

Transcendental Politics: the Meeting Point of *Parrhesia* and the Ideal of Freedom¹

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Abstract

The present article presupposes that the philosopher does not restrict himself just to knowing things as they are; rather, rising to do things as they must [be done] is considered the actual continuation of his thought, and that a philosopher is not just aware of the truth, but he stays at it. The article poses the following questions: "what is Mullah Sadra's position as to the truth?" "Is our philosopher – as Foucault expresses under the features of *Parrhesia* – ready to have the same treatment with truth as Socrates did?" This study deals with Mullah Sadra's *Parrhesia*-like actual aspects in confronting with the owners of power and the factors defacing social wisdom. Thus, the study of Mullah Sadra's political-social mission is determined in two lines. First, we deal with Mullah Sadra's *Parrhesian* mission. *Parrhesia* means truthfulness without adulation, freedom of speech, frankness and explicit veracity in facing with the king's will or facing the irrational requests of the majority. In the second line, we deal with Mullah Sadra's attempt to enumerate factors defacing the truth in a way that leads to ruin of the social wisdom, an action that can result – by removing the layers of ignorance – in freedom of human's reason from the dominance of factors defacing it. The removal of layers of ignorance has been borrowed from the literature of ideal of freedom in Frankfurt school. The present article uses the discourse method for maximal coverage of the meanings.

Keywords

Parrhesia, freedom, truth, philosophy, transcendental politics

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Introduction

In his book entitled *Discourse and Truth* (2001), Foucault deals with the concepts of *Parrhesia* and *Parrhesiastes* (the one who uses *Parrhesia*). In Foucault's words, *Parrhesia* means truthful without adulation, freedom of speech, frankness and explicit truthfulness in facing a sovereign's will or facing the irrational requests of the majority. And the *Parrhesiastes* is someone who acts according to the rules of *Parrhesia* and speaks of those truths that bring about the society's welfare and felicity all the time, even if there is a risk to his life. For Foucault, such a person, with the prominent example being Socrates, enjoys two basic characteristics: (1) harmony of speech and behavior; and (2) stability in behavior, belief and thought (Foucault, 2001, pp. 28-35)

If the prominent example of *Parrhesiastes* offered by Foucault is Socrates, Socrates' statement that "virtue is knowledge" is true for Socrates himself. "Virtue is knowledge" means when philosopher knows that something is right, he does it; and when he knows something is not right, he does not commit that wrong action (Gomperz, 1896, pp. 907-911). That is, any action done by the philosopher is accompanied by deep knowledge and insight. This fact leads us to the Islamic philosophers' perception of philosophy. Islamic philosophers have defined philosophy (*ḥikmat*) as follows: "knowing things as they are and rising to do things as they must [be done]" (Khaja Nasir, 1369 SH, p. 37). Viewed from this angle, there is no distance between the philosopher's theory and his practice, because the true philosopher does not stop at knowing philosophy; rather, he stands up to do it. As we said, he "rises to do things as they must be done". And, this is the linking point between philosophy and the rules of *Parrhesia*.

Considering this introduction, the present article regards Mullah Sadra (979-1045 AH) as the very *Parrhesiastes* of the Safawid period,

who – demanded by his philosophy – firstly acts according to *Parrhesia* rules and, secondly, does his best to free the social wisdom from the yoke of ignorance, explaining the features of true wisdom. Compared to Socrates, Mullah Sadra goes further in speaking frankly and insisting on truth, and welcomes the threats to his life and property as well as going to exile. This is because he himself admires Socrates in some occasions: "Socrates is satisfied just with divine philosophy and turns away from the worldly pleasures, opposing the Greeks in their religion. The public and the adventurers opposed him and requested his execution. The governor sent him to jail and poisoned him, as it is well-known" (Mullah Sadra, 1371 SH, p. 66).

This much courage and frankness is the result of spiritual struggles done by the Shirazi *Parrhesiastes* (i.e. Mullah Sadra) in the same way as the divine men and the wayfarers do. In a time when journey from a city to a neighboring city was impossible for many, Mullah Sadra "went to Mecca, along with a caravan, on foot seven times, which is indeed above all severe austerities" (Mullah Sadra, 1371 SH, p.19). As acknowledged by many of his friends and associates, he was always busy in religious austerities from saying recommended prayers and doing recommended practices to fasting in day and nocturnal vigilance (Mullah Sadra, 1371 SH, p. 66). All what he enumerates as the characteristic of truth-seeking pious people apply to he himself. "The pious man loves truthfulness and the true people as well as knowledge and the knowledgeable men. He is not a rebel and obstinate person in pursuing his passions. He is not among those who eat and drink much and those who are easily attracted to lusts. His spirit refrains from what people consider as valueless. He is committed to chastity and piety, welcomes goodness and justice, and rebels against evil and oppression. He is kind towards benevolent people and furious towards oppressive people and tyrants" (Mullah Sadra, 1371 SH, pp. 69-70).

Background of the study

Regarding Mullah Sadra's political approach, hundreds of books and articles have been written, whether as independent works or along with more major subject matters such as Mullah Sadra's philosophy. Some of these works, which are definitely in Mullah Sadra's political approach, mainly place his theory of perfect man as their basis to bring the atmosphere of philosophy into their discussion, thus they have not paid much attention to the appearance of his political action. Therefore, in this article, in line with the discussion focused on manifestations of the philosopher's political action, we have tried to first refer to Mullah Sadra's works directly and, first of all, we considered *Kasr Aşnnām Jāhiliyya* and *Risāla Si Aşl*. Then, we studied Mullah Sadra's approaches to politics by referring to historical texts. Among them, the book entitled *Şafawiyya dar 'Arşayi Dīn wa Farhang wa Siyāsāt* written by Rasool Ja'fariyan is a book exploring the political, religious and social history of Mullah Sadra's era while taking a scientific approach.

Theoretical framework

The present study has used the method of discourse for several reasons:

1. This study sees firstly a discourse containing the denotations defacing the reason, i.e. what Mullah Sadra calls *ignorance*; that is, a discourse articulated with various types of ignorance idols.
2. Some of the values of this discourse are so valid and accessible that the philosopher has to act according to the rules of *Parrhesia* and risk his welfare, his peace and even his life.
3. In the discourse, the researcher's focus is on the appearance of the things and affairs; thus, the objective realities in the relationship between politics and philosophy are considered, not the abstract and non-concrete concepts.
4. The last part of the article wherein Mullah Sadra has the concern for freedom from ignorance or – in his own words – the concern

for *kasr aṣṇām Jāhillya* (literally: breaking the idols of ignorance) has somewhat been explained in the language of freedom school.

Mullah Sadra and stating the truth

Mullah Sadra's lifetime is coincident with the powerful presence of two social classes: jurists and Sufis. These two groups – equally – consider themselves as responsible for adjusting social wisdom. It is half a century that the jurists are supporting their increasing power in the society. The Sufis are in the cycle of declining but still exist; and as Mullah Sadra mentions, not only are they present, but also their presence is quite bold¹ and they still consider a share for themselves in directing the society. As the present article explicitly states, these two groups are considered two pillars of discourse wherein the political power has a mercantile transaction with the religious institution; and as Mullah Sadra explicitly states, the prominent feature of this discourse is the dominance of ignorance and deviation of the social wisdom. Although Mullah Sadra sees this deviation in his various works, it is in his *Kasr Aṣṇām Jāhiliyya* that he calls out this deviation and starts breaking the idols of ignorance with the axe of the divinely granted reason.

In that discourse, according to the rules of the past ages, it is the

1. The light of the Sufism in Iran was gradually turning off at the end of 10th century, and its decline was seriously considered. Those cities full of *khānqāhs* such as Tabriz and Yazd were empty of *khānqāhs* in the 11th century, which then were replaced by mosques, *takyas* and *husseyniyyas*. According to Kiani, "we infer from what is written in *Jāmi' Muḥīdī* (composed around 1080), that there was a decline in Sufism and building *khanqāhs* from the 10th century on, and they were quite extinct in the time of the author. There were then just congregational houses wherein the wayfarers would recite the Quran" (Kiani, 1369 SH, p.262). in *Jāmi' Muḥīdī*, we read that, "in these day, due to reasons that I cannot state the truth of it, the building has started to be ruined... and the ceremonies of *rāṭiba*, *ṣādir* and *wārid* are no longer common in *khānqāhs* and shrines" (Muhammad Mufid, 1342 SH, vol.3, p. 577 quoted by Kiani, 1369 Sh, p.262).

religious teachings – of any sort – that are the focus of attention by people. Thus, Mullah Sadra's *Parrhesian* mission is to purify people's religion and remove the unneeded additions. From Mullah Sadra's viewpoint, in that era, the truth was entangled in the vicious triangle of political power, court scholars, and mercantile Sufism. Thus, according to his *Parrhesian* mission, he spares no pain to state any truth leading to clarification of the existing situation. Naturally, inciting the society in conditions that most people were accustomed to bawdy arrangements would mean just one thing: "choosing the insentient horse of the politics and unity with Socrates' unrest gadfly" (Islami, 1385 SH).

Mullah Sadra's critical attitude is, more than anything else, focused on the political power of the time, because the knowledge system is not independent – in any time and place – from the strategies of power (Dreyfus, H. L. 1982, 25-28). Besides, a philosopher such as Mullah Sadra, with a quite idealistic view, would consider any power headed by human being accompanied by darkness (Lakza'i, 1391 SH). Therefore, unlike what was common in those days, he paid no attention to worldly things and did not make any effort to please the kings and sovegovernments. First of all, we may find out this from the introduction to his numerous works. In his lengthy work entitled *Safawiya dar 'Arṣayi Dīn, Farhang wa Siyāsay*, Rasool Ja'fariyan reports that in Safawid period, the tradition of writing *taqdīm-nāma*¹ was extremely common. He names 313 books mostly on jurisprudence whose authors dedicated their works – in the introduction – to one of the kings or authorities in the courts of the Safawids (Ja'fariyan, 1379 SH, pp. 1133-1140). Nevertheless, in the introductions of Mullah Sadra's numerous works, there are no such dedications (Mullah Sadra, 1371 SH, p. 20). Mullah Sadra considered distancing from the sovegovernments and rulers among the signs of loving death and perfection of one's religion (Mullah Sadra, 1371 SH, p. 98). Regarding Mullah

1. A work dedicated to someone.

Sadra's son, Mirza Ibrahim, Qazwini writes: "it became clear for me that his method was different from that of his father, because his father had no belief in kings and would not consider going to their court right. However, he – unlike his father – composed a treatise and dedicated it to the king of his age" (Qazwini, 1407 AH, p. 52 quoted by Ja'fariyan, vol.1, 1379 SH, pp. 123-125).

Under the Safawids, Mullah Sadra was among the few scholars who regarded the court as a place for presence and gathering of the oppressors and people of the world. Thus, regarding those scholars who – in his words – "would turn towards the altar of sovegovernments", he says sarcastically: "such is the state of those who consider themselves among scholars, but have turned away from the Sacred and seeking certitude, turning towards the altar of the sovegovernments" (Mullah Sadra, 1360 SH, p. 18; and see 50, 60, 99, 100). In the same vein, he mocks – in his poems – pomposity in kings and loving the presidency in them (Mullah Sadra, 1360 SH, p. 88). This is while the Safawid kings would call themselves Perfect Mentors and would regard, for themselves, a degree in spiritual wayfaring (Jamal-zada, 1389).

Mullah Sadra whose concern was removing the dust of ignorance from the "true knowledge and certain teachings" (Mull Sadra, 1360 SH, p. 90) would confront with the enforcers of deviation from right religious styles in society, and naturally, he had to make himself ready for any harms and irritations from them. Terribly, those irritations from the ignoble persons – dressed in scholars' clothes – were in a religious language supported by the public.

The deviation in jurisprudence, from its original meaning was among Mullah Sadra's concern. He asks, "How can we call someone who has gone to the oppressive rulers and kings and assisted them with his false fatwas a jurist?" (Mullah Sadra, 1371 SH., p. 18). Thus, before he criticizes the jurists, he explains the science of jurisprudence. That is, he asks, "What kind of science is this science whose result is such a behavior?" "Is

lowering the position of those who possess this knowledge and are readily polluted with worldly desires a result of the science itself or what they possess is not jurisprudence at all, but something else just called jurisprudence?" Therefore, in line with definition of jurisprudence offered by Ghazali – whom he loves with sincerity – he writes, "in past days, the science of jurisprudence denoted the knowledge of the way to the hereafter, knowing one's soul, delicacies of its deficiencies and illnesses, understanding Satan's deceptions, turning away from the world and passions, and eagerness towards the blessings of the hereafter and meeting God as well as fearing the Judgment Day." But "now, for the seekers of knowledge in these days, jurisprudence refers to understanding the laws of divorce, emancipations, cursing, selling, peace, mortgage, the skill of diving heritage, and the like" (Mullah Sadra, 1360 SH, pp. 99-100). This is what has caused them to seek "garden, love and land", not "religious law, reason and religion". He regards it likely that they may even have turned away "from the way of religious law and provision" and become "thirsty to drink one another's blood" with the tool of excommunication (Mullah Sadra, 1360 SH, p. 100). Mullah Sadra would vividly see that some famous persons "did not explore divine verses... but dealt with composing lengthy books on other chapters of laws and issues of licit and illicit things... This is because through these tools they could be referred to by people for fatwa and judgment; and through these tools they could approach the rulers and worldly possessions" (Mullah Sadra, 1371 SH, p. 150). Thus, he regards them as persons who "have given up sincerity and trust in God, seeking those things elsewhere" (Mull Sadra, 1360 SH. P. 50).

Mullah Sadra would well notice the alteration of states and decay in the era, and in his introduction to the treatise entitled *Jabr wa Tafwīd*, he writes, "I composed this treatise in a time when acquiring divine knowledge was regarded as a fault, and individuals would achieve

positions and offices by denying the true knowledge. And the monotheist knowledge is nearly about to be effaced from all regions" (quoted by Ja'fariyan, 1379 SH, vol.2, p. 527). Naturally, promoting the sacred word of Allah – as the essence of 'knowledge of monotheism' was costly. The Shirazi *Parrhesiastes* had to expect the most modest attacks, mainly with the arm of excommunication – excommunications that, in Sayyid Jalaluddin Ashtiyani's words, "were not consistent with the standards of religious law, and those who were excommunicated were typically righteous people who were knowledgeable, pious and virtuous " (Mullah Sadra, 1346 SH, pp. 108-110). Master Ashtiyani, however, maintains that "the actions of excommunicators were resulted from not entering into the rational and mystical foundations; thus, those who were skilled in transmitted and rational knowledge have excommunicated individuals less frequently." Mullah Sadra, however, has no such opinion about himself. In his treatise entitled *Se Aṣl* (= three principles), he maintains that the reason for the enmity of those who pretend to be jurists is their love for power and wealth (Mullah Sadra, 1360, pp. 88-90). Thus, when a conscious man such as Mullah Sadra appears in the sphere of the society, this means the end of their existence, unless they make him outcast with tricks and deceptions.

Accusations cast upon Mullah Sadra by pro-court scholars were very terrible. They called him heretic, opponent of legal imitation, and having false beliefs.¹ Of course, these labels were far from Mullah Sadra, just as the same claim was proposed against Athens' *Parrhesiastes* in Socrates's trial court. It seems that the jurist in Safawid period have resorted – in this regard – to the jurisprudential rule of *mubāhita* extracted from a right hadith (Abdi and Zarqani, 1396 SH).

1. Some maintain that Mulla Sadra's mystical exposition to *Uṣūl Kāfī* is profane (Khansari, 1390 SH, 4121).

Shiraz's *Parrhesiastes* (i.e. Mullah Sadra) suffered from many tortures, as he speaks – in some of his books (*Se Aṣl, Asfār, Wāridāt Qalbiyya, Ash ‘ār*) – of teasing inflicted upon him by some who were deceived by the world. Of course, these tortures could lead to his being killed, as was the situation for Hallaj, ‘Ein al-Quzat Hamadani, and Sheikh Ishraq¹... it seems that his familial influence (Mullah Sadra, 1360 SH, p. 27) and his powerful friends in Isfahan hindered his opponents' wish. For Mullah Sadra, dying may have been much better than infinite tortures from his opponents who were unaware of truth. He himself says his complaints in some heart-rending poems:

Nobody's life was that much unsettled..... Nobody was so sorrowful
in his heart

Nobody is miserable like me..... Nobody maybe like me in the world

Elsewhere, he writes:

He suffered from every barb..... He suffered from the wretched
people

So many jewels of speech were lost..... So many speeches were
forgotten

How must he not compose sad music?..... How must he not cry
severely?

My moans and agonies are too many..... No one is aware of my inner
state

Mullah Sadra's approach to mercantile Sufis are mostly found in his

¹. Muhammad Taher Qomi, one of the prominent scholars opposing Tasawwuf in Safawid period (d. 1098 AH) introduces Ibn ‘Arabi as "*rind mu ‘āsir*" (meaning "contemporary rogue") who loves Sadruddin Qunawi (Qomi, 1376 SH, p.264). He then goes to Roman Mowlana and Shams Tabrizi: "he played chess with a beautiful boy" (Qomi, 1376 SH, p.265). Then he speaks of Sana’i and Yusuf Hamadani – that Sana’i is a Sunnite and a pupil for Khaja Hamadani, and "a witness for this ... is his romance" (Qomi, 1376 SH, p.269). Sana’i also loved a butcher boy (Qomi, 1376 SH, p.278) and Shahabuddin Suhrawardi loved a beardless youth (Qomi, 1376 SH, p.278). Similarly, Shabestari was a playboy (Qomi, 1376 SH, p.278).

book entitled "*Kasr Aṣṇām Jāhiliyya*". In that book, he expresses his sincere regards towards the genuine mysticism, and arranges an intra-discourse criticism against the raw and decayed forms. We must not forget that in Mullah Sadra's time, Tasawwuf was still the most prominent social force. The jurists' attacks against it had not started yet, and the Sufis were still influential in the society (Ja'fariyan, 1379 SH. vol.3, p. 1313), and that serious powerful influence was still running up to the end of the Safawid period. It was just under the last Safawid king, Sultan Hussein, that he did not allowed – in the time of his coronation – Qizibash Sufis to surround the king as was usual. Thus, we may judge that the mercantile Sufis and their *Qutbs* and *Sheikhs*, who were the very Qizilbashes or the military body of the Safawid state, enjoyed support both from a section of the court and from ordinary people. The Qizilbash Sufis – as attested by history – were not committed to hold religious obligatory rites such as prayer and fasting. Besides, they were accustomed to drinking wine, singing and dancing (Parsadoost, 1381 SH, p. 851). This situation caused the *Parrhesiastes* of the Safawid period to react seriously to it. Writing *Kasr Aṣṇām Jāhiliyya* mostly aimed at this goal. We cannot say with certainty – while it is inferred from Mullah Sadra's poems – that he was tormented by irreligious Sufis as well. What caused his serious reaction – while he was among the sincere adherents of righteous Sufism and the promoters of its heritage – was their refrain from gaining knowledge before austerity and diligence, breaking religious norms, committing forbidden actions, and their attempt to attract pupils and their effort to gain presidency and power by resorting to various forms of tricks and deception. These all were factors leading to the cultural recession and deviation of the social wisdom.

Mullah Sadra and criticizing the factors defacing the religious wisdom Sadra and the ideal of freedom

The ideal of freedom is a concept much considered by the thinkers in

Frankfort School. They put forward the utopian element (ideal thought and desired society) in their thoughts and believed in human's felicity, freedom and salvation. Although they speak of three [types of] wisdom (interpretive, relational, and instrumental), they place two wisdoms in opposing positions: the instrumental wisdom and the relational or critical wisdom – which they consider themselves as agents of them. From this viewpoint, the wisdom in the capitalist societies is a defective wisdom, for it creates obstacles in the path of right recognition through the artifact of culture and mass media as important obstacles in the path of salvation. The result is human's degradation to the level of a uni-dimensional human being with just one mechanical dimension, and void of other humane aspects. The adherents of Frankfort School have likened such a human being – for whom the capitalist system has created false material interests, hence content with the status quo – to a blind bird that sees no difference between the cage and the garden. In this way, they seek to show the gaps in the life of the modern human being to highlight his being imprisoned and make him enjoy the blessing of "awareness", and then show him the way of salvation, that is guiding him to the "state of wisdom". In other words, their effort is to remove those adventitious things, added to human's wisdom and turned into his secondary nature, to return him to his original nature (Kaffashi, 1384 SH, p. 87).

In the same vein, Mullah Sadra sees the society from a high divine horizon, a society in whose way some great obstacles have been created. He maintains his duty is not restricted to just the *Parrhesian* mission and stating the deviations in a brave manner, and "breaking the idols of ignorance"; rather, he deals with repairing the building of wisdom. Sadra sees a society wherein the strategies of power has caused "the darkness of ignorance and blindness to spread out in cities, and short-mindedness and dishonesty dominate all areas". And as the adherents

of Frankfurt School would say, people in such a society do not see their ignorance to the extent that "they regard the evil of fancy as the ultimate finding of the perfect men, and regard themselves similar to people of monotheism and abstraction, while they lack knowledge and practice"

(Mullah Sadra, 1372 SH, pp. 24-25).

Critique of the discourse

The scholars' illness

Mullah Sadra maintains that the primary reason for degradation or even the downfall of the divine wisdom of the society is not the actions of the men of power and politics. Rather, it is the illness of worldliness in [religious] scholars "who have gotten ill in these days and are unable to cure themselves, and the epidemic nature of this illness has granted them tranquility to the extent that their deficiency is not known. Thus, they deceive people and force them to do things that aggravate their illness, because they are suffering from the same worldliness and are unable to make people avoid it; otherwise, they themselves would be questioned" (Mullah Sadra, 1371 SH, p. 140).

What causes Mullah Sadra's surprise is the existence of these very ill-hearted scholars and pretending mystics who "are cripple and blind in discerning good and evil or benefit and harm", but "they claim to be guides for others and to be able to take over the presidency of people" (Mullah Sadra, 1371 SH, pp. 92-93). And more surprisingly, a large number of people are attracted to them (*ibid.*) Mullah Sadra maintains that people follow the ill-hearted scholars and false mystics because of the validity and accessibility of institutions of *taqlīd* and *Qutbiyyat* in jurisprudence and mysticism. Indeed, when he opposed some cases of abuse of those two institutions in the presence of the Safawid king, he faced severe reaction from some jurists (*ibid.*). Viewed from this angle, these two institutions are not considered deviated ones, for the Shiite imams have asserted the necessity for people to refer to scholars (*ibid.*). Sadra's

opposition is due to the fact that he sees false wishes behind them that are void of concern for religion, and whose main drive is self-love and love for presidency. Behind these relationships of *marja'* (religious authority) and *mugallid* (imitator) and *murid* (pupil) and *murad* (master), Mullah Sadra sees, on the one hand, polemicists who "rely on their valueless wisdom" (Kasr Aṣṣnām, p. 95), and on the other hand, biased ordinary people "in whose hearts imitated beliefs have been rooted and they have been veiled" (Mullah Sadra, 1371, p. 39). From this perspective, such beliefs – not gained through certain discovery or argumentation – result in the appearance of "a corrupted religion void of the path to discovery and certainty" (Mullah Sadra, 1371, p. 95).

Non-priority of knowledge over mystical diligence

Among the cases about which Sadra warns us is the discussion on non-priority of knowledge over mystical diligence and austerity. For him, those who start austerity before gaining knowledge of religious laws and rituals enter a path that finally ends to nothing but perversion. He expressly objects to them and calls them perverted individuals who are prey to Satan's tricks, and thus associating such persons leads to despondence of one's heart and corruption of one's religion, hence corruption of the society and degenerating the parameters of social wisdom (Mullah Sadra, 1371, pp. 21-23). As he asserts, "a group has started diligence and forty-day seclusion and dressed in Sufi clothes, beginning to take allegiance from their pupils and appointing themselves to the position of guidance and direction before strengthening – in themselves – the knowledge of God and His attributes and actions as well as the Books, the prophets and the Judgment Day..." (Mullah Sadra, 1371, p. 31).

Pretending to have the knowledge of divine mysteries

One of the basic afflictions in the religious societies is the mixing up of the genuine with counterfeit, and true with false. Certainly, when the

religious denotations are valid and accessible in societies, those who are fond of power and presidency are busy deceiving people in an embellished form and with the claim of truth. For Mullah Sadra, recognizing such persons is not a complicated matter. It is enough "for any vigilant individual seeking truth to watch their states and actions carefully and scrutinize their conditions" (Mullah Sadra, 1371 SH, pp. 43-44). From this angle, we find that these persons "pretend to be committed to the position of caliphate, guidance and inner purification" (ibid.). There are individuals who "are weak-reasoned, with a rough character and rebellious thought and tough heart which neither accepts scientific roles nor is it ready for sacred manifestations". More importantly, if you scrutinize their actions, you will find some persons "busy indulging in pleasures, polluting their souls with passions..., eating doubtful things (such as foods provided by the oppressive kings and tyrant rulers, as well as thieves and other individuals who do not identify licit and illicit things), and gaining their properties or the foods for their cattle through the easiest and cheapest ways" (ibid.).

Erotic *Samāʿ*

Among the items seriously criticized by Mullah Sadra is the Sufi *samāʿ*.¹ It seems that *samāʿ* had a widespread diffusion in Sufis' realm, without supervision of religious laws and in the light of the silence and even support of the Safawids, as attested by ample treatises written against Sufis even years after Mullah Sadra. *Samāʿ* was originally a rite practiced for quenching the thirst of eagerness (Ibn Abi Sa'd, 1367 SH, p. 49), a window for manifestation, and a proper opportunity for sighting the truth of God. However, throughout history, we find many cases wherein the heads of that mystical tradition were ignoble persons whose passions dominated their reason, and thus, *samāʿ* would add to the

1. A ritual dance accompanied by *zikrs*, leading to a mystical ecstasy.

darkness of their souls (Sepahsalar, 1325 SH, pp. 56, 66-67). Accordingly, the great mystic Abul-Mafakher Bakharzi's words were true in Mullah Sadra's time as well. Bakharzi called *samā'* "a meaningless name and a soulless body and a false ceremony, neither having the form of the *samā'* of true righteous people, nor the meaning of the pure ones" (Bakharzi, 1383 SH, p. 195). Mullah Sadra, who had frequently seen such a ceremony in his time, wrote, "Most of the attendees of these meetings are villains from the hoi polloi with hearts full of lusts." Thus, he maintains that such ceremonies lead to "inciting those hidden lusts and chronic illnesses rooted inside them" (Mullah Sadra, 1371 SH, p. 57). In line with Mowlana's words that "the *sine qua non* for legitimacy of *samā'* is that the soul not be moved and nothing other than Allah come to mind" (Sepahsalar, 1325 SH, pp. 56, 66-67), Mullah Sadra believes that "*samā'* excites in any person what has been rooted inside him. In wretched ordinary men with ill souls and imperfect efforts, it causes the fire of lusts to rise out of ashes. Here, they are excited and regard this ecstasy a divine affection and religious worship" (Mullah Sadra, 1371, p. 57).

The transcendental parameters of the mystically founded discourse

The covertness of divine saints

Among the events that led to emergence of Safawid state was the alteration in the concept of *Wilāya* in the context of the pupil-master relationship between the Safawid *Qutbs* and *Qizilbāshs*. This was done through the reinterpretation of theory of *Sufi Wilāya*, started by Sheikh Safi. *Wilāya*, as a truly covert affair hidden from the people, gradually got – assisted by considerable attention of the pupils of the Safawid *Qutbs* and, of course, the material facilities – an overt political form, leading to the establishment of the Safawid state (Ahmadwand, 1398 SH, pp. 87-106).

Indeed, one of the characteristics of the divine saints – or in Mullah Sadra's words, *Ahl Allah* (literally, "people of Allah") – is their being

hidden from people. Of course, "this does not mean that no one sees them; rather, their state is hidden from people, and no one knows their [spiritual] rank" (Mullah Sadra, 1371 SH, p. 142). This fact has been repeated in the history of Tasawwuf. Shams Tabrizi maintains that divine saints are those "who make effort to cover" (Shams Tabrizi, 1385 SH, vol.2, p. 209). According to Mullah Sadra, they are persons "whom God brings into the cover and tells them the secrets" (Mullah Sadra, 1371 SH, p. 294). From Mowlana's viewpoint, the one who enjoys the position of *wilāya* – who has achieved that rank in the last stages of wayfaring – is hidden from people (Mowlana, 1374 SH, vol.2, pp. 176-177). Indeed, most mystics have – more or less – repeated the following hadith: "My saints are under my frock. No one knows them except me." (Amoli, 1386 SH, p. 319). In the same manner, Mullah Sadra considers the claim and action of those who explicitly or implicitly claim to be divine saints as having internal contradiction, a contradiction not hidden from the wise people. Thus, he explicitly says, "the wise and aware man and the people of tasawwuf and perfection refrain from revealing their own states; rather, they insist to be anonymous..." (Mullah Sadra, 1346, pp. 103-104).

The social responsibility of *Ahl Allah*

For Sadra, wayfaring and spiritual diligence is not free from the social aspect. This is because his ultimate goal in the valuable book entitled *Asfār Arba'ā* is to state the important point that the wayfarer returns, finally after being aware of the truth and exploring God's attributes, to people to direct them to the same destination he himself has achieved (Dalir Naqada'i, 1396 SH, pp. 57-60). Of course, the phrase "providing people with ease" is among phrases mostly used by the mystics. Sa'di maintains that worship is nothing but giving service to people, and if it was not for what revealed to Ala'udowla Semnani after 280 periods of seclusion, he would not give up companion to Sultan to give service to people (Jami, 1370 SH, pp. 482-491). However, Sadra sees claimants who seek

worldly enjoyment from Tasawwuf and wayfaring. Neither do they understand social responsibility nor are they ready to pay anything for establishing justice. He writes, "We see such wayfarers have neither destroyed any falsehood nor have they established any truth. Neither have they turned a vice into a virtue, nor have they given up their outer layer for purification of their inner. Rather, the more they have indulged in that lifestyle and the more they have gained skills in doing it, the more they have afflicted with horror and hypocrisy. Their writings are full of polemics and disputes, and these have turned into fields for snobbishness and efforts for silencing other" (Mullah Sadra, 1371 SH, p. 131).

Loving death and seeking loneliness

It is quite normal that some philosophers introduce philosophy as "a science for practicing dying" (Schopenhauer, 1844, p. 914-915). That is, when those who are steadfast in knowledge achieve some deep perceptions of existence, the world's glamorous luxuries become valueless for them. Thus, Mullah Sadra considers one of the distinctive features of *Ahl Allah* to be seclusion and distancing themselves from "worldly means, turning away from associating with people, hating lusts and inattention to customs such as associating with people of their time and going to rulers and kings" (Mullah Sadra, 1371 SH, p. 98). Viewed from this angle, such individuals seek to associate with "fun and idle people and those whose hearts are the farm of worldliness and seeking pleasures". This is because "companionship to such people makes staying in this world sweet for one and creates hatred towards death..." Mullah Sadra emphasizes such death-loving individuals, instead of companionship to people of power and wealth, find pleasure in "supplication to God, reciting His Book, attention and vigilance, and seizing the opportunity of night and the pleasure that one feels in one's separating from worldly occupations" (Mullah Sadra, 1371 SH, p. 98). This is because "the lowest level of affection is getting pleasure in solitude and being with the Beloved as

well as loving prayer to Him. But how can one believe the claim of the one who sees pleasure in sleeping or associating with others more than intimate conversation with the Beloved" (Mulla Sadra, 1371 SH, p. 98).

Sadra's reference to the death-loving characteristic of *Ahl Allah* enjoys a political-social aspect, for there were many individuals with the label of *Ahl Allah* in Safawid period, persons who behave in a way not congruent with their claim. Mullah Sadra's sensitivity is incited because of the fact that such people – delighted with rulers' rewards and gifts – are seeking to find pupils in the whole society, which then leads to defacement and distortion of the social wisdom.

Pure nature

Throughout Mullah Sadra's works, we find statements on struggling with one's passions and purification of the soul. From his viewpoint, *Ahl Allah* move in this path and achieve spiritual perfection in this way. Viewed from this angle, "the soul can achieve the divine knowledge and spiritual truth just when its essence is pure and clean, and vicious actions or vile character have not polluted it...this is the time when the images of the spiritual things are seen in the mirror of its essence" (Mullah Sadra, 1371 SH, pp. 41-42). Mullah Sadra believes that if human's essence "is polluted with lusts and is dependent on what hoi polloi consider good, accepting that habit and turning away from true knowledge and certainties, undoubtedly nothing of the true forms is seen in it except for the null forms and beliefs that are of the illusion type" (Mullah Sadra, 1371 SH, pp. 41-42). The interesting point in these statements is that the hoi polloi consider something good and the special personages or *Ahl Allah* consider another thing as good. Everywhere in his works, we find that those who are responsible for adjusting the social wisdom are in an ideal form the very *Ahl Allah*, not the hoi polloi who are dominated by the power of their instinct. And Mullah Sadra's criticism blade is directed towards the society wherein the perception horizon of those who claim

to be leaders of people has declined into a vulgar level.

But those who have a superficial knowledge and a shallow wisdom, when they see someone in seclusion and dressed in Sufi Sheikhs' clothes, they consider him as having miraculous gift and saintly states. Secondly, those individuals perform extraordinary actions, which are nothing but tricks and deceptive operations – by which the jugglers and fortunetellers deceive people.

Conclusion

As we saw, the present article dealt with the political aspects in Mullah Sadra – a philosopher with no contradiction in his thought and practice. One of these aspects is focused on rulers and centers of power, and this Shirazi philosopher is careful – in his lifetime – not to be polluted by them, because "turning to the altars of the sultans" would be the same as dominance of loving world and its consequences over one's soul. Due to his *Parrhesian* status, Mullah Sadra not only preserves a certain distance from the sultans, but also renounces those Sufis and scholars whose goal is proximity to sultans. Another aspect of Mullah Sadra's political mission is informing the society, stating its deviations and delineating the borders of transcendental discourse. In this sphere, Sadra introduces two groups as the agents for deviation of people and defacement of social wisdom. First the mercantile Sufis and second the jurists who "go to oppressive sultans and assist them with their false fatwas." From this perspective, modifying these two groups, who are the role models for people and leaders of the society, is the necessary condition for modifying the society and for its felicity.

This study presupposes that human beings enjoy – in all ages – a common essence and nature, and that the main core of their feelings and choices – although it changes as demanded by the conditions – is the same. It deals with the thought and practice of the Shirazi *Parrhesiastes* in relation to the power and the discourse, because the very issue

preoccupying Mullah Sadra is true for other times and other worlds. There are always individuals who make use of the infinite reservoir of ordinary people's ignorance by resorting to religious values for building up their own world. "Mullah Sadra"s are still wandering throughout history, are downgraded, and are defamed by accusations and lies.

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