early 17th C.), Illuminationism came to dominate Peripateticism. This happened for several reasons. For one thing, it had become quite well known that Peripateticized Aristotle was fraught with problems on such serious issues as creation, eternity, and immortality, as well as exhibiting fundamental logical gaps in the methodology of science; Islamic Peripateticism collapsed not only because of Ghazālī's clever rebuttal, but due to technical defects or logical gaps in its foundations. But Illuminationism also offered an epistemological theory that could accommodate Shī'ī doctrine more readily, as well as an Iranian symbolism integrated into a political doctrine, as we shall see below.

The most crucial epistemological problem was the concept of "intellectual knowledge" presented in *De Anima* III and *Metaphysics* XII. Briefly, in explaining how primary principles are obtained, the Stagirite named them "immediate" and "indemonstrable" (*Anal. Post.* I, 79ff). But he never developed a theory to explain these epistemic modes. Nor did the Peripateticism of the Aristotelean commentators of late antiquity or of Islam as fully re-worked by Fārābī and Avicenna pay much attention to the basic dilemma of the epistemology of immediate indemonstrable knowledge, preferring to concentrate instead on harmonizing reason and revelation.

The Illuminationist philosophers addressed this problem by developing a unified epistemological theory. Their most prior First Principles of science are obtained by a cognitive mode which is both "immediate" (in durationless time, *ān*) and not demonstrable by temporally extended syllogistic deduction. This mode is named "seeing" (*mushāhadah*, of the non-corporeal; *ibṣār*, of sense data), and is akin to the notion of "hads" or intuition. It is an immediate relational correspondence between a knowing (self-conscious) subject and knowable object, leading to knowledge of essence. The Illuminationists further demonstrated the validity of extraordinary knowledge gained through a combination of study of the intellectual sciences and strong intuition. This they accomplished through the construction of *ahkām al-hads* (intuitive judgements) within the Illuminationist system so as to give them priority over the demonstrated results of syllogistic science. Thus intuition becomes a noetic process, not to be confused with generalized, subjective mystic visionary claims; it functions within the epistemology of "Knowledge by Presence" as *ibṣār* (common sight) in the corporeal world and *ishrāq wa-mushāhadah* (illumination and seeing) in the non-corporeal world. This "seeing" is similar to Fichte's technical use of *Anschauung*; it is as scientifically sound as the "witnessing" of stars and celestial objects by astronomers who are then able to predict celestial occurrences with mathematical accuracy. In short, the Peripatetics began the study of existing Reality in the stage of dyadic

differentiation, and their definitions, the cornerstone of syllogistic science, are all in the form of predicative propositions, which are tautological and thus do not lead to knowledge of Essence. But Illuminationist philosophy is founded upon a mode of knowledge said to be distinct from cogitation (*fikr*)—upon a primary “seeing” in durationless time (*ān*), prior to dyadic differentiation of Reality into Prime Matter and Form.²⁶ The Illuminationists equally demonstrated the validity of knowledge through *ilhām* considered as one of the types of immediate, non-inferential, pre-propositional intuitive modes of cognition, as well as other types of non-standard intellectual and intuitive knowledge.²⁷

In this way the crucial gaps that result from the tautological nature of Aristotelean *horos* and *horismus* (*al-hadd al-tāmm*) put in the form of a predicative proposition are resolved. Thus, for example, “intuitive judgements” (*al-ahkām al-hads*) are as valid as syllogistic reasoning, but prepropositional in form, similar conceptually to Plato’s notion of “remembrance.” Intuition links the human intellect to the world of *noumina*—or in the case of Shī‘ism, to the “Unseen World.” In sum, priority given the epistemic mode “immediate, durationless, intuitive cognizance” resulted in an elaborate epistemological theory. This theory had been called by the young, charismatic, and creative Suhrawardī, who was instrumental in devising it, “Knowledge by Presence” (*al-‘ilm al-ḥudūrī*).²⁸ His introduction to *Hikmat al-ishrāq* (“The Wisdom of Illumination”) here quoted at length, illustrates its appeal for Shī‘i thinkers:

²⁶ “*Irṣād jismānī wa-irṣād rūḥānī tuntaj min humā natā‘ij musallamah yaqīnīyah.*” See Suhrawardī, *Hikmat al-ishrāq/Le livre de la sagesse orientale*, ed. Henry Corbin (Istanbul: Maarif Matbaası, 1945), I (Introduction), 11.1. See also my *Shahrazūrī’s Commentary*, I. Prolegomena.

²⁷ See my *Knowledge and Illumination*, Ch. III: 5, Ch. IV: 3.

²⁸ I cannot discuss Suhrawardī here, but refer the reader to a few good studies. The major biographical sources are: Ibn Abī Uṣaybī‘ah, *‘Uyūn al-anbā’ fi ṭabaqāt al-a‘ibbā’*, ed. A. Mueller, 2 vols. (Koenigsberg i. Pr., 1884), I, 168; the edition I have used is that of N. Riḍā (Beirut: Dār Maktabat al-Ḥayat, 1384/1965), 641-646; Yāqūt, *Irshād al-arīb*, ed. D.S. Margoliouth, 7 vols., (Leyden: Brill, 1907-1927), VI, 269; Qifī, *Tārīkh al-ḥukamā’* (11th century Persian translation), ed. Bahman Dārā‘ī (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Dānishgāh, 1347 H.Sh./1968), 345; Ibn Khallikān, *Waḥayāt al-‘ayān*, ed. Ihsān ‘Abbās, 8 vols. (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1398/1978), IV, 268-274; Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Shahrazūrī, *Nuzhat al-arwāḥ wa-rawḍat al-afrāḥ fi tārīkh al-ḥukamā’ wa-al-falāsifah*, ed. Khurshīd Aḥmad, 2 vols. (Hayderabad: Maṭba‘at Majlis Dā‘irat al-Ma‘ārif al-‘Uthmānīyah, 1395/1976), II, 119-143. See also W.M. Thackston, Jr. *The Mystical and Visionary Treatises of Shihabuddin Yahya Suhrawardī* (London: The Octagon Press, 1982); Max Hoerten, *Die Philosophie der Erleuchtung nach Suhrawardī* (Halle: M. Niemeyer, 1912); Hellmut Ritter, “Philologika IX: Die vier Suhrawardī,” *Der Islam* 24 (1937): 270-286 and 25 (1938): 35-86; Henry Corbin, *Suhrawardī d’Alep, fondateur de la doctrine illuminative* (Paris: G.-P. Maisonneuve, 1939); *idem*, *Les motifs zoroastriens dans la philosophie de Sohrwardī* (Tehran: Éditions Courier, 1946); *idem*, *L’homme de Lumière dans le soufisme iranien* (Paris: Sison, 1971). See especially Corbin’s Prolegomènes to each of his following critical editions of Suhrawardī’s works: *Opera Metaphysica et Mystica I* (Istanbul: Maarif Matbaası, 1945), *Opera Metaphysica et Mystica II* (Tehran: Institut franco-iranien, 1954); *Opera Metaphysica et Mystica III* (Tehran: Institut franco-iranien, 1970); and Hirawī, *Arwā‘īyah*.

I [Suhrawardī] will write for you a book in which I mention what I have obtained by my intuition (*dhawq*) during my retreats (*khalawāt*) and moments of revelation (*munāzalāt*). In every seeking soul there is a portion of the light of God, be it abundant or little. And every scholar has intuition, be it perfect or not. Knowledge does not rest only among a particular group of people so that the doors of Heaven be shut behind them and the rest of the world be denied the possibility of obtaining more; rather the Dator Scientias (*wāhib al-ilm*), who stands by the "clear horizon" (Q. 71:23) is not stingy with the Unseen (*al-ghayb*).²⁹

The most evil age is the one which is lacking in personal endeavor, in which the movement of thought is interrupted, and door of revelations (*al-mukāshafāt*) is locked, and the way of visions (*al-mushāhadāt*) is closed.³⁰

The world has never been without philosophy, nor without a person who is in charge of its wisdom, possessing proofs and explanations. Such a person is God's vicegerent on earth (*khalīfat Allāh fi al-ard*), and this will be so as long as there are heavens and earth.

The group [of philosophers] include the "messengers" (*ahl al-sifārah*) and the "lawgivers" (*al-shārfūn*) ... and others. Should it happen that in some period there is a philosopher proficient in both divine philosophy (*al-hikmah al-muta'allihah*) and discursive philosophy (*al-hikmah al-bahthiyah*), he will have the leadership (*al-rfāsah*), and [such a philosopher] is God's vicegerent (*khalīfah*). Should it happen that this not be the case, then a philosopher proficient in divine philosophy, but of middle ability in discursive philosophy [will have the leadership]. Should it happen that even this is not the case, then a philosopher who is proficient in divine philosophy, but who lacks discursive philosophy, is God's vicegerent. The earth will never be without a philosopher proficient in divine philosophy. Leadership on earth will never be given to the proficient discursive philosopher who has *not* become proficient in divine philosophy. Thus the world is never without a proficient divine philosopher, who is more worthy than he who is only a discursive philosopher; for inevitably, guardianship (*rfāsah*) must be held [by someone]. By this leadership I do not mean only temporal control. Rather, the imām-philosopher may either be openly in command, or he may be in Occultation, [in which case] the multitude refer to him as "the pole" (*al-qutb*); he will have the leadership even if it is in utmost concealment. When earthly rule (*al-siyāsah*) is in such a philosopher's hands, the age will be a luminous one (*zamān nūrānī*); but if the age is without divine management (*tadbīr ilāhī*), darkness will be triumphant.³¹

The theory of "Knowledge by Presence" is quoted in almost every text in the Intellectual Sciences. It is *the* theory named in almost all present-day publications by the Shī'ī *ulamā'* in the domains of philosophy (where it is argued), creed (*uṣūl al-dīn*), and gnosis (*irfān*). Most important for the present discussion, the majority of theological and juridical studies of imamate and Guardianship (*wilāyah*) refer to this epistemological mode to demonstrate the validity of extraordinary knowledge, as well as God's knowledge of the

²⁹ *Hikmat al-ishrāq*, 10-11.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 12.

particulars. Consider the following synopsis of Suhrawardī's theory: the laws of science formulated as A-propositions cannot be both necessary *and* always true, because future contingency (*al-imbkān al-mustaqbal*) is a scientific principle and has priority over deduced laws. That is to say, $\Gamma(\alpha)\tau_v$ (τ_v = present time) formulated as, or equated with, the formula $\Gamma(\alpha)\Leftrightarrow\forall(\alpha)f(\alpha)$ are inherently refutable (similar to Popper's views), and may in fact in some future time and or/other possible world be demonstrated to be wrong, i.e. the universal affirmative proposition $\forall(\alpha)f(\alpha)$ set as the law $\Gamma(\alpha)$ at time τ_v will be negated; because at some later time τ_{v+t} , something, say β —where β is included in α —may be observed which would negate the validity of $\Gamma(\alpha)$; that is: $\langle \rangle$ ("possibly") $\exists\beta$ at τ_{v+t} , and $\beta = \neg$ ("not" i.e. *falsity of*) $f(\beta)$; and thus $\neg f(\forall(\alpha)f(\alpha))\tau_{v+t}$, and therefore $\forall(\alpha)f(\alpha)$ is proven false for τ_{v+t} , thus $\Gamma(\alpha)$ cannot be a universal law valid at *all* times, present and future.

The consequences of this initially purely *scientific* endeavor to expand upon Aristotelian philosophy rather than blindly imitate it have been most evident in Shī'ī political philosophy and in the absolute role bestowed upon the ranking member of the clergy to act (among other things) as the scientist-observer of any particular time charged with redefining the principles of "science" (*'ilm*). This is what is meant in contemporary Shī'ism when it is said that the ranking Ayatollah possesses absolute knowledge of every domain of science pertaining to the world of sense perception, as well as absolute knowledge of the realms of non-corporeal being—it is that he combines to a perfect degree discursive philosophy and intuitive philosophy, as defined by Suhrawardī and described above. This fundamental Shī'ī position did not appear suddenly; it goes back to the greatest philosopher of all time, the First Teacher himself.

It is also necessary to mention Ibn Turkah Iṣfahānī (d. 836/1432), referred to in the texts of the madrasah syllabi as "Ṣā'in al-Dīn." He was among the first scholars to write jurisprudence in Persian, and also allegedly the first to make a serious attempt to harmonize *fiqh*, *'irfān*, and philosophy and define a common language of technical discourse. It is largely due to him that the Illuminationists were able to define and formulate a non-ordinary technical (meta-) language of discourse capable of presenting the common foundation of these three disciplines in order to arrive at a measure of agreement among them—that is to accomplish an almost impossible task never attempted by any other Islamic tradition of scholarship. As the learned philosopher Sayyid Jalāl al-Dīn Āshtiyānī has repeatedly stated, Ṣā'in al-Dīn's contribution must be examined primarily through his ontologic-centred text, *Tamhīd al-qawā'id*.³² Renowned Shī'ī savants of the intellectual sciences (*'ulūm-i 'aqlī*, a term perhaps first popularized by Ṣā'in al-Dīn himself) living in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—such as Ḍiyā' al-Dīn Durri, Āghā Mīrzā Muḥammad Qumshah-ī, Qumshah-ī's mentor Mīrzā Muḥammad 'Alī

³² 'Alī ibn Muḥammad Abū Ḥāmid al-Iṣfahānī al-Khujandī, Ṣā'in al-Dīn, *Tamhīd al-qawā'id*, ed. Jalāl al-Dīn Āshtiyānī ([Tehran]: Anjuman-i Shāhanshāhi-i Falsafah-i Irān, 2535/1976).

Muẓaffar, and Āghā Sayyid Muḥammad Kāẓim al-Lavāsānī al-Ṭīhrānī—all studied *Tamhīd al-qawā'id*.³³ Evidently, this text was considered significant and ranked highly in the madrasah syllabi. A virtual compendium of high Shī'ī intellectual theory, its central focus is the comparison and harmonization of the two schools of thought that comprise the intellectual heritage of Shī'ism: Peripateticism, largely as interpreted by Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī (d. 672/1274); and Illuminationism, studied in a somewhat tamed version by the commentators Shahrzūrī, Ibn Kammūnah, and Quṭb al-Dīn Shīrāzī. Scholars such as Nasr, Bihbihānī, and Dībājī hail the *Tamhīd* as a triumph in harmonization and believe this aspect has contributed to the author's success in constructing a "speculative mysticism"—although it might more aptly be designated "philosophical studies on fundamental ontological problems in the phenomenology and philosophy of religion." The author is given most to analysis of ontological problems such as the long-standing inquiry in Islamic philosophy into distinctions among *Das Sein*, *Das Seinde*, *Das Seinde-in-Ganzen* and *Dasein*; and the precise impact on epistemological theory of the priority or non-priority of *Das Anwesen* to *Das Vernehmen*.³⁴ In short, Ṣā'īn al-Dīn's innovative ideas, preserved in more than sixty works,³⁵ played a central role in the definition of intellectual processes that have shaped Iranian Shī'ism in ways more acceptable to the high-ranking jurists than philosophy ever could.

The *Tamhīd* has also greatly impacted twentieth-century Shī'ī thought. It may best be described in contemporary terms as a text on phenomenology and philosophy of religion, comparable in its methodology and objectives to such works as van der Leeuw's *Religion in Essence and Manifestation* and Eliade's *The Sacred and the Profane*. The critical difference is that Ṣā'īn al-Dīn's work includes a profound and elaborate examination of the metaphysics of the One and explicit statements, in ordinary language, that his purpose is to provide a "proof" for imamate and Guardianship. For him the theoretical synthesis of philosophy, *irfān*, and jurisprudence serves both to harmonize intellectual and juridical traditions and prove the absolute validity of representative guardianship as the continuation of imamate.

Subsequent to Ṣā'īn al-Dīn, the "scientific revival" of the seventeenth-century Isfahan school presented a new and dynamic thinking based on innovative use of earlier philosophical thought, notably Suhrawardī and his

³³ Proved in the recent seminal study by Manuḥīr Ṣaduqī-Suhā, *Tārīkh-i ḥukamā' va-ṣ-wafā'-i muta'akkhīr bar Ṣadr al-Muta'allīhīn/A Bio-bibliography of Post-Ṣadr-ul-Muta'allīhīn Mystics & Philosophers* [sic] (Tehran: Anjuman-i Islāmī-i Ḥikmat va-Falsafah-i Irān, 1359 H.Sh./1980), especially Section VII.

³⁴ Priority not in simple Euclidean spacio-temporal extensions of the real, *res*, but priority-qua-priority.

³⁵ See Sayyid 'Alī Mūsawī Bihbihānī, "Aḥvāl va-āthār-i Ṣā'īn al-Dīn Turkah-'i Isfahānī," in *Collected Papers on Islamic Philosophy and Mysticism*, ed. Mehdi Mohaghegh and Hermann Landolt (Tehran: McGill University, Institute of Islamic Studies, Tehran Branch, 1349 H.Sh./1971), 87-45, 168-169.

commentators Shahrazūrī, Ibn Kammūnah, and Qutb al-Dīn Shīrāzī. To name but a few of the accomplishments of the school: the concept of Eternal Creation (*ḥudūth dahrī*) was introduced; proof for God's knowledge was devised by applying the theory of Knowledge by Presence and naming His Knowledge "Presencing Knowledge" ("*ilm-i bārī? ḥudūrī ast*"); propagation of light was proposed through continuous sequences (such as 2ⁿ) creating the Continuum-Whole, *al-ittiṣāl bidūn infisāl aṣḥān fi al-kull*—and so on. The two leading figures of the school of Isfahan, the great Ishrāqī philosopher Mīr Dāmād (d.1040/1631) and his disciple Mullā Ṣadrā (d.1050/1640), found Suhrawardī's epistemology, as well as his continuum theory and light-propagation, well suited to their mission of harmonizing philosophy with *fiqh*, *uṣūl al-dīn*, and *irfān* without offending the jurists by pronouncements on creation, resurrection, and God's knowledge.

At this time, the unified theory of Knowledge by Presence (*al-ilm al-ḥudūrī*) became a powerful tool for demonstrating not only the validity of *ilhām*, but also Safavid legitimacy.³⁶ Faced with Ash'arī doctrinaire proofs of the legitimacy of the Ottoman caliphate,³⁷ the Safavids legitimized their spiritual authority and divine right to rule both through the Shī'ī notion of *ilhām* from the imāms, and the living memory, now brought once again to the fore, of Iranian kingship.

Legitimacy had been already partly secured by dreams experienced by Shāh Ṭahmāsp, founder of the Safavid dynasty, and his successors. For instance, Sulṭān Ḥaydar had a dream in which he was chosen by the Unseen to prepare the twelve-cornered Ḥaydarī crown as a sign of the royal authority of Safavid rule,³⁸ while in many dreams, Ṭahmāsp is invested not only with spiritual authority by luminous figures commonly accepted to be the imāms, but also with the royal authority of just Iranian rulers from Kaykhusraw to Artakhshīr.³⁹ Such dream episodes were commonly related by historians to

³⁶ Though it has been little acknowledged, philosophical learning and concepts of *ilm* were a driving force in the building by the Safavids of a "new" Iran in the seventeenth century. The Safavids not only rescued an Iran divided, bankrupt, powerless, and exploited by marauding warlords; they also revitalized intellectual life, supporting state-endowed schools and renewing scholarship. Most important, Safavid rule resulted in institutionalization of the ideals and principles of Shī'ī thought. These had never before been cohesive or even discussed openly; scholars in Jabal 'Āmil (in present-day Lebanon) had no idea what their counterparts in Yaman were studying.

³⁷ A legitimacy based on interpreted versions of principles expressed in classical Sunni political texts, such as Māwardī's (d. 450/1058) *al-Aḥkām al-sulṭānīyah* and Abū Ya'la's (d. 458/1066) work of the same name.

³⁸ See Ḥusayn ibn Murtaḍā Ḥusaynī Astarābādī, *Tarīkh-i sulṭānī az Shaykh Ṣaḍī tā Shāh Ṣaḍī*, ed. Iḥsān Ishrāqī ([Tehran]: Intishārāt-i 'Ilmī, 1364 H.Sh./1985), 19-26.

³⁹ For examples see *ibid.*, 19, 25-27, 35ff; see also Ibn Bazzāz, *Ṣafwat al-Ṣaḍā*, 2 vols. (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Zaryāb, 1376 H.Sh./1997 or 98), I, 1-7. Acceptance of this idea may have been facilitated by Firdawsī's *Shāhnāmah*. The *Shāhnāmah* was well known to the Iranian populace. Many knew it by heart, and storytellers (s. *naqqāl*) told of the heroic deeds of kings and champions all over the land. In fact, there is a dream-episode in the *Shāhnāmah* which parallels the view of Safavids as restorers of Iran's glory: that of Zāḥḥāk and the restoration of Kiyānid

lend divine authority to Sāfavid rule.⁴⁰ However, they lacked an intellectual foundation harmonious with the principles of revelation and not offensive to the *sharī'ah*; although the Safavids had decreed Shī'ī legalist tradition the law of the land, they still lacked Shī'ī-defined spiritual authority. What was needed was a political philosophy that could explain in "scientific" terms the legitimacy of divine authority of a Turkic ruler.

The kernel of this political philosophy was again provided by Suhrawardī. Suhrawardī's political doctrine "validated" an Islamicized version of the Iranian concept of divine authority of kings. His theory was so construed that the ruler need not be related by blood to Muḥammad's Arab clan; his authority would derive instead from knowledge and the ancient Iranian idea of the "aura of kingship" (*farr* or *farrāh-i izādī*). I have named this "Illuminationist Political Doctrine" and have discussed it elsewhere.⁴¹ Applied to the Safavids, it conferred legitimacy on either a monarch learned in both discursive and intuitive philosophy, or one who had constantly by his side a philosopher-sage who could counsel the ruler through "illumination" (*ishrāq*) and "seeing" (*mushāhadah*, similar to the idea of *ilhām*), as well as the science of philosophy. Guardianship (*wilāyah*), not originally part of Suhrawardī's model, was added as an integral and necessary component for the legitimization of Sāfavid rule. The monarch in Iranian Shī'ism henceforth was seen in terms akin to the ancient Persian rulers who possessed "divine glory" (*farrāh-i izādī*). The Sāfavid monarch was thus, at least in principle, considered a divinely-inspired ruler with manifest signs of divine glory, possessing temporal authority with manifest power of rule. In this way Fārābī's prophet-lawgiver and First Ruler—the Philosopher-King of Plato—is transformed into the Shī'ī Guardian-Ruler. Consider the following excerpt from Suhrawardī's *Partaw-nāmah* or "Book of Radiance," in which we learn that:

Any king⁴² who learns wisdom (*ḥikmah*) and persists in his consecration (*taqādis*) of the Light of Lights ... will be given the Great Royal Light (*kiyān*

rule (*farrāh-i kiyānī*); see *Shāhnāmah*, ed. J. Mohl, 10 vols. (Tehran: Jibī, 1362 H.Sh./1984; repr., Paris, 1838-1878), III, 36. Another of the *Shāhnāmah*'s eighteen dream-episodes concerns Siyāvush's vision in which he is informed that "there is no way to turn away from God's justice" (*ibid.*, II, 193, 194). Firdawsi invokes the authority of the Prophet Muḥammad to legitimize such dreams, warning: "Behold that thou dost not consider dreams to be meaningless." He goes on to declare that "It [dreaming] is a part of the prophet's knowledge" and that "enlightened souls see in dreams, all existent things" (*ibid.*, VI, 122). This confirms the essence of the Iranian-Islamic position regarding dreams as a principal channel of *ilhām*.

⁴⁰ See Ghiyāth al-Dīn al-Ḥusaynī, Khvānd Amīr, *Tārīkh-i ḥabīb al-siyar*, ed. Muḥammad Dabīr Siyāqī, 4 vols. (Tehran: Khayyām, 1363 H.Sh./1983), IV, 413ff. See also Henri Massé, *Anthologie persane* (Paris: Payot, 1950), 349-350.

⁴¹ "Source and Nature of Authority: A Study of Suhrawardī's Illuminationist Political Doctrine," in *The Political Aspects of Islamic Philosophy*, ed. Charles Butterworth (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1992), 304-344.

⁴² I read *har pādīshāhi* instead of *har-ki*; cf. *Opera* I, 504. This reading is preferred by Corbin, but not Nasr; see *Opera* III, 81.

kharrāh) and the luminous light [called] *farrāh*. Divine light will bestow upon him the robe of Royal Authority and of majesty. He will become the natural ruler of the world (*ra'īs-i ṭabī'ī-i 'ālam*). He will receive aid from the lofty realm of the heavens, and whatever he says will be heard there. His dreams and his personal inspirations (*ilhāmāt*) will reach perfection.⁴³

This Illuminationist use of *ilhām* readily appealed to the Shī'ah, not only because they were already familiar with it from the *Ṣaḥīfah Sajjādīyah*, but because it allowed for continual linkage with the twelfth imām.

IV. Sabzavārī and the Authority of the Religious Class

It was the great thinker Ḥājj Mullā Hādī Sabzavārī who finally succeeded, following the attempts of many others, in completely harmonizing reason and revelation through his "Divine Philosophy" (*al-ḥikmah al-muta'allihah*). His contribution, along with that of Ṣā'ib al-Dīn, might be regarded as essentially a reworking of Suhrawardī's unified epistemology in a refined language more in harmony with jurisprudence (*fiqh*). Nevertheless, it did prove to be a crucial development in Shī'ī thought, for it was with him that the concept of guardianship was fully integrated within Shī'ī political theory and "given rational proof" (*burhānī shud*). Sabzavārī refined and made abundant use of Illuminationist meta-language (*lisān al-ishrāq*) in order to reformulate Knowledge by Presence so as to prove the legitimacy and authority of the imamate, and thus of Guardianship (*wilāyah*) in the absence of the twelfth imām.

This language has even been employed at times in texts on *uṣūl*, that is creed. It is clearly equivalent to our notion of "meta-language" today, in which terms are assigned significations and values and are not to be confused with symbols of some theosophical mystery no one knows and for which there is no textual evidence.⁴⁴

Illuminationist philosophy, through several re-examinations and as finally articulated in the nineteenth century by Sabzavārī in an altered language made consistent with *irfān* and with the principles of imamate and Guardianship or *wilāyah*, lives on today in Iran, where it continues to be discussed.⁴⁵ Because of it, philosophy may be said to be presently in harmony with Shī'ī thought, and even at points integrated with it, for it provides the jurists, gnostics, and philosophers with a common language of discourse so that the more intelligent members of each group actually read works by the other groups and agree on many, if not the majority, of issues that comprise what we know as Shī'ism today.

⁴³ *Opera III*, 80-81, and cf. p. 194. See also Ziai, *Radiance*, 84-85.

⁴⁴ See *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq I*, Introduction.

⁴⁵ Ṣadūqī enumerates four hundred philosophers, each one with several texts to his name, from the late seventeenth century to the present. See Ṣadūqī, *Bio-bibliography*. I know of few other civilizations that have produced this many philosophers in three centuries.

One of the most significant principles allowing for the symbiotic continuation of *fiqh* and philosophy that has helped to define and direct present-day Shī'ism is that of "rational jurisprudence" (*fiqh-i ijtihādī*). To begin, exercise of reason in the legislative process serves to ensure the legitimacy of the *marjī'* or top legal authority. In addition, the lively and dynamic system of philosophy and logic intensely studied by a limited number of the most highly-regarded clergy-scholars not only ensures the internal consistency of a holistic Shī'ī system of thought, but posits priority of the "scientific" examination of the "Most Learned" (*ʿālam*) and the Supreme Ayatollah (*āyat allāh al-ʿuzmā*) of the foundations of knowledge. This side of the Ayatollah's activity is not purely symbolic, nor is it limited to legalist problem-solving. Rather, the ranking Ayatollah must necessarily re-examine the principles of science (*ʿilm*) to ensure its validity. For valid science is required to legitimize government, which must be based on valid truths rather than the unchanging values proven by Suhrawardī to be an Aristotlean fallacy. Thus the highest-ranking or "most learned" (*ʿālam*) Ayatollah-jurist may refine, reformulate, and even renew the principles of "valid knowledge."⁴⁶ In this way he upholds the scientific validity of immediate and divinely-inspired knowledge as in every period laws and principles are deduced anew and refined in accord with the Shī'ī requirement of ongoing *ijtihād*. The significance of this is not merely academic; such an endeavor is central to the Shī'ī concept of legitimate government as spiritual *wilāyah* or guardianship.

Thus the early nineteenth century learned clergy were able to greatly refine Sabzavārī's system and supply further, novel interpretations of the theories of *marjī'īyah* or source of authority and *ʿālamīyah* or superiority in learnedness. The doctrine of *wilāyat-i faqīh* or guardianship of the jurist is only the most recent designation of this theory; it is the logical conclusion of a long intellectual process which I have presented here only in minimum form.

⁴⁶ *Al-ʿilm al-ṣāhīh, al-ʿilm al-burhānī, or al-ʿilm al-yaqīnī.*

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