

Typology of Politics in the Gnostic-Noetic System of Mulla Mohsen Feyz Kashani

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Abstract

Feyz Kashani was among the well-known personages in Isfahan school of thought, who has reconciled various tendencies. He was an *Akhbari* (i.e. traditionalist)² jurist with gnostic thoughts and philosophical method. Feyz's perception of politics, as a thinker contemporary to philosophical renaissance of the Isfahan school, was under the influence of his tendencies and noetic,³ philosophical and gnostic system. He considers the universe as the place for manifestation of divine knowledge, and the man as a theosophist being who covers the path towards knowing God. This wayfaring towards God is some kind of politics as well because the

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2. An *akhbari* is an Expert in narrating traditions and hadiths.

3. In this article, "The Noetic System" does not refer to the branch of alternative medicine that focuses on healing the body and achieving homeostasis through the power of the mind; rather, our use of the term is drawn from its Greek root, *noesis*, which means "inner wisdom." What we are referring to here is a step farther and places intellectual experience (in its broadest sense) between inner and outer experience.

goal of politics and religion is the man's felicity. This article aims at exploring the political thought of one of the most important intellectual figures of Isfahan school, and using the method of analysis of noetic system, we are seeking to investigate types of politics in Feyz Kashani's view with an emphasis on two treatises entitled *Ā'īna Shāhī* and *Raf' al-Fitna*. The main question of this article is as follows: "What is the relationship between the gnostic-noetic system and Feyz Kashani's attitude towards politics, and what has been the effect of this attitude on his typology of politics?" The results we obtained from this study show that Feyz's noetic system has a direct relation with his political attitude and, accordingly, he maintains that the true politics – which is a type of politics of external state – is dependent on the politics of the soul or the internal state, i.e. the human state. On the basis of the relationship between these two principles, Feyz Kashani offers a typology of politics in proportion to his noetic-gnostic system. He speaks of these two types and five types of politics and state in the practical level. Here, we explain them.

Keywords

Feyz Kashani, politics, political thought, Gnosticism, vicegerency, divine politics, Shahi

Introduction

Mohammad bin Shah Morteza bin Shah Mahmoud, known as Mowla/ Mulla Mohsen Feyz Kashani, was one of the philosophers in Safawid period, whose father was one of the great scholars of Isfahan, and Feyz had good relations with his father's voluminous books from the early childhood (See: Khansari, n.d., vol. 6, p. 79). He studied the science of hadith with Sayyid Majed bin Hashem Bahrani (Jazayeri, n.d., p. 156) and was influenced by him to the extent that in spite of his high position in philosophy and mysticism, he did not leave his traditionalist tendencies up to the end of his life. In Isfahan, he was a pupil of Sheikh Baha'i and Mulla Sadra Shirazi and, finally, he was attracted by Mulla Sadra and married his daughter.¹

As said before, Feyz was one of the well-known figures in Isfahan school, who had various tendencies simultaneously. He was a traditionalist jurist with gnostic thoughts and philosophical method; and this weird composition could be realized in such a person. The bibliographers have introduced Feyz as a mystic – not a Sufi. Khansari in *Rowḍāt al-Jannāt*, Sheikh Abbas Qomi in *Tatimmat al-Muntahā*, and Feyz himself in treatises entitled *al-Muḥākima* and *al-Inṣāf*, have dealt with this issue (Feyz Kashani, 1387 SH, p. 8). Nevertheless, Feyz would always be accused of Sufism. As Ahmad bin Mohammad Ali Behbahani arrived at Lucknow, he found that there Feyz was satirized and execrated. Thus, he composed a book entitled *Tanbīh al-Ghāfilīn* to exonerate him. Nevertheless, in the next century, individuals such as Yousef bin Ahmad Bahrani (1107-1186 AH) would still rebuke Feyz for his belief in 'unity of existence'. Bahrani wrote the treatise *Nafaḥāt al-Malakūtiyya fī Radd 'Ala-l-Ṣūfiyya* in rejecting Sufism and Feyz (See: Najī Nasrabadi, 1377 SH, p. 31).

1. Mulla Sadra's other daughter married another pupil of his father called Mulla Abdur-Razzaq Lahiji. Mulla Mohsen was entitled Feyz and Mulla Abdur-Razzaq was entitled Fayyaz.

Mulla Mohsen's writings, as reported by his pupil Sayyid Ne'matullah Jazayeri, are about 200 works (Jazayeri, v.d., p. 156). In the most important treatises entitled *Ḥaqq al-Yaqīn*, *ʿAyn al-Yaqīn*, and *ʿIlm al-Yaqīn* about philosophy, he has offered new innovations, including the fact that he considers the general intellect identical with the Shiite Imams. He was the representative of one of the most important intellectual efforts in the Shiite Iran in closeness of *Sharīʿat* and *Ṭarīqat*. In the process of intermingling philosophy and mysticism in Iran, Mulla Mohsen had a fundamental role. In principle, he can be regarded the typical representative of the philosophical trend of the Isfahan school, who united numerous intellectual lines. The same idea was effective in his perception of politics. In fact, politics was not for Feyz merely an institutional idea related to power and government; rather, politics was – in the first place – politics of the soul and, then, it gets external and social aspects. Of course, he was not pessimistic to institutional politics, but he did not consider himself a proper person for practical politics. Once, Shah Safi (1038-1052 AH) and once Safawid Shah Abbas (1052-1077 AH) invited Feyz to grant him the post of Sheikh al-Islam in Isfahan, but he rejected their invitation¹ (Ashtiyani and Corbin, 1378 SH, vol. 2, p. 149). Nevertheless, Feyz would much respect Safawid kings; thus, he has called – in the initial part of his *Tarjumat al-Sharīʿa* – the second Shah Abbas “the honor of the throne and supported by divine assistances” (Feyz Kashani, 1388 SH, p. 341).²

1. Of course, some believe that Feyz accepted Shah Abbas's invitation (Khaleqi, 1380 SH, p. 2). Abdur-Rahim Kalantar Zarrabi, known as Soheil Kashani, has recorded the original letter written by Shah Abbas (See: Kalantar Zarrabi, 1356 SH, p. 78). The copy of Shah Abbas's invitation along with Feyz's answer is found in the collection of manuscripts in Tehran University under the number of 4602/4.
2. This position held by Feyz regarding Safawid Shah is consistent with his beliefs regarding the government of sultans in the Occultation Period. We will later explain that in Feyz's view, politics is management of the worldly and religious affairs simultaneously. Thus, Feyz has said somewhere in his treatise entitled *al-ʿIḍhār*, “The Safawid sultans have made the establishment of pillars of sultanate contingent upon the continuity of religion as demanded by the principle ‘the kingdom and religion together’” (Majlesi, 1386 SH, vol. 72, p. 354). (Feyz Kashani, 1371 SH, p. 282).

The source of this attitude to politics is in Feyz's noetic-gnostic system. Feyz's status in mysticism was so high that the great Shiite philosopher in that time, i.e. the judge Sa'id Qomi, was a pupil to him. In addition to the junior philosopher Allamah Majlesi, Sayyid Ne'matullah Jazayeri and Sheikh Hurr Ameli were also his pupils. Feyz's noetic system can be considered a gnostic-noetic system.

What is a noetic system?

We proposed the concept of 'noetic system' due to the insufficiency of the existing methodologies in understanding mystical knowledge (Fadaie Mehrabani, 1393, pp. 90-116). In the sphere of perception, we may say that any noetic system is related to two levels: the *Zeitgeist* of the time, and the personal perception as the man's encounter with what emerges for him.¹ As a result, the manifestation of "meaning" in the noetic system necessitates two spheres: internal and external. Of course, these two have no certain demarcations for externality and internality, because the inside and outside of the noetic system are effectively interrelated all the time.

The *Zeitgeist* is not Hegelian and does never have the evolutionist mechanism, because there is no 'geist' to evolve with awareness of freedom and, in this way, to make the history of the world surrender to determinism.

On the other hand, the *Zeitgeist* is neither the materialist episteme based on episteme as viewed by Foucault² (Foucault, 1980, p. 93), nor a

1. This encounter is not, in our view, of the confrontation type; rather, we mean some facing with the *Zeitgeist*.

2. The materialist of non-materialist nature of *Zeitgeist* is just dependent on the noetic systems. Revelation of meaning in the noetic systems depends on the mode of individual being. Thus, the various methods of existence reveal various meanings. The mode of existence focused on internal world reveals the meaning on the material level, and in this way, the noetic meaning will be materialistic. And the mode of existence focused on the point beyond the limits of the universe reveals →

metaphysical social construct of concepts as we see in the theory of discourse. In Foucault's episteme, what is there is 'knowledge', and evidently, knowledge has a collective nature and is considered in a special time and place. One cannot ignore the paradigmatic features of knowledge. But in the noetic system, there is a system of meanings and it does not have, in principle, a collective nature. Rather, it is specified to one person or individual. Thus, although the noetic system is related to the *Zeitgeist*, the meaning is created just in the noetic system.

On the one hand, unlike discourse and paradigm, the *Zeitgeist* is not imposed on the subject, and the subject can own the *Zeitgeist*. The *Zeitgeist* is formed on the basis of accumulation of personal interpretations in a period of time. Indeed, the meeting point of internal and personal opinions and noetic systems forms the identity-giving elements of the *Zeitgeist* governing a time. As an instance, the identity-giving elements of the *Zeitgeist* in Iran under Safawis was formed in the clash and integration of the various noetic systems such as Sufi-jurist disputes, Sufi-philosopher disputes, philosopher-jurist disputes, and mystic-jurist disputes. The clash and conflict between these noetic systems lead to a mutual influence, and this leads to prevention of the internal congestion of the *Zeitgeist*. In these conflicts of opinions, the meanings are revealed in a noetic system.¹

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the internal meanings. However, since the *Zeitgeist* is founded on noetic systems, and since the noetic systems are plural, it is not possible for the *Zeitgeist* to be quite materialistic. However, the central core and the identity element of the *Zeitgeist* are the ultimate decisive factors.

1. As is apparent, the *Zeitgeist* is different from what Mohammad Abed al-Jaberi – following Lalande – calls constituent or conventional intellect. The constructed intellect, in Jaberi's view, is the very cultural intellect (for example Arabic or Greek wisdom) and is considered as an intellectual heritage with cultural and social features (al-Jaberi, 1389 SH, p. 29). But the *Zeitgeist* – while it enjoys historical aspects like the constituent intellect (al-Jaberi, 1387 SH, p. 37) – is founded on the noetic systems that are not necessarily historical.

Of course, we call the most important identity-giving element of the Zeitgeist “the central core”. The central core serves as the identity-giving factor of the Zeitgeist. This central core is the main center for conflict of opinions in any Zeitgeist. It seems that the central core of Zeitgeist in the Safawid period was the Shiite mysticism. Of course, the central core evolves following the nature of the Zeitgeist, as the central core was Sufism in the Safawid period, and it was gradually replaced by ‘mysticism’. This means that the central core is influenced by the scientific revolutions and lasting noetic systems, as in the Zeitgeist of the Safawid period, initially the Sufis’ noetic system would determine the central core. And gradually – in facing with the noetic system of the divine philosophers and jurists that would look at the issues from the epistemological position than from the perspective of Sufist manners and conventions – the central core tended towards the ‘epistemic mysticism’. Nevertheless, the central core ‘evolves’, not replaced. Thus, in Zeitgeist we always face the remaining of the tradition, and this remaining of the tradition causes the central cores to evolve, not to be replaced. On the other hand, the remaining of tradition prevents epistemological rupture in scientific revolutions. Accordingly, in the Safawid period, noetic system of jurists and philosophers did not create a new central core; rather, it turned Sufism into mysticism; in other words, the inner aspects of the central core were still be remaining.

Our emphasis on understanding Feyz Kashani’s political thought under the concept of noetic system is because we must be aware of both external aspects and internal aspects of his thought, which are revealed altogether as an epistemic and noetic system, and not impose one on another. Accordingly, we may perceive the political role of many originally mystical and philosophical concepts under the noetic system of a thinker. As an example, we may understand how the concept of divine vicegerency finds a political sense for Feyz Kashani,

or the concept of politics finds a mystical sense. The claim of this article is that deployment of a concept in a certain noetic system causes some kind of proximity and association between the noetic system and the concept. Then, we will explain Mulla Mohsen Feyz Kashani's noetic system.

Mulla Mohsen Feyz Kashani's noetic system

Mulla Mohsen's works show the dominance of his mystical attitude. As an example, the books entitled *Zād al-Sālik* and *Kalimāt Maknūna* were written in Sufism and mysticism and have gnostic contents. *Kalimāt Maknūna* and its summary *Kalimāt Makhzūna* are among unique treatises on theoretical mysticism. In *al-Li'ālī*, Feyz uses a mystical method to assure readers that "there is no way to the depth of truth, and no one except God is aware of it, because He dominates everything and cannot be dominated by anything, and nothing can be perceived except by dominance. Thus, 'they do not comprehend Him in their knowledge.'" (Feyz Kashani, 1387 A, p. 5).

In *Kamilāt Makhzūna*, Feyz has explained his belief on equation 'existence-knowledge-truth' on the basis of the fact that 'truth is the soul of the universe and the universe is all body' (Feyz Kashani, 1387 B, p. 60). Under the title 'in it, there is a reference to how existence coincides with things in the outer world', he says, "according to the people of knowledge, the existence of thing in the outer world is the very manifestation of the Exalted God in their truths" (Feyz Kashani, 1387 B, p. 37). Then, he goes on to say, 'any perfection found in a truth is among the requisites and consequences of that truth. And any being is characterized by the perfections of existence – including life, knowledge, power, will and the like – in proportion to accepting the existence; but beings are different in accepting existence, and the difference in perfection and manifestation of perfection in them is in terms of difference in accepting the existence, both in perfection and

defection. Thus, what deserves the existence in its complete form also deserves the perfection in its complete form' (Feyz Kashani, 1387 B, p. 61).

In this phrase, Feyz believes that the closer is the man to God or existence, the more will he be characterized by the requirements and consequences of existence, including power. This proximity is founded on removing the veils (Feyz Kashani, 1387 B, pp. 48-49). In Feyz's view, there are 'hindering veils' in the man's path of knowledge, "but the Exalted God has placed in the man's truth the potentiality to remove those veils" (Feyz Kashani, 1387 B, p. 64). Indeed, Feyz believes that removal of the veils is among 'the man's existential possibilities'¹, and other beings "are imprisoned in the positions and have no potential to go beyond it" (Feyz Kashani, 1387 B, p. 62). In his treatise entitled *al-Li'ālī*, Feyz has referred to hadiths on 'veil'. There is a weird hadith transmitted from Imam Kazem by Allamah Majlesi in his *Biḥār al-Anwār* as follows:

"There is no veil between Him and what He has created except the very creatures. He has been veiled without a veil and covered without a cover." (Majlesi, 1386 SH, vol. 3, p. 327).

Another hadith referred to by Feyz, which is important for us in the third level from the viewpoint of methodology, is a hadith from Imam Hussein, which is adduced by Khaja Parsa, just like the Prophet's hadith, in *Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ al-Ḥikam* (Parsa, 1366 SH, p. 51): "You are known for me in everything, and I saw You in everything; And You are apparent for everything" (Majlesi, 1386 SH, vol. 64, p. 142). And finally, Feyz criticizes the abstract and mental polemics, with a sarcastic tint pointed towards the adherents of appearance, and demands God to Remove the curtain to make known.... That the guys worship someone else (Feyz Kashani, 1387 A, p. 8).

1. In *al-Maḥajja al-Bayḍā*, Mulla Mohsen has a detailed chapter on the fact that "revealing the mysteries is in proportion to the man's faith" (Feyz Kashani, 1372 SH, vol. 1, p. 447).

The other side of Feyz's methodology is critique of abstract thoughts and polemical philosophy, because in Feyz's view, the way of understanding is the "path of monotheism", and true monotheism is not acquired by sermon and abstraction. In Feyz's view, polemical method in this way just leads us to mirage, and admonishes that, "whose thirst has been quenched with mirage?" For him, knowing God is an endless sea, and finally, "The path of monotheism is in walking... . Is the depth of the sea a place for boasting?"¹ (Feyz Kashani, 1387 A, p. 132).

This 'walking' is, for Feyz, the very 'adventure to the sea', because no one learns to swim by discussion and reading books. This position caused Feyz, in many cases even in discussing jurisprudential laws and philosophical discussion, to have a bohemian statement. For instance, in the treatise entitled *Tarjumat al-'Aqāyid*, Feyz starts his discussion under the title 'on the existence of Exalted God' as follows:

Leave, for a short while, the discussion on possibility and necessity [of existence] and be with us, and leave for a moment the discussion on vicious circle and listen to us. For the vicious circle makes you baffled, and throws you in an endless desert. (Feyz Kashani, 1388 A, p. 42).

Of course, Mulla Mohsen, due to being a philosopher, believes in argumentation and reasoning and, in *Maḥajja al-Bayḍā*, speaks of the manners of dispute and polemics as well as their defects (Feyz Kashani, 1372 SH, p. 192). The conditions asserted by Feyz as the manners of polemics make the discussions free from abstraction and what – finally – remains is founded on connected intellect aware of the brigandage of individual intellect.

In many of his positions, he is close to Mulla Sadra and Sohrawardi

1. In *Kalimāt al-Maḥnūna*, Feyz has asserted that "Know that monotheism is a great sea with no coast" (Feyz Kashani, 1387 C, p. 17).

regarding the polemic philosophy. As we know, Sohrawardi maintained that Aristotle's polemic philosophy was the first decline in the philosophy; so, he was seeking to revive the Nouriyya philosophy of Khosrawani philosophers of the ancient Iran.

Feyz's another well-known work entitled *al-Maḥajja al-Bayḍā fī Tahdhīb al-Iḥyā* "is the most important Shiite work on ethics with a Sufi orientation. Indeed, what Mulla Mohsen did was the revival of Ghazali's book in the Shiite circle by making them Shiite." He did so by replacing the traditions extracted from the Shiite sources for the Sunnite traditions found in Ghazali's book (Nasr, 1387 SH, p. 142).

Basically, the philosophers who are in line with Isfahan school – including Mulla Ali Nouri, Qazi Sa'īd Qomī¹ (1049-1103 AH), Aqa Ali Zanozi, Aqa Mohammad Bidabadi, Rajab-Ali Tabrizi, and Aqa Mohammad Reza Qomshe'i – were trying to reconcile religion and mysticism. The important point in the philosophy of Isfahan school was that even the most Peripatetic philosophers of that sphere were so much influenced by Iran's divine-mystical philosophy and had taken steps in intermingling reason and intuition so skillfully that there is still disagreements among scholars in their being illuminationists or peripatetic leanings – a distinction removed in the philosophical school of Isfahan. In this way, the Isfahan school was the manifestation of the evolution in the philosophical system of Iran. Regarding the Isfahan school, Corbin maintains that, 'there is an exception that no purely peripatetic philosopher can be found here, a philosopher in whom the neo-Platonic philosophy has not penetrated and – hence – has not become somewhat illuminationist.'² (Corbin, 1380 SH, p. 477).

In Feyz's noetic system, we see a synthesis of traditionalism, mysticism and philosophy, which seems – at first look – to be a non-

1. Regarding Qazi Sa'īd, Sayyid Jalaluddin Ashtiyani writes: "Qazi Sa'īd has a mystical leaning and his talent in mystical issues is unique and astonishing" (Ashtiyani, 1384 SH, p. 156).

harmonic synthesis. However, Feyz could well juxtapose his leanings in jurisprudence, philosophy and mysticism. He is a good sample for investigating a philosopher from the perspective of noetic system, because if we investigate Feyz's treatises individually without considering his noetic system, we may have a wrong judgment. For instance, investigating Feyz in those treatises wherein he has dealt with jurisprudence may lead us to conclude that he was a merely traditionalist jurist. Investigating his mystical treatises may lead us to an opposite conclusion. It is just by considering his works in his noetic system that we can reach a proper understanding of his works.

Although Feyz considers Ibn Arabi as bewildered in the sphere of sciences and some of his thoughts as looser than spider's web, opposite to religious law, and inconsistent with reason (Feyz Kashani, n.d., p. 149), he was finally influenced by Ibn Arabi. In other words, we must say that Feyz also was among those who linked Ibn Arabi's mysticism with Shiite teachings. Due to his traditionalist leanings, he attempted to offer a mystical interpretation of Shiite hadiths. This leaning can be well found in *Kalimāt Maknūna*. Feyz's traditionalist leanings were related to a time when Sayyid Majed bin Hashem Bahrani (1028) was educated and had become a traditionalist.

Nevertheless, Feyz was, due to his mystical leanings, criticized by anti-Sufi jurists, although Majlesi would greatly respect him (Khansari, n.d., vol. 6, p. 82). Despite his opposition to Sufism, he turned into an instance of Sufi due to his mystical leaning. This was to the extent that his cousin, Shah Fazl Kashani, wrote a book in rejecting *Radd al-Wāfī* (Afandi, 1401 AH, vol. 4, p. 316). Nevertheless, Feyz was never opposing traditionalism. In reconciling traditionalism and mysticism, he decided to search for mysticism in the context of traditions. In other words, he wanted to extract the sciences of mysticism and philosophy previously learned from his mater Mulla Sadra, something to which Mulla Sadra himself paid attention in his exposition to *Uṣūl Kāfī* as well as his

interpretation of the Quran. He could preserve his position as a traditionalist thinker who believes in hadith among his contemporary scholars by composing the books *al-Wāfī* and *al-Ṣāfī*. Feyz's *al-Wāfī* was officially used at least for two centuries and finally, with an evolution in jurisprudence, *Wasā'il al-Shī'a* composed by Hurr Ameli (died 1104) substituted it. (Ja'fariyan, 1388 SH, vol. 1, p. 770).

In his treatise entitled *al-Nukhba al-Fiqhiyya* composed on jurisprudential issues, he is a representative of integration between jurisprudence and mysticism (See: list of manuscripts of National Library, vol. 9, p. 395; manuscript 1386 SH/ 2). Feyz has presented a summary of that book under the title *Taṭhīr al-Sirr* whose title suggests the content (See: list of manuscripts in Mar'ashi Library, 1355 SH, vol. 4, p. 177). Feyz's leanings caused people to label him 'eclectic'. Mirza Ali-Reza Tajalli (died 1085), one of his contemporaries, called him a person who gathered different thoughts, but integrated them improperly (See: list of manuscripts of Tehran University, vol. 14, p. 3604, manuscript 4659, Ja'fariyan, 1388 SH, vol. 1, p. 771).

Among the most important approaches taken by Feyz was inserting inner leanings into jurisprudence, in a way that this has turned his jurisprudential books into one of the most attractive works on religious laws. For instance, in his *Miftāḥ al-Khayr*, he has narrated the following poems at the end of his discussion on laws of prayer:

If I have not turned my heart towards You
 I do not count that prayer as prayer
 By saying prayer I mean to recount
 The story of my loneliness for You
 Otherwise, what kind of prayer is the prayer in which
 I have sat before the altar, while my heart is in bazar.

(Feyz Kashani, 1388 B, p. 223)

In *Maḥajja al-Bayḍā*, written following the form of Ghazali's *Iḥyā al-'Ulūm* with a critical approach, he has criticized Ghazali's view in counting jurisprudence among the worldly sciences (Feyz Kashani, 1372 SH,

p. 132). And this is, indeed, Feyz's inner approach to jurisprudence. Apart from these critiques, however, Mulla Mohsen is considered as a person intellectually influenced by Ghazali (Ne'ma, 1347 SH, p. 498).

Generally, in jurisprudence, he was – along with philosopher jurists such as Mohaqeqq Sabzewari, among followers of Mohaqeqq Ardabili's school. The author of *Jawāhir al-Kalām* has called that jurisprudential circle 'Atbā' al-Moqaddas' who believed in some type of analytical legal reasoning in jurisprudence. From the philosophical perspective, Feyz's personality was unique. Feyz believed that the genuine wisdom was at the disposal of prophets, and 'his contemporary wisdom' was different from what was inherited from the prophets. He believed that the prophet's wisdom 'was nothing except the science of Sufism' (Feyz, 1371 A, p. 38). In his view, the true scientist and scholar is "the one who has a radiant candle that enlightens people and everyone can see in his light... similarly, the scholar carries a light-giving candle of knowledge by which he removes the darkness of ignorance. Thus, everyone who enjoys his light of knowledge will be free from bewilderment and darkness of ignorance." (Feyz Kashani, 1389 SH, p. 41).

Feyz considers that candle to be the scholar's intellect, and maintains that the word *nūr* (literary 'light') in verse 35 of Sura *Nūr* means 'intellect'. And when we see *nūr* (light) and *zulmat* (darkness) together in the Quran, they mean 'knowledge' and 'ignorance' respectively, as we see in the verse 257 of Sura *Baqara* ("He brings them out of darkness into light"). Going out of ignorance into knowledge is specified to those who take God as their guardian and authority; and – on the opposite side – those who take the tyrants as their guardians, "drive them out of light into darkness." (Feyz Kashani, 1389 SH, p. 88).

This method is, in Feyz, definitely a mystical one and based on

level one of mystics' methodology, i.e. *kashf al-mahjūb* (removing the veil). Revealing things as they truly are requires covering the path of truth, and the fundamental link between God and truth is, once again, revealed in Feyz.

Interestingly, Feyz's son, 'Alam al-Hoda, also – like the son of Mohammad Taqi Majlesi, Mulla Mohammad Baqer – wrote three books in criticizing Sufis entitled *Dirāyat Nithār Fatḥullāh bi A ḡun al-I'tibār*, *Khirad-parwar dar Tanbīh Ṣūfiyān Khīrasar* and *Haqq-gozār dar Inkār Bid'at Sho'ār fil-Radd 'Ala-Ṣūfiyya* and attempted to remove the label of Sufism from himself and his father ('Alam al-Hoda, n.d., vol. 1, p. 1-80). This suggests that the atmosphere of opposition to inner leanings was so powerful. In next section, we will explain that this formalism atmosphere continued and is – up to the present time – a powerful force for confronting the philosophers and mystics.

Feyz Kashani's political thoughts

In Feyz's noetic system, gained by intermingling various sciences by him, the man has the highest status. In his treatise entitled *Tarjumat al-'Aqāyid*, Feyz writes, "the main goal of creation of the universe is the existence of the man who is the noblest creature" (Feyz Kashani, 1388 A, p. 68). And the main goal of creation of the man is also – as asserted by the Quran (Sura *Dhāriyāt*: 56) – is servitude to God (Feyz Kashani, 1388, p. 339). Indeed, the ultimate goal of the man's creation is his [intellectual] maturity in perfection and his proximity to the Exalted God. Thus, there must be a 'perfect' of this type in the universe; otherwise, the existence of the universe will be fruitless; and this is the destruction of the universe and annihilation of other human beings" (Feyz Kashani, 1388 A, p. 68).

In Feyz's view, after God's absolute dominance over the universe, the right to governance belongs to the one who is with God; and such

a person is the perfect man who is God's vicegerent on the earth (Feyz Kashani, 1388 A, p. 75). The perfect men are the Prophet and his legitimate successors "and they are – in this nation – like Noah's ship. Anyone who resorted to them was saved and anyone who refrained, perished." Feyz adds that "in an agreed upon hadith from the Prophet, anyone who died and did not know the Imam of his time died in ignorance, i.e. faithless [Majlesi, 1386 SH, vol. 1, p. 111]" (Feyz Kashani, 1388 A, p. 73). On the basis of the Shiite belief in Imam, Feyz believes that politics is the very felicity, and that in the path of felicity, it is only the imam who enlightens the path. Thus, "if the path of truth was clear and imam was apparent, nobody would oppress others." (Feyz Kashani, 1388 A, p. 75).

Generally, in Feyz's view, political governance is not separated from spiritual leadership, because the ultimate goal of both is the man's felicity. Consequently, "worshipping the Exalted God is truly covering the path to felicity... and obedience to Him is turning towards the kingdom and sovereignty. Accordingly, the religious legal duties are called *Shari'a* and *Sunnah*, because they mean the 'way', which inevitably leads the wayfarer to the destination if he persists. Thus, we are ordered to say in prayer, 'guide us to the right path!' [Sura *Hamd*: 6]" (Feyz Kashani, 1388 SH, p. 343), and *Shāri'* (literally 'legislator') meaning the one who sheds light on the way is the very owner of the *Shari'a*.

Finally, however, wayfarer and leader are all obedient to divine commands, and any man – even the political ruler – is finally obedient to the absolute sovereign, that is God. The man must prepare conditions to 'turn his mortal worldly obedience into the ruling and kingdom of the lasting world' (Feyz Kashani, 1388 SH, p. 343). Thus, a leader must enjoy, more than anything else, the characteristics of a guide. This statement of Feyz is founded on the link between Shiite epistemology and belief in Imams as well as the link between "light-

way-knowledge. Felicity and politics are wayfaring the hidden path of truth with the light of prophethood and authority [of imamate]”.¹

In Feyz’s view, the leading feature is found, more than anyone else, in the perfect man. Indeed, however, the truth of things is coveted and hidden, while falsehood is often more objective and before the eyes. Just as the legitimate Imam who deserves governing is hidden and others are kings of the world. Thus fact, for Feyz, has been such from the early days of creation. He explains, “Since the day when the damned Cain murdered Abel due to jealousy for why Adam made him his heir, and then the Exalted God granted Hibatullah to Adam instead of Abel, dissimulation, fear and hiding truth emerged in Adam’s scions and the saints and God’s friends were always hidden, guiding people with fear and dissimulation. The world has always been so. And oppressive kings and emirs were always dominant, and just in rare cases where the truth became dominant, not the whole world was conquered by truth. This is because this worldly mode of existence cannot tolerate the light of truth due to its distance from truth and misery of essence” (Feyz Kashani, 1388 SH, pp. 78-79).

1. In this noetic system, the feature of the way is being hidden and darkness, and the light of imam’s lamp as the core of the world of possibilities (in a poetic expression, the polestar that shows us the way) guides us in the path of felicity. The mystics have advised us ‘not to cover this path without the companionship of Khezr/ it is dark, be afraid of being misled.’ In imam Ali’s words, we know what the word *mishkāt* in Sura *Nūr* means: Jaber bin Abdulla Ansari quotes Imam Ali and says, ‘once I entered the mosque of Kufa and saw Imam Ali who was writing something and was smiling. I asked him about what made him smile. He answered, ‘I wonder about the one who recites this verse and does not understand it.’ I asked him about that verse. And he answered, ‘the verse *Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth (Nūr: 35)*. The *mishkāt* is the Prophet Mohammad. I am the *miṣḡbāḥ*. Hassan and Hussein are the *zujāja*. Ali bin Hussein is the *kukab durrī*. Mohammad bin Ali is *shajara mubāraka*. *Zeytūna* is Ja’far bin Mohammad. *Lā sharqiyya* is Musa bin Ja’far. *Lā gharbiyya* is Ali bin Musa al-Reza. *Yakādu zeytuhā yaḍī*’ is Mohammad bin Ali. *Low lam tamsashu nār* is Ali bin Mohammad. *Nūr ‘alā nūr* is Hassan bin Ali. And *yahdillāh li-nūrihīman yashā*’ is Mahdi Qa’im” (Tabarsi Nouri, 1386 SH: chap. 2).

But after the perfect man, who are the Prophet, his appointed successors and – now – the hidden Imam, the guides of the people are the divine scholars ‘who act according to their knowledge, speak of God’s path and hereafter, and are not fond of this world’ (Feyz Kashani, 1388 SH, p. 345). Just if there are scholars who are free from loving others than God, politics can play its main function that is “training man for achieving his qualification of perfection” (Feyz Kashani, 1358 SH, p. 340). Such persons take the true responsibility for leading the society towards moral and human perfection.

Previously, we pointed that in the noetic system of Feyz Kashani, the ‘light’ and ‘darkness’ as scientific terms in the Quran are synonyms for the ‘intellect’ and ‘ignorance’. And accordingly, guiding towards knowledge is guiding towards God. In other words, guiding towards truth is guiding towards God. This image of leading towards truth forms the foundation of politics in Feyz’s view. Accordingly, Feyz believes that “politics is the noblest action of the man” (Feyz Kashani, 1389 SH, p. 39). This politics will not – undoubtedly – be free from wisdom and knowledge. Thus, the leader of such politics must be one from the knowledgeable people.

This image of leadership – reached at by Feyz and many other Shiite philosophers – is, at first place, related to the prophet and his appointed successor, as the Prophet declares the goal of his calling to prophethood to be completion of moral virtues. In his valuable work entitled *Naṣīḥat-nāma Shāhī*, Hussein bin Hassan Kamal Kharazmi (838 AH), composed at 830 AH under the name of Ibrahim Sultan bin Amir-Shah, has a well-known phrase that helps us in understanding the meaning intended by Feyz. He says, “Listen to the interpretation of Exalted God’s saying from Sheikh Abdullah Ansari, who said, ‘I was a hidden treasure and wanted to reveal My power; thus, I created the universe. I wanted to reveal Myself, then I created the man. And the perfection of this knowledge is not gained except by moral virtues

and purity of the soul and one's inner nature. And this is not realized except by the pieces of advice from advisors and with the compassion and guidance from the merciful guides''' (Kharazmi, manuscript 3650, Tehran University, p. 3).

In the above statements, the relationship between knowledge, morality, felicity and leadership is quite clear. Thus, the existence of a leader and a guide in mystical thought is among the necessities of taking steps in the sphere of wayfaring towards truth and achieving felicity. In Feyz's view, the world wherein we live is not the destination. Rather, it is a temporary residence to leave after a short time. Thus, as going on any journey requires some provision and a roadster, this path will not lead to truth without proper provision and vehicle (Feyz Kashani, 1388 SH, p. 344). Accordingly, the man's need for civilization and community and fulfilling his essential needs are formed. Here, the difference between Feyz Kashani and persons such as Mohaqqueq Sabzewari is that Feyz – unlike the common approach – does not reach politics from the man's need for community and his subsistence; rather, the man's subsistence and his need for civilization is defined basically under the means of his wayfaring towards his main destination. In general, in the man's journey and wayfaring towards his sublime destination, the community's politics has a high position, because no traveller reaches the destination without proper provision. For Feyz, when the man's civilization and community is formed, the criterion and law of the path is the very *Shari'ah* (Feyz Kashani, 1385 SH, p. 338), which reminds us once again of the relationship between the way and the *Shar'*. Accordingly, types of politics are formed – for Feyz – in this way.

Typology of politics

Based on the abovementioned points, Feyz divides politics into two general types: religious legal politics and non-legal or essential politics. The religious legal politics is the politics that sees the man's

felicity not only in this world but also beyond the worldly limits. Thus, the religious legal politics is the politics that “places the material world at the service of the celestial world, leads the man towards the Exalted God, places the lusts at the service of the intellects, refers the world to the hereafter, and incites men to move towards these affairs. And it leads them in proportion to their talents towards ultimate felicity” (Feyz Kashani, 1385 SH, p. 349).

The religious legal politics is the very politics for which the divine prophets and their appointed successors took responsibility. And if the human beings pursue the same politics, they are wayfarers of the religious legal politics. But the essential politics or the ‘conventional’ politics is just focused on subsistence affairs and is formed on the basis of the man’s presence in civilization and community. This politics is the very ‘worldly politics’ which has been accidentally essential in the religious legal politics of the prophets and their successors (Feyz Kashani, 1385 SH, p. 349). Thus, in the religious legal politics, the requirements of the community are also hidden, because wayfaring the path to felicity will not be possible without provision. Accordingly, in exposition on religious legal politics, Mulla Mohsen believes that this type of politics considers “reformation of the whole population and the whole system of this world and the hereafter together” (Feyz Kashani, 1371 B, p. 5). This is because *Shar‘* and the religious legal politics “reminds people of the fact that they are going to return to another world upper than this world, which is everlasting and eternal and it is the true felicity. And this is not achieved except by turning away from the lusts and passions of this world” (Feyz Kashani, 1371 B, p. 5). But the worldly and essential politics lacks the religious legal politics, and only “it reforms the individual souls and the causes of their subsistence just to live in this world” (Feyz Kashani, 1371 B, p. 5).

Feyz, however, emphasizes that not realizing the religious legal politics must not lead to closure of worldly politics, because the man –

as it is man – does nevertheless require subsistence, and under such conditions, the politics that protects the men’s essential community is inevitable. This is because the social life, without such a policy, is not possible and, thus, religious legal politics includes both aspects. Feyz concludes that politics and management of the men’s community – even founded on overcoming – is necessary (See: Feyz Kashani, n.d. A, p. 176).

In Mulla Mohsen’s view, after two general types of politics, the politics and government are of five types in the practical level:

1. Divine politics and God’s absolute sovereignty. In Feyz’s view, sovereignty belongs to God. As a result, religious legal politics is formed on the basis of divine sovereignty. The politics and government that defines itself under the more general system of divine sovereignty is the religious legal politics and government; otherwise, it is the non-religious and essential politics and government. Generally, for Feyz, the governance of the religious legal government is the very sovereignty of God as the spirit governing the universe; and on the contrary, in the non-religious legal essential government sovereignty belongs to ones other than God. Thus, Feyz believes that politics without *Shari‘a* is like a corpse without spirit. In mystical statement, Feyz believes that the politics void of divine spirit is restricted to the limits of the material world.
2. The prophets’ politics and government. The prophet is the perfect man and select of the universe. Feyz believes that the Exalted God has determined two types of missions for His prophets and messengers. That is, He has determined the main goal for calling them to prophethood to be reinforcing the man’s sublime aspect and employing the material world for serving the celestial world, but He has entrusted them the responsibility for preserving the men’s essential community in the worldly life.

Thus, they are custodians of the policy of preserving the men's essential community (See: Khaleqi, 1380 SH, p. 43).

3. Finally, however, even in the Prophet's politics the sovereignty belongs to God not to the Prophet, because the whole universe and all human beings and jinns have been created for obeying Him and, thus, the religious legal government must be a beam of light of the divine sovereignty.
4. The politics and government of God's trustees and saints. The genetic and legislative politics and leadership based on continuation of divine authority is specified to the Prophet's appointed successors who are, after him, the perfect men, the Arch-pole and the great spirit of the universe and the heir to the Prophet's knowledge and all his states except receiving divine revelation. The Shiite imams are the spirits of the universe and without them the universe is like a corpse without spirit. And this is the meaning of *hujjatullā* (God's proof) of whom the earth will not be void, as we find in hadiths.
5. The scholars' politics and government. In this section, Feyz divides scholars into three groups: those who have just the exoteric knowledge; those who have just the esoteric knowledge; and those who have both types of knowledge. Finally, Feyz concludes that just the third group can take over the responsibility of the religious legal politics, because they are aware of both the man's destination and his necessary needs, i.e. the provision and the roadster. Dividing scholars, for Feyz, is founded on esoteric epistemology and mystical anthropology in his noetic system. In Feyz's noetic system, the man has two aspects: first, the spiritual aspect on which the man's humanity depends, and second, his physical aspect, which is specified to his worldly existence. Based on this dichotomy, the exoteric and esoteric sciences are formed. In Feyz's view, however, the

religious legal politics is the one that considers both aspects. This is the reason for Feyz's oppositions to Ghazali in regarding jurisprudence under the category of worldly sciences. In Feyz's noetic system, jurisprudence cannot be void of esoteric aspects. And those scholars who have both esoteric and exoteric aspects are divine scholars who are spiritual deputies of the Infallibles.

6. Of course, Feyz Kashani has also investigated the scholars' lieutenantancy from the perspective of jurisprudential common principles. In the Shiite jurisprudence one of the entries regarding politics is obligatoriness of Friday Prayer in the Occultation period. Feyz, in the treatise entitled *Tarjumat al-Ṣalāt* under the discussion on obligatoriness of Friday Prayer, has divided the opinions of great scholars and has expounded each one. Among the existing opinions, Feyz deals with explanation of an opinion that says, "in the condition of absence of a just sultan, i.e. the Infallible Imam, the jurist is Imam's lieutenant and, thus, the Friday Prayer must not be cancelled." Nevertheless, Feyz concludes that the opinions are numerous and "there may be no consensus upon them, unless some imitate others and a group follows another group, as it is the case" (Feyz Kashani, 1388 C, p. 171). However, considering Feyz's explanation on various opinions, it seems that he agrees more with the opinion believing in the scholars' lieutenantancy, because Feyz in *al-Li'ālī* believes that imamate and caliphate after the Prophet and his legitimate successors goes to divine scholars. Thus, "the misleading scholars of the nation with spiritual relation to those two are equal to the guiding scholars of the nation with spiritual relation to the Prophet and his legitimate successor." (Feyz Kashani, 1387 A, p. 72).
7. Therefore, Feyz believes that in the period of the absence of divine scholars, they are prior to others for guiding and leading

the society. In *al-Maḥajja al-Bayḍā*, Feyz criticizes Ghazali's opinion in *Iḥyā al-Ulūm* for considering jurisprudence under the worldly sciences (Feyz Kashani, 1372 SH, p. 132) and believes that jurisprudence includes sciences pertaining to this world and the hereafter. Thus, unlike Ghazali, he maintains that scholars and jurists are not only advisors of kings regarding political morality; rather, in Feyz's view, since politics means reformation of people for felicity, and the way to felicity is through *Shari'ā*, the religious scholars are prior to sultans in policing people. This is one of the important points in Feyz's political thought found in treatise *Raf' al-Fitna*. We will discuss it in a separate section dedicated to that treatise.

8. Politics and government of kings and sultans. In Feyz's view, with the existence of non-legitimate sultans, the politics is the one that just "reforms the individual souls and the causes of their subsistence just to live in this world" (Feyz Kashani, 1371 B, p. 5). And such a politics definitely ignores the possibilities of the man's being beyond his worldly life. Such a politics pays attention just to the man's limited and objective life in the closed material world, hence neglecting the sublime worlds beyond the material world. For Feyz, in such a politics, there is no possibility for the man's felicity, because his life is restricted to the time between his birth and his death. Nevertheless, there must inevitably be such a politics in the society, because with the existence of powerful sovereigns, the split and schism among people will be prevented. In the treatise *al-Ītidhār*, Feyz believes that the Shiite Imams also confirmed such a principle: "Don't you see when Imam Ali could not resist people, he yielded the government to the first caliph to preserve the system of Islam and Muslims, prevent schism among Muslims, establish their community, and enforce the laws of religion?" (Feyz Kashani, 1371 SH, p. 285).

Regarding the three first items in Feyz's noetic system, except the first item that is related to God's sovereignty, the second and third items are basically religious and there is no possibility for formation of non-religious politics on the part of the Infallibles. As to the fourth and fifth items, i.e. the politics and government of the scholars and kings, it can be both the essential politics and religious legal one, because none of the two abovementioned groups (i.e. scholars and kings) is infallible and, thus, may have errors. The foundation of Feyz's discussion to bring "the material world at the service of the celestial world" (Feyz Kashani, 1358 SH, p. 349) starts from this point. The criterion Feyz offers for formation of such a society is *Shari'ā*; that is, the divine knowledge communicated to the man through the prophet and his legitimate successor. And this is the very light that enlightens the way to felicity beyond the material world. Accordingly, for Feyz, scholars as the successors of Imam in the Occultation period are prior to sultans and other classes of people in policing and leading the society.

The ideal political conditions will realize when the political rules confirm with the rules pertaining to the man's felicity. In *al-Wāfī*, Feyz has named a section "Ḥusn al-Siyāsa" wherein he maintains that good politics is "moral purification, whether from outside like sultan, or from inside like good policy of the soul" (Feyz Kashani, 1368 SH, vol. 1, p. 124). Under such conditions, the religious legal government is formed. But, such a government has duties as it has latitude.¹ Such a thought is reflected in Feyz's two political treatises, with which we will deal later on.

A) *Ā'īna Shāhī*

Feyz's treatise entitled *Ā'īna Shāhī* (literally, 'royal mirror') begins

1. For more information, see: Khalegi, 1380 SH, p. 62.

with a discussion on mystical anthropology. At the beginning of the treatise, Feyz says this treatise is a summary of a Persian treatise entitled *Ḍiyā' al-Qalb* written on “knowing the man’s thinking soul and placing the [five] rulers on it in order”. In that book, he likens the man’s soul to a city on which various rulers want to dominate. These are five: the intellect, religious law (*sharʿ*), habits, convention, and nature (See: Feyz Kashani, 1320 SH, p. 178).

Muhyuddin Arabi, who starts his discussion in *al-Tadbīrāt al-Ilāhiyya fī Iṣlāḥ al-Mamlīka al-Insāniyya* (Ibn Arabi, 2015, p. 90) on nurturing the soul and modifying human lands, and reaches at the outer land and sultanate on the basis of improvement of human lands or the ‘microcosm’. Later on, Mirfenderski pursued this thought in Isfahan school. It seems that Feyz was continuing the same thought in that treatise. He intended to know the five rulers to give a criterion and a mirror to the sovereign, i.e. the king, so that he may look into the mirror and see his own defects.

The first point in the anthropology offered by Feyz Kashani is that the man has been created ‘free-willed’, but this free will is a two-edged sword, because free will leads to deciding and following various ways, the ways “obeying some of which ascends him to high positions and obeying others descends him to lowest parts of the hell.” (Feyz Kashani, 1371 C, p. 2). The second point is that for Feyz, free will leads to decision-making, but any decision is made under the influence of one of the five rulers. The five rulers initially have a general classification: (a) inner rulers including intellect and nature; (b) outer rulers including religious law (*sharʿ*) and convention. Feyz adds other rulers to these four rulers, “which come from the outside and is placed inside it, and that is habit.” (Feyz Kashani, 1371 C, p. 2).

Following each of these rulers places the man in a certain path in life, but the man is free to choose any of them, and is not obliged to choose any. Choosing any of those rulers plans the possibilities of the

man's life. Up to this point, Feyz's statements are similar to the recent existentialists, but unlike individuals such as Kierkegaard or Sartre, he is not involved in existentialist anxiety, for he believes that in time of anxiety and when the man is disappointed, he can make the final decision by referring to the *Aḥkam al-Ḥākimīn* (i.e. the judge of the judges). Feyz's description of the man is different from the common definitions and perhaps one of the reasons for his opposition to logic is the same fact. He believes that "the man's truth is not fixed and 'in one mode'; rather, it is 'altering' between the intellect and the nature in a way that each that overcomes him will become the same as him" (Feyz Kashani, 1371 C, p. 6). His description of the man is somehow close to Mulla Sadra's view; but regarding the five rulers, he has an innovation. He believes that the man – in proportion to the dominance of any of the five rulers – will have a different nature (Feyz Kashani, 1371 C, p. 6, 7). Feyz, then, adds the point that among the five rulers, "the intellect and religious law are nobler than others, and the intellect is the noblest and most superior." (Feyz Kashani, 1371 C, p. 7). And "if there was no intellect, *Sharʿ* would also not be recognized; and indeed, the intellect is a *Sharʿ* inside the man just as *Shrʿ* is an intellect outside him. And the dearest blessing granted by the Exalted God to His servants is the intellect, because it is the meaning of life and basis of permanence. Through the intellect, one understands and acquires knowledge and preserves the insight of monotheism. With its light, one can see and can achieve the high levels of guidance. And in short, the intellect is the source for all perfections." (Feyz Kashani, 1371 C, p. 8). In Feyz's view, the intellect is graded and the highest degrees of it belong to the Infallibles; thus, the perfect intellect is prior to any ruler, for "as far as there is intellect, there will be no other ruler. If some ruler judges in opposition to intellect, the judgment must not be obeyed. This is because the intellect is the noblest and the most superior of all rulers and the most consistent one with *Sharʿ*; and other

rulers always obey it... and it has no errors. However, this kind of intellect specifically belongs to the prophets and divine saints.” (Feyz Kashani, 1371 C, p. 169).

Feyz believes that in the case of disagreement between the five rulers, the intellect is prior to other rulers; of course the perfect intellect that belongs to the Infallibles. Considering these facts, Feyz stands somewhere between the *akhbārīs* (traditionalists) and *uṣūlīs*¹ (fundamentalists). On the one hand, he comes close to *uṣūlīs* by giving priority to the intellect and, on the other hand, he maintains that the perfect intellect belongs to the Infallibles, and this shows the importance of traditions (*khabar*) for him. At the end of his treatise, Feyz maintains that when there is no perfect intellect and ‘there emerges bewilderment in discerning on the part of the sultan’, he must refer to someone who is closer to the perfect intellect and consult him in rational affairs (Feyz Kashani, 1371 C, p. 11). For Feyz, such individuals are ‘divine scholars’ (Feyz Kashani, 1371 C, p. 11) who have probably made their material world subordinate to the celestial world and sensible things subordinate to intelligible things. Thus, the king must consult such persons who see the truths of things as they are, not those who have made intelligible things subordinate to sensible things and are far from truth.

In Feyz’s view, “convention is the lowest ruler [among the five rulers], but it makes judgment about all and is dominant over all in most of people. The intellect and *Sharʿ* order people to obey convention as far as it does not oppose their laws; and when it oppose their laws, it must be avoided, except when there is a fear of harm and there must be dissimulation” (Feyz Kashani, 1371 C, p. 8). This position places Feyz in confrontation to those who found the political thought on a rhetoric basis; and this is one of the features of mystical nature of

1. *Uṣūlī* is a title for a scholar of the ‘Principles of Jurisprudence’ (*uṣūl fiqh*).

Feyz's political thought and its inconsistency with the Peripatetic philosophers.

The aforementioned treatise explains how the ruler who is – as a man – ‘subordinate to the sultanate’ of the abovementioned five rulers must decide. The treatise has been compiled in 12 chapters and has the noetic system of the traditionalist mystical scholars. Something like this position – in a more tangible form – can be seen in Majlesi I and even Majlesi II. Feyz also was, anyway, a scholar with mystical leanings, but on the other hand, he had traditionalist leanings as well. Accordingly, he tries – *passim* in his treatise – to put his findings under the trial of the traditions. As it is clear, in the above phrase, he considers the highest order of the intellect as belonging to the prophets and their trustees. Nevertheless, Feyz also regards ‘convention’ as one of the five rulers identified.

Regarding chapter five of the treatise devoted to “knowing convention”, i.e. the fourth ruler, Feyz believes that “convention is an instructive law specified by the public among themselves, making it an obligation for themselves and considering disobedience to it as indecent. Although acting according to it may be difficult and unwelcome, they will reprimand one another for not doing it. And it is different based on different times, lands and people. It is sometime consistent with the intellect, *Shar‘* and nature, and sometimes not. It is sometimes accepted by sapient people and sometimes not. What is consistent with those three and not accepted by sapient people is unwise to do, except when it is done out of dissimulation and fear of harm. And convention – if it includes dominance and overcoming – will be called sultanate; and any community has to have a sultanate so that their population is ordered and disciplined. And the difference between *Shar‘* and sultanate is that sultanate modifies the population of individual souls and orders their subsistence just to live in this world; and it is issued from individual souls subject to errors. But

Shar‘ modifies the general population and the whole system of this world and the hereafter together while preserves modification of each in it. Thus, it inevitably reminds people that they will return to another sublime world higher than this world, which is everlasting and perpetual, and that it is true felicity, which is not acquired except by turning away from lusts and passionate pleasures of this world” (Feyz Kashani, 1371 C, p. 5).

In the above statements, Feyz believes that whenever convention includes dominance, it will be called sultanate. Of course, we must note that the term *sultanate* in older texts is not the only equal for the word ‘sultanate’ in today’s language; rather, it is an equivalent for ‘state’ that can include any type of government. Dominance and overcoming here means taking power, not dominance intended in the traditional theories on overcoming.¹ Feyz concludes that human’s felicity must necessarily include the sphere beyond the sensible world as well. Thus, “the sultan’s actions are incomplete and can be completed by *Shar‘*; but the actions of the *Shar‘* are complete and needless of sultanate” (Feyz Kashani, 1371 C, p. 5).

For Feyz, priority of *Shar‘* over convention is influenced by the worldview of the divine philosophy that sees the celestial world inside the material world. In this way, Feyz seeks to make the outer of the universe subordinate to its inner. He believes that “altogether, the relation of sultanate to *Shar‘* is as the relation of body to spirit,² and as the servant to the master. It sometimes listens to its speeches and

1. In *Tajumat al-Ṣalāt*, Feyz speaks of “Infallible Imam’s dominance and sultanate” and considers him the very “just sultan” (*sultan ‘adl*) (Feyz Kashani, 1388 SH. C, p. 171).

2. In *Kalimāt Makhzūna*, Mulla Mohsen believes that the relationship of “the Exalted God to all beings is like the relationship of your spirit to your organs; thus, the truth of all beings is the same” (Feyz Kashani, 1387 B, p. 59). Evidently, Feyz extends that relationship to society and politics on the basis of the very ontological view. In his noetic system, thus, Feyz looks at the society with a view of ‘unity of existence’.

obeys its order and sometimes not. Thus, whenever sultanate obeys the *Sharʿ* and follows its orders, the outer of the universe – which is the material world – will become subordinate to the inner of the universe, which is the celestial world. The sensible things become subordinate to the intelligible things, the particles move towards the whole, people become willing to perform lasting righteous deeds and avoid mortal things, teasing things are gotten rid of and charity becomes a habit, and every new day will become a better day for the man. Thus, the Exalted God guides the servants every day and night, assists them and grants success to them, especially the king that makes people obey the *Sharʿ*, and he himself obeys it. And sometimes, due to this fact, the celestial lights come down to the heart of the king to make his heart insightful and the zeal to liken to spirituality ascends him to high spiritual degrees so that he may be king in that mode of existence as he is a king in this mode... And whenever sultanate does not obey *Sharʿ*, the senses are captivated by the intellects, the celestial world is captured by the material world, the lower orders dominate the sublime world, people lean towards the mortal things, asceticism will not be found in the lasting righteous actions, evil will be acquired habitually, and every day will be worse than the previous day. The Exalted God, then, will leave His servants day in and day out, withdraw His guidance and assistance from them, and altogether, the opposite of the previously mentioned affairs will occur. We seek refuge to God from that situation.” (Feyz Kashani, 1371 C, p. 5-6).

Feyz Kashani has not inserted any obligation and force in his thought so that the outer material world may become subordinate to the inner celestial world. According to that opinion, basically from the cosmological viewpoint, the material world is subordinate to the celestial world, and this has been frequently mentioned in the Quran. Thus, when the material world or *mulk* – implicitly referring to another meaning of *mulk*, i.e. ‘government –turns towards celestial

world, it means that the political society is adjusted according to what is running in the reality of existence. Turning away from celestial world is the same as being far from “the truth of things as they really are”. This approach is based on the realistic ontology of the mystical thought.

In this worldview, the material world’s leaning towards the celestial world occurs when the man’s interests are towards the celestial world, not towards the material world. And if there is a leaning from the material world towards the celestial world, which is indeed turning towards truth, victory reveals in politics; otherwise, if the celestial world is captured by the material world, “appetite in mortal things emerges” (Feyz Kashani, 1371 C, pp. 5-6). This analysis offered by Feyz is based on limiting the interests as well as restricting and reducing the man’s worldly aspects, which occurs in the concrete thought and causes the man to be placed in the position of understanding the existence or presence focused on celestial world. Feyz inserts this position in his political thought and believes that if the material world is focused on celestial world, the system of the universe is organized in accordance with the reality.

Feyz’s statement shows he does not mean that the ruler must merely be the perfect man. Rather, adjusting the material world in accordance with the celestial world will place the ruler, as a part of the material world, in the existential position focused on the celestial world. But on the other hand, we must note that the man’s gradual turning away from the ruler’s being a perfect man in the mystical political thought is one of the features of the Shiite mystical political thought. This is because in the view offered in the mystical leaning of the Shiite scholars – who have now replaced the early mystics such as ‘Aziz Nasafi – the perfect man and the Arch-pole is just the Infallible Imam, not – as they think – the man who has covered stages of wayfaring and annihilation in Allah. The man can reach the Polehood,

but the Arch-pole is the Imam who is the most perfect man.

In general, in that treatise, Feyz considers politics under the more general belief of felicity, and considering the man's free-will and volition, he regards the man's expediency in turning towards the other sphere of existence. In his view, "the main end of the man's creation is that his 'thinking soul' progresses gradually and reaches the perfection he deserves; and the body has been created as a tool for the soul in acquiring that perfection. The ultimate perfection is that the man knows the existence as it is." (Feyz Kashani, 1371 C, p. 8). This knowledge, for Feyz, is realized through *ma'rifat al-nafs* (i.e. 'knowing the soul'). Journeying into the man's inner side means going inside the man, and knowing the human world leads us towards knowing the outer world.

B) Raf' al-Fitna

One of treatises written by Mulla Mohsen Feyz Kashani regarding the political thought is his treatise entitled *Raf' al-Fitna* of which a copy is found in Tehran University.¹ This treatise is about the statement of "truth of the knowledge, scholars and their categories" (Feyz Kashani, manuscript no. 4761/4, Tehran University, p. 156) and was dedicated to Shah Abbas. Aqa Bozorg has introduced this treatise as *Raf' al-Ghawāya* (Aqa Bozorg, 1377 SH, vol. 11, P. 243). Some maintain that this treatise is a part of Feyz's treatise entitled *Sharḥ Sadr* (Feyz Kashani, 1371 SH, p. 35). Some others, however, have compared the beginning, the end, and the goals of the treatise. They maintain that the treatise has an independent nature (Naji Nasrabadi, 1377 SH, p. 48). In our view, the latter opinion is more valid.

The treatise sees an inextricable link between knowledge and

1. Copy no. 4761/4 from the collection of manuscripts of the central library of Tehran University. Another copy is also found in Royal Library (Golestan Palace) (List of Manuscripts/ incomplete: 600).

politics, and is founded on dividing scholars into three groups: people of exoteric ideas, people of esoteric ideas, and people believing in both. This seems to be a conventional normal classification, and Feyz himself has mentioned it in *Āṭna Shahī* as well. In Feyz's view, the inner knowledge (knowledge of inner side of the man) is preferred to other types of knowledge, because the destination of all sciences is the inner knowledge. The inner knowledge is, indeed, a destination that the wayfarer of knowledge must achieve it. He believes that "the ultimate goal of knowledge is just the inner knowledge. The human species has been created to acquire this type of knowledge, and the man has been privileged over other creatures with this type of knowledge. We call this type of knowledge 'wisdom'." (Feyz Kashani, manuscript no. 4761/4, Tehran University, p. 156).

Feyz's statement here is focused on human species, not believers or Muslims and the like usually addressed in jurisprudential treatises. This opinion offered by Feyz is based on mystical anthropology that speaks of "the man's understanding" based on understanding "the ontological possibilities of the man's humanity" and, accordingly, the man is the subject of knowledge for he is the man, not a man in certain limits. In mystical anthropology, the man's truth and universe is revealed under the inner knowledge, and this epistemological way is based on *kashf al-mahjūb* (removing the veil) to which just the man who has stepped in the sphere of mysticism can reach. Feyz's reason for the priority of inner knowledge is also founded on this logic, "because from this knowledge, the truth of things is revealed, especially knowing one's soul as the asset for acquiring divine truths and knowledge" (Feyz Kashani, manuscript no. 4761/4, Tehran University, p. 156).

"Revelation of truth of things" on the basis of "inner knowledge" and "knowing one's soul" is – for Feyz – realized just through one method; that is, the method of *kashf al-mahjūb*. Feyz concludes that among people, the one who enjoys inner knowledge is prior to others

in politics. But since the world is dominated by the people of outer ideas, the people of inner ideas are tragically put aside. This belief is, almost always, the general feature of the Shiite political thoughts, and in a delicate way must be studied under the discussion on Shiite study of Imams and Shiite epistemology, because in the Shiite study of Imams, the right to imamate is also out of social arrangements. The divine knowledge and infallibility turns imam to the most legitimate individual for leadership of the society. Nevertheless, making this right practical is dependent just on people's willingness – as it was the case in Imam Ali's instance. Consequently, people's free will is another side of their enjoyment of the 'rule of grace'.

Feyz's idea of leadership for the scholar who is beyond the inner and outer worlds is due to the completeness of his knowledge, for he has the right to government in the absence of the Infallible. Feyz believes that "in short, scholars are of three groups: one includes those who have just the outer knowledge. They are like lamps that burn and enlighten others. They are not free of loving this world; rather they sell their religion for their world, because they have recognized neither this world nor the other world. This is because these two can be recognized through the inner knowledge, not the outer knowledge. Verily, this group is not qualified for leadership of the people towards God. They are the masters of scholars and most of them are masters while they are not qualified and are in darkness, deviation and deception. Mostly, the people are led to them and get benefits from them, as a hadith says, "Verily, God supports this religion [even] with the sinful man." Sometimes, there are some of them who are characterized by purity of nature. They lead people to God and are rewarded for that; and this is not strange. The second group includes those who have just the inner knowledge. They are like stars whose light is limited to their surrounding environment. They are also unable to lead people, because the inner knowledge without the outer

knowledge cannot have obedience. And they are qualified to lead people, because one of them can reach the east and west of the world and can be the Pole of his time. They will be satirized and persecuted by the people of outer ideas and be labeled infidels by them, because they will have no status among public, and the worldly scholars who are slaves of the world cannot see their beloved is with another.” (Feyz Kashani, manuscript no. 4761/4, Tehran University, pp. 162-163).

Feyz Kashani maintains that the one enjoying inner knowledge is the one who enjoys prophetic wisdom. However, he admonishes us that “this wisdom as the heritage of the prophets is different from the wisdom common among the recent scholars, because some deviations inserted in it has led to misunderstanding of the valueless people and interference in the conditions of acquiring it” (Feyz Kashani, manuscript no. 4761/4, Tehran University, p. 157).

Conclusion

In Feyz’s noetic system, those who have both inner and outer knowledge, i.e. those enjoying divine wisdom as well as knowledge inherited from the Prophet, are those “deserving leadership of people”, because they are aware of anything and it is advisable for people to have such as person on the throne of servicing them. “However, all people do not have the capability of understanding this knowledge and are not qualified for receiving such an honor and felicity” (Feyz Kashani, manuscript no. 4761/4, Tehran University, p. 157). It is quite clear that once again, the tragedy of the dominance of the world-seeking majority of people is repeated and such a person is put aside. This is because such a person is a physician in the mystical political thought and nobody refers to a physician on force.

This has always been the case in this world that the individuals for whom the world is a beloved become rulers. This historical negligence, for Feyz, postpones understanding the truth of life beyond

death, and this ignorance is always repeated in a vicious circle: wanting the world for the world itself! Feyz complains to the people of outer ideas that they unconsciously oppose the inner knowledge, and refers to a hadith from Imam Ali in response to them: “People are enemies of what they do not know.” (Feyz Kashani, manuscript no. 4761/4, Tehran University, p. 159).

This idea, i.e. exiting the vicious circle of wanting the world for the world, becomes practical in the sphere of politics. That is, the one who can save the human community from this circle and lead the men to felicity is just the one who is free from this circle. Accordingly, for Feyz, having an ideal society is dependent on dominance of the inner knowledge and inner scholar; however, “there is pain but no physician” (Feyz Kashani, manuscript no. 4761/4, Tehran University, p. 158). And this is an allusion to Feyz’s loneliness in his life. Finally, he died in 1090 AH.

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