

Philosophy as Viewed by Imam Khomeini (R.A.)

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1. The Greek Philosophy

Imam Khomeini (RA) held a moderate standpoint vis-à-vis the Greek Philosophy. He even regarded Aristotle as the founder of logic and recalled with honor this great man and his services to philosophy and logic. About Aristotle, he said as follows:

“Aristotle, the son of Nicomachus of Stagira, is one of the great philosophers of the world. The logical teachings and the laws of deduction which is the basis of all learning are indebted to the valuable services of this great man. As he founded the teaching of logic, he became known as the “First Teacher”. Shaykhul ar-Ra’is (Ibn Sina), the prodigy of the time, has knelt down before teachings of this great man and has paid homage to his writings. According to Shaykhul-Ra’is, so far no one has been able to find fault which the rules of logic set forth by Aristotle and his grave views have not suffered violation and distortion.” (See *Kashful-Asrar*, p. 34)

Imam Khomeini (RA) recalls Aristotle with honor. At times, he recalls Aristotle with terms such as the “eminent philosopher” and the “grand philosopher”. He recalls Aristotle’s “*Uthulogiya*” as a precious and respectable book. (See *A’da’b us-Salat*, by Imam Khomeini (RA), p. 329)

On the other hand, the divine philosophers of Greece praised Plato. About him, Imam says the following:

“In the field of divinity, he has grave and solid views, some of which have been proved and demonstrated by Sheikh Shahabuddin Hakim Ishraqi and Sadrul-Muta’allihin, the renowned Islamic philosopher, such as “*Qawl bih Muthul Aflatuniyyah* (Platonism), and “*Mu’allaqah*”. [See *Kashful-Asrar*, p. 33 by Imam Khomeini (RA)]

But despite the Imam’s acknowledgment of the advantages of Greek philosophy, he says the following about the efforts made by the Muslims and by the Islamic thinkers and philosophers: “The issue of bi`that created a scientific and mystical development in the world: It turned the dry Greek philosophy, which had risen in the hands of the Greeks and which had and still has value, into an ocular mysticism and a true intuition for the men of intuition.” (See *Sahifatun-Nur*, vol. 17, p. 250 - statements of Imam addressed to the President, Majlis members, on 21.2.1362 Shamsi)

Imam Khomeini (RA) after expressing the sublime position of the Qur’an and the fact that it elevates man from the status of verification to that of intuition and heartfelt knowledge, points out:

“If the Qur’an didn’t exist, the door towards God’s knowledge would be closed forever. And the Greek philosophy is another story which is very valuable in its own place, because it proves things with reasoning. But no knowledge is acquired.” (Ibid.)

2. The Western Philosophy:

With this explanation, the view of the Imam (RA) with regard to Western philosophy is also made clear. On the one hand, the Imam attacks the philosophy of Descartes and regards it weak with respect to divinity and metaphysics. He also reproaches the infatuation of the Muslims with the Western philosophy and notes:

“Some have conceived that if a country progresses in natural phenomena, it can also be a fore-runner in the trend of divine wisdom.” (See Kashful-Asrar, p. 33)

On the other hand, the Imam (RA) then refers to Descartes’ view on proving the permanence of the soul after death. (Ibid. p. 37) The Imam’s approach to Western philosophy in this manner indicates two points:

1. It shows the Imam’s vast scope of mind and his comprehensive knowledge of Western philosophy.
3. At the time, some readers deemed important the views of Western philosophers, and proving the performance of the soul by the Westerners was more convincing for them.

Consequently, studying the works of Western philosophers and other thinkers of the world in any period is exigent for the lovers of philosophy in the theological centers and at the universities. But the following must be borne in mind:

1. Before commenting with discussions which are not, at times, devoid of hidden fallacies, the researchers and lovers of philosophy should strengthen their own doctrinal and philosophical foundations.
2. Professors should engage in teaching these ideas and philosophies who are aware of the hidden nations of rational methods and of the secrets behind ancient and new philosophical studies.
3. They should gather a store of the rich Islamic philosophy which is the result of hundreds of years of unremitting efforts and endeavors of the Islamic thinkers.

By observing these conditions, one can use the sources of Western philosophy and other schools of thought and abstain from their disadvantages.

The most important step to be taken now that philosophy is receiving greater attention is to revive the verbal and philosophical

heritage for whose compilation Islamic thinkers have spent many years of their precious lives.

If the European write tens of books and articles about one of their ordinary artists and depict his life and works in different forms for their people, not many have engaged in analyzing the views and writing the biographies of numerous scholars such as Sadruddin Shirazi, Mulla Hadi Sabziwari, and Fayz Kashani who emerged in the recent centuries in Iran. The history of Iran and the Islamic countries is full of such honors. Before the Orientalists introduce them to us, it is the duty of the thinkers to get hold of these assets (of their own country) and benefit from their knowledge. As a result, Islamic metaphysics, like other branches of science, possesses a sublime value. Instead of ignoring it, one must engage in reforming it and removing its shortcomings. In reply to those who accuse the Muslim scholars (Ulama) of Islam of trampling the decree of wisdom, Imam Khomeini (RA) stated: "Have not the pious people who have written all these books on philosophy and discourse which are more than a thousand in number proceeded with the light of wisdom and the illumination of reason? Don't the dignitaries of religion regard reason as one of the proofs even in jurisprudence (Fiqh)? All philosophical issues, most metaphysical issues, and a great many issues related to Usul are based on wisdom." (Ibid.)

Addressing those infatuated by the Western philosophy who don't value the doctrinal principles of Islam as much as they respect the bombastic names of Western philosophers and foreign terminology. Imam Khomeini (RA) stated the following;

"The writers of books in the past half a century have all cited evidence from the statements of the Westerners. If they want to mention a matter, they immediately cite the source and name of a Western philosopher."

He continues his statements in this way: "The Western philosophers still need to learn some issues from the Eastern philosophers." (See "Sahifatun-Nur", vol. 19, pp. 25-27)

It must be kept in mind that not all issues of Western philosophy are useless, as the Western thinkers have tremendously facilitated the growth and development of some philosophical issues, some of which haven't been set forth in Islamic philosophy. The crux of the matter, however, is that infatuation with Western philosophers would render null and void the value of intellectual and doctrinal assets of Islam and hundreds of precious philosophical books, of which even a very small number hasn't been considered and investigated and which have been stacked away in the corners of libraries.

3. The Islamic Philosophy

(i) The Mashsh (Peripatetic)' Philosophy

concerning the personality and works of Ibn Sina, Imam (RA) stated: "Shaykhul-Ra'is Abu Ali Hussain ibn Abdullah ibn Sina was an inhabitant of Bukhara. His father was from Balkh. His life, education, and writings are full of wonders which create amazement. He wrote the book "Qanun" at the age of 16. As it has been related, he said: 'When I reached the age of 24, I thought there was no science in the world which I didn't know.' It is said that, each day, he compiled 50 pages of divinity and natural sciences for the book entitled "Ash-Shafa" without referring to any source." (Kashful-Asrar, p. 35) In his addresses, the Imam (RA) referred to the alienation of the Muslims from themselves, their culture, and their scientific resources and to their infatuation with the Western culture. He always recalled Ibn Sina as the pride and glory of the world of Islam. For example on 27/6/1358 Shamsi, the Imam (RA) said the following ,addressing the gathering of the heads and managers of teaching and training organizations of the Tehran's province: "This part of the world, i.e., the East was among the progressed at one time and the Westerners have brought us into the present state. Perhaps even now the books of Shaykhul-Rai's are taught and used at their universities. We set aside what we had and we couldn't get what they had." (See Sahifatun-Nur, vol. 9, p. 160)

The Mashsha (Peripatetic)' philosophy and the Aristotelian logic served as the source of tremendous developments in Islamic culture and civilization. Farabi, Ibn Sina, and Ibn Rushd have taken great pains in clarifying and explaining these two valuable sciences.

With regard to the Aristotelian logic, the Muslims have been commentators and expositors. There are great differences between issues raised in the Aristotelian philosophy or in the Islamic philosophy (even in the Mashsh (Peripatetic)' philosophy). In this connection, the Imam (RA) pointed out as follows:

"With regard to philosophical issues, when you study the Aristotelian philosophy, which might be one of the best forms of philosophy prior to the advent of Islam, you will notice a great difference between it and the philosophy which developed after the emergence of Islam. Although the Aristotelian philosophy is very precious and although Shaykhul-Ra'is says that no one has so far been able to alter or add to the Aristotelian logic, we see a great difference between the philosophy prior to and after the advent of Islam when we study it." (Ibid., vol. 18, pp. 190-191)

(ii) The Muta`aliyyah Philosophy

Mulla Sadra was the first person to expound this philosophy which is half-way between the Mashsha (Peripatetic)' and the Ishraq philosophies. About this Muta`aliyyah philosopher, Imam Khomeini (RA) states as follows: "Muhammad ibn Ibrahim Shirazi was among the greatest divine philosophers,

the founder of Ilahiyyah laws, and the renovation of the metaphysics. He was the first person to set Mabda' and Ma`ad on a great, unbreakable principle. He proved physical Ma`ad with logical reasoning. He cleared up the flaws of Shaykhul-Ra'is in divinity. He united the pure religion with the Ilahiyyah philosophy. A thorough investigation indicated that things said about him have been out of the shortcoming of the metaphysicists and their ability to understand his sublime views. Indeed, willful dealing with issues of varied and extensive principles creates suspicion about religion and philosophy so much so that Mulla Sadra's sarcasm directed towards Asha`irah and Mu`tazilah is ignorantly regarded as attack on religion and the learned religious men." (See Kashful-Asrar, p. 36)

Surely, it must be kept in mind that the confirmation of philosophy as a useful branch of knowledge doesn't mean that we should confirm all views set forth by the philosophers. Basically, the philosophical insight is opposed to such an outlook towards philosophy. Even a prominent personality such as Sadruddin Shirazi hasn't been free from error and mistake. Those interested in the Muta`aliyyah philosophy should view it as a critic. In this way, the shortcomings of branches of knowledge may be removed and its development facilitated. A blind-folded belief in, and adherence to any form of philosophy is opposed to the philosophical insight.

On the contrary, endorsing it with sanctity brings about stagnation in this insight and consequently, in humanity. In fact, the views of the thinkers resemble a body of water which will become more limpid when filtered by the critics.