Epistemology and Its Relationship to the Political Philosophy of Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi

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Abstract: Ayatollah Mohammad Taghi Mesbah Yazdi, a prominent Neo-Sadraian philosopher and influential political figure in contemporary Iran, has developed significant theories within both philosophical and political domains. This study aims to address the question: "What is the relationship between Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi's epistemological views and his political thought?" Employing an analytical-destriptive approach based on Leo Strauss's text-to-text interpretation method, the research demonstrates that his political ideas—particularly his theories of governance—are grounded in an epistemological framework consisting of four layers: empirical knowledge, rational insight, intuitive awareness, and revelatory understanding. The study hypothesizes that this epistemological foundation shapes his political thinking into an elitist structure. The paper first examines Mesbah Yazdi's views on the types, value, and means of acquiring knowledge, followed by an overview of his political thought. It concludes that his political outlook is constructively derived from his epistemological principles, underscoring a foundational link between the two.

Introduction

From the formation of first human societies to emergence of modern governments, the issues of organization of social-political life, and regulation of relationships between rulers and subordinates have been among the most important concerns of man; because the social institution of government is series of more or less uninterrupted relationships among individuals. Based on different perceptions of thinkers, this theme has experienced several types. From the Islamic thinkers' viewpoint also, thoughts have their own form according to religious teachings of Islam, forming political systems based on their cultural requirements. The political system formed by them have their own characteristics coming to existence very slowly and gradually, but needing to understand verbal, juridical, principled, mystical, and philosophical theories in order to know their form and structure. Here, Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi has highly important theories in the light of his long-time reflection and working in the realms of epistemology, ontology, anthropology, and…, having a considerable share in explication and introduction of the Islamic thinking, specifically political thinking. In this paper, we will find an answer to the question of what type of relationship there is between epistemology and Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi's political thoughts. Our main hypothesis says that the relationship between epistemology and Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi is of constructive type and this perceptional system has caused his political thoughts to be elitist. We believe epistemological themes are so influential that they can be considered as the origin of many diversities and disputes in political thinking in a way that some theoretical differences among political scientists start with disagreement on epistemological debates. For this reason, the focus of this research will be on epistemological discussions and political thoughts while other discussions will be considered as lateral and subordinate. That is why in order to find this relationship, we will employ the descriptive-analytical technique based on text-to-text interpretation of Leo Straus.

1. Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

Theoretical framework is like a window through which the researcher is looking at his viewpoint. In fact, it is a basis according to which the

researcher thinks about the relationships existing among the important factors forming a problem. The suggested model to analyze thoughts generally, and Mesbah Yazdi's thoughts specifically, [as a case study] says that in order to understand thoughts, they should be analyzed according to their philosophical and intellectual bases. In fact, political thoughts should be analyzed and discussed according to epistemological, ontological, and anthropological bases. This theoretical framework has been created based on this presumption that the structure of political thoughts of an individual is not separated from his look at knowledge, ontology, and anthropology. It means that political thoughts of any individual will be under the influence of his look at three above-mentioned elements, and any thinker's perception of those themes will emerge in his political thoughts. For this reason we believe that the precise analysis of any thinking is conducted only when the impact and relationship of those three elements to the political thoughts are clearly explored. The comprehensive analysis is obtained by gathering those themes and political thoughts in a place. Of course it should be noted that those three elements are not equally important in all thinkers, rather for each of them some dimension may be more important. Another point is that, the above-mentioned theoretical model can usually analyze only the political philosophical realm, without having any use in political canon law scope.

1.1.   Epistemological Bases

Among the most important intellectual bases of a thinker is his epistemological base. Epistemology expresses the manner of his attitude toward knowledge and its tools, correctness or incorrectness, absolute or non-absolute, how to achieve the truth by cognition, and… (Jamshidi, 1388: 119). Although epistemology has a long background in philosophical thinking, its difference from ontology and self-knowledge was established in 19th century first under the title of "epistemology" and later with the name of "theory of knowledge". For this reason, thoughts belonging to earlier ages were always under the shadow of ontology and self-knowledge. Neo-Sadraic philosophy is not an exception of this rule. That is why in that philosophy, usually, the ontological principles of knowledge are first addressed and then knowledge itself receives attention. Here it should be noted that there

is controversy about the priority of epistemology to ontology. At first glance the priority of epistemology to ontology seems evident, although this knowledge itself reaps some profit from existence. According to present systems of epistemology, epistemologists and philosophers establish their theories upon one of the following approaches: epistemology based on the Islamic philosophy; modern epistemology; epistemology based on analytical philosophical approach (contemporary epistemology); epistemology based on European philosophy; and denial of possibility of epistemology (Hosseinzadeh, 1386: 11).

Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi is among Islamic philosophers whose epistemological tendency is based on traditional Islamic philosophy, specifically the philosophy of Molla Sadra. In this paper, we are going to explicate his viewpoint on the topic. As dealing with all aspects of epistemology will be too long and out of the capacity of this research, here we will point only to some important elements of epistemology such as type of knowledge, tools of knowledge, and the value of knowledge from Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi's viewpoint.

1.2. The Meaning of Knowledge

Knowledge is among most evident concepts and basically impossible to define; because there is no concept clearer than it to introduce it. Accordingly wherever there is a definition of science and knowledge in logic or philosophy books, it is not a real definition, rather it is an attempt to introduce an instance, that is achievement of appearance of something in the mind, "or the theory of the definer about some ontological cases related to it, that is "appearance of an object to an abstract creature" whereby to express its idea about abstraction of science, (Mesbah Yazdi, 1383 a, Vol. 1: 152).

According to the description given above for "knowledge", epistemology can be defined a as science that discusses human insights, and evaluation of types of them, as well as identification of criteria of their correctness or incorrectness, (Mesbah Yazdi, 1383 a, Vol. 1: 147). Therefore, the factor leading to pay attention to this science was the issue of finding out errors of human senses and insufficiency of tools of knowledge to represent external realities. (Mesbah Yazdi, 1383 a. Vol. 1: 147).

1.3. Possibility of Recognition

Within this science, possibility and realization of recognition is evident, needing no proof or principles whose aspects can be expressed only based on primary axioms, (Mesbah Yazdi, 1383 b, Vol. 1: 166). Those axioms are rational ones that form the base of philosophical arguments and absolutely not fallible. Therefore, the possibility of occurrence of knowledge is not deniable for any wise person whose mind is not full of doubts. Meanwhile, the title of absolute denial of knowledge is given to such philosophical schools as sophism, skepticism, and agnosticism; because some individuals suffer from serious mental obsession that is a kind of mental disease, (Mesbah Yazdi, 1383 a, Vol. 1: 160-161). These types of people ignore that no one can doubt himself as doubter, the existence of doubt, the existence of perceptual power as well as his mental shapes and mental conditions (Mesbah Yazdi, 1383 a, Vol. 1: 162). The existence of *me* as an aware and doubting person is clear and undeniable having priority to the existence of doubt, (Mesbah Yazdi, 1383 a, Vol. 1: 171). Meanwhile, correctness or incorrectness of sensual feelings and non-evident intellectual (theoretical) feelings are determined based on intellectual evident feelings and occurrence of mistake in them doesn't lead to spread of error to other intellectual evident feelings (Mesbah Yazdi, 1383 a, Vol. 1: 165), therefore doubt in all affairs is impossible and we are apt to accept some of them as realities. Agreement on this base, opens the path to enter the scientific discussions; because lack of decisive knowledge destroys the base of science and insight, and prevents social realities from transmitting to the society and formation of political thoughts.

In an intellectual classification, science can be considered as something between proof and negation in such a way that either it belongs to the essence of matters without a mediator, and individuals become aware of their existence, or individuals receive them through their form and mental meaning. The first type is called "science by presence" while the second type is called "acquiring knowledge", (Mesbah Yazdi, 1383 a, Vol. 1: 171-172). In science by presence as the most complete instance of "presence of the ascertain to the knower", the individual's ego, or the thinker himself obtains awareness of his

own existence not through sensing and experiencing or mental concepts, rather by internal intuition, (Mesbah Yazdi, 1383 a, Vol. 1: 172). Awareness of an individual of his own existence, carnal power, cognitive power, and actions without a mediator from the ego are instances of science by presence, and no error can enter them (Mesbah Yazdi, 1383 a, Vol. 1: 173-174). Awareness of mental form and concepts is among other instances of science by presence that is considered as acquiring science because of visibility of external objects and persons, but the ego receives it by presence and without any mediator (Mesbah Yazdi, 1383 a, Vol. 1: 174).

Meanwhile, in some cases, sometimes our mind receives mental interpretations in addition to science by presence as acquiring knowledge mixed with science by presence. Such cases that often occur in sensual conditions and mystical explorations lead to spread of error to science by presence simultaneous with acquiring knowledge. Therefore, it is necessary to be careful about science by presence and separate it from mental interpretations in order to avoid deviation, (Mesbah Yazdi, 1383 a, Vol. 1: 176). Limitation of science by presence causes us to need to examine acquiring knowledge and its types, unless we won't have any way to find out realities among acquiring types of knowledge, and we won't be able to accept any absolute theory within any science and even primary evidence and conscience-related cases will lose their certainty and necessity, (Mesbah Yazdi, 1383 a, Vol. 1: 184). In liberal arts, legal and moral concepts (value concepts) are among validity instances that are considered as both, consequents of affairs, and origins of affairs. In other words, any moral or legal case includes such concepts as must, mustn't, and their substitute terms such as *forbidden* and *required*. Those concepts form the consequents of affairs, while such concepts as fairness, injustice, and… that form the subjects of moral, and moral cases are usually taken from philosophical and substantive concepts. Although these concepts are subordinates of conditions and agreements, they are considered as symbols for real and non-agreed-upon cases and form real relationships among individuals, their results, their interests, and… (Mesbah Yazdi, 1383 a. Vol. 1: 201-207).

1.4. The Starting Point of Knowledge

For Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi the starting point of knowledge is different from that of European and Anglo Saxonical philosophy. In fact, he neither believes in the validity of senses in formation of all imaginations and confirmations, nor believes that, wisdom, by itself, receives all imaginations and confirmations without the help of senses. In this attitude, the validity of wisdom has its own place both, in imaginations and confirmations. All general concepts that wisdom plays an important role in formation of them always depend on other partial and individual understandings coming from sensation or science by presence. Thus, it is not agreeable that wisdom has specific concepts from the beginning of its existence, or after a while, it becomes able to understand them without the impact of any other factor, (Mesbah Yazdi, 1383 a, Vol. 1: 216 and 225), because cognitive features, as abstract entities are not able to change from sensory perception to intellectual perception, and philosophical concepts also are not obtained from abstraction and generalization of sensory perception, (Mesbah Yazdi, 1383 a, Vol. 1: 226). In initial truisms, and conscience-related objects, wisdom plays a role and experience is not required with the difference that in initial truisms contrary to conscience-related objects, experience plays the role to imagine the concept, while in conscience-related objects imaginative concepts come from science by presence, (Mesbah Yazdi, 1383 a, Vol. 1: 238-239). Therefore, only subjects that contain external palpable phenomena and their qualitative need sensory experience as sine qua non, not sufficient condition; because absolute conclusion of external palpable phenomena needs intellectual proof, (Mesbah Yazdi, 1383 a, Vol. 1: 240). Therefore, absolute matters do not need sensory experience, and this clarifies the invalidity of positivism.

1.5. Value of Knowledge

After expressing the possibility of knowledge and that we cannot doubt all affairs, another question comes to the mind about how we can find out which knowledge and certainty is in conformity with the truth. In other words, the major question in epistemology is to determine the realm of human knowledge, identify the instrument to achieve absolute knowledge and perception in conformity with the truth, (Mesbah Yazdi, "Epistemology" pamphlet No 1-2-10: 1). The

secret of fallibility and non-fallibility of science also is clarified when there is a mediator between the knower and the object of knowledge. In other words the knowledge that has ability of being true - in conformity with the truth – and being untrue – in disconformity with the truth – is the very acquiring knowledge, and when the science by presence is described as the truth, it means the inherent negation of error about it, (Mesbah Yazdi, 1383 a, Vol. 1: 179 and 247). Therefore, if we consider knowledge with the meaning of exploration and conformity as both, knowledge by presence and acquiring knowledge, it should be claimed that whatever is called knowledge by presence is generally in conformity with the truth and disconformity with the truth is impossible about it, while that class of acquiring knowledge that is obtained without mediation of science by presence, such as initial truisms and conscience-related cases and… are completely in conformity with reality and have absolute validity, because they the immediate reflection of those sciences by presence, but other acquiring sciences are explored in different stages. This group of sciences are explored more completely if they are closer to truisms, and the probability of error in them is less. But if one matter is concluded from initial truisms through several mediators, some errors may occur, ("Relationship between Science and Religion", Mesbah Yazdi, 1392).

1.6. Tools and Kinds of Knowledge

Knowledge tools are tools (inside or outside of human body) that make knowing easy for man. For this reason, man has several ways and tools to achieve knowledge such as senses, wisdom, intuition, exploration, and revelation, (Hoseinzadeh, 1385: 37). Here, we are going to study each of the above-mentioned tools from Mesbah Yazdi's viewpoint:

He believes that there are four groups of tools and human knowledge as follows:

1.6.1. Experimental and scientific (sensory) knowledge

This kind of knowledge is obtained with the help of sensory organs. Of course wisdom also plays role in deduction and generalization of sensory knowledge, (Mesbah Yazdi, 1384: 35).

1.6.2. Intellectual knowledge

This type of knowledge is formed by abstract concepts and the major role is played by wisdom to obtain it. Of course sometimes comparison

also becomes necessary. The scope of this knowledge includes logic, philosophy and mathematics, (Mesbah Yazdi, 1384: 36). Therefore, there is no border between wisdom and religion, rather some part returns to wisdom and another part to religion. In fact, wisdom acts as a lamp whose light helps us to find out God's satisfaction, and what is explored here with the help of wisdom is a religious case (Mesbah Yazdi, 1391 b: 63).

1.6.3. *Intuitional knowledge*

Intuitional knowledge contrary to all types mentioned above, is achieved without mediation and has no place for error, (Mesbah Yazdi, 1384: 36). Intuition is a personal way which is neither provable, nor accessible to all people. If someone intuits Allah, it is a proof for himself and he cannot represent it to others. For this reason, this type of knowledge cannot be used to give political theories.

1.6.4. **Relevational knowledge**

This type of knowledge has a secondary state and is achieved based on a previous knowledge (authentic resource) or authority by taking information from "an honest reporter". Matters coming from different religions are of this type, the followers of which show trust in them even more strongly than their own experiences that they have obtained through sensory organs, (Mesbah Yazdi, 1384: 36). Some part of religion should be proved with the help of wisdom while the other part is provable to us through citation. Of course, prophets achieve it through science by presence and relevation, while for us it should be cited for example about the manner of prophet's saying prayers so that we also follow it. Therefore, here, neither intellectual method, nor experimental method can be used, rather, only historical method and citation are useful, ("Relationship between Science and Religion"). Generally, the stages of epistemological tools from Mesbah Yazdi's viewpoint can be represented as the following:

He believes that sensory cognition is the lowest type of knowledge which is related to the world of nature and not more than it. Then is the intellectual knowledge as the instrument used in logic, philosophy, and mathematics. The next stage is the intuitional knowledge which can be obtained through edification and austerity. Of course it is a step lower than relevational knowledge, and higher

than all these stages is the relevational stage that comes to prophets by angels. The reason why this type of knowledge is the most important is that it enters the heart of prophets from the side of Allah and it is unmistakable because prophets receive it through science by presence. The following shows stages of knowledge as mentioned above

2. Political Thoughts

In Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi's belief, the value of discussion and study of epistemology is not limited only to eliminate ignorance or to satisfy man's curiosity or to achieve his personal or moral goals in life, rather, it plays an important role in political cases, (Mesbah Yazdi, 1379: 15), for epistemological science is an important principle to make man's life targeted and to help man achieve perfection and prosperity, (Mesbah Yazdi, 1384: 135), so that the more man understands his own dependence, the more his science by presence becomes clear and deep. In this way finally he becomes familiar with his own abstract existence and finds out that he is some creature other than his body, and his body is like clothes for his ego or like a low stage of his existence. It is in this stage that he finds himself as a freeloader, dependent of God. In fact, the more he understands his dependent on God, the more he knows Allah, "He who knows himself, in fact knows his God" (Mesbah Yazdi, 1391 a, Vol. 2: 91). Therefore, the originality of God and dependence of man, guardianship of innocent Imams and permanent presence of God's proof during the history comes from the heart of science by presence. Accordingly, Ayatollah Mesbah's historical philosophy which is of reasoning-based type becomes to existence; because perfect man is the person who reaches the highest point of monotheism stage, (Mesbah Yazdi, 138: 214).

Meanwhile, acceptance of possibility of achieving certainty and transition from skepticism in his intellectual system contributes to opening of different knowledge layers for theorization in politics, so that in addition to historical experiences of man as experimental culture, he uses intellectual and relevational culture in several forms. In this part of the research, we are going to show how his political thoughts have been precisely based on his epistemology.

2.1. Necessity of Human Society and Government

According to common sense, social life is necessary for man, because the goal of Creation is achieved when human has social life based on cooperation and help of each other. Therefore, man's social life is not like that of honey bees and termites which is based on instinct and without conscience goals, rather, it is selective and intellectual, (Mesbah Yazdi, 1391 a, Vol. 3: 93-96). Of course, social life, firstly is not considered as absolute value rather it is relative, and its identity, depends on conditions and intention of individuals (Mesbah Yazdi, 1391 a, Vol. 3: 24-26), and secondly, has an instrumental place. Even during the highest stage of the society which will be formed at the time of Imam Zaman (P.b.u.h.), social life is not an absolute value; rather, the formation of society is a means to prepare the grounds of spiritual growth of individuals. Therefore, in the Islamic perspective sociability is considered at the highest level of ideality while, in some cases unsociability is regarded as better than sociability, and individuals are encouraged to migration, isolation and separation from society (Mesbah Yazdi, 1390: 307). According to Mesbah Yazdi, it is necessary to have enough guarantee to enact social rules so that people's rights are not disregarded and complete grounds are prepared for spiritual and material growth of people, or else the mere writing of rules on a piece of paper and passage of them in the parliament do not meet the needs of the society. In other words, rules by themselves, do not solve any problem; they need somebody to enact them across the society. Therefore, the existence of the law is essential, and beside it we need an institution under the title of *government* to guarantee the enactment of the law, (Mesbah Yazdi, 131 c: 191).

2.2. Necessity of the Government of Allah

From Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi's perspective, according to relevational culture which is higher than experimental and intellectual knowledge, in Islam, man is not considered as legislator and all monotheist individuals should know that there is no Creator except God who manages the universe. In fact all of us are servants of Allah and based on this principle the right of dictating belongs only to God, (Mesbah Yazdi, 1387: 38-39). Accordingly the administration of God's recommendments is not in the realm of man's intentions and if someday the majority of people didn't like God's orders or didn't want

to obey them even is such a case, the Islamic leader should enact the orders of God; because he has the duty to enact them from the side of Allah, (Mesbah Yazdi, 1382: 241). Of course, the monopoly of legislature to Allah doesn't mean as divestment of legislature from man, and God gives the authority of making laws in some parts (Mesbah Yazdi, 1391, Vol 2: 109). In that case the laws are valid only when they refer to God's laws. Within this hierarchy which is based on relevational and intellectual cultures, the laws made by God, have inherent validity and is in the highest place. In the second rank there are some changing laws legislated by the holy Prophet with the permission of Allah. For this reason, their validity depends on God's intention. In the next stage there are laws made by Imams whose legal value is referred to God's and prophet's will. And in the last rank there are laws made by leaders who are assigned in the absence of Imams, (Mesbah Yazdi, 1391, Vol. 2: 163). Those laws are at the third rank of validity. On the other hand, in addition to fixed laws made by religion, there are some other changing laws that meet the everyday needs of societies as new laws. Thus, Islam keeps the way open for people to make laws according to their recent needs of the society, and this, shows the flexibility of Islam toward new needs in the framework of above-mentioned religious principles, (Mesbah Yazdi, 1391, C: 108). Therefore, it is not true to claim that some laws belong to the past and are useless nowadays.

2.3. Necessity of God's Leader

For Ayatollah Mesbah, government belongs to Allah whose laws are taken from the religion and whose administrators also are directly assigned by God, (Mesbah Yazdi, 1391 b, Vol. 1: 148-150). Thus, God first makes man familiar with the real interests of the government by prophets, and then assigns prophets as administrators and introduces his book as its main resource and advises people to obey prophets and his book as the final judgement, (Mesbah Yazdi, 1392: 36-37), With this presumption, in the Islamic thoughts, the legislator and the administrator should directly or indirectly be assigned by God, and their authenticity depends on God. Accordingly, wisdom and citations reveal that innocent persons are the ideal ones to be in charge of political affairs. All Koranic texts show that God has assigned prophets

as the best individuals for leadership and has invited all members of the society to absolutely obey them, (Mesbah Yazdi, 1391 d: 229-231). The Koranic sentence of "The prophet is prior to all believers" points strongly to this matter, meaning that the holy Prophet has the authority to intervene directly in people's lives and properties, and people obey his orders in all affairs of life, (Mesbah Yazdi, 1391 c: 232-239). After the holy Prophet, according to the Koranic verses, specifically the verse saying "You should obey God, and the prophet, and those who were assigned by them", people are obligated to obey the orders of twelve Imams after the death of the holy Prophet, (Mesbah Yazdi, 1391, c: 240-241). And finally, before the realization of the most ideal form of the Islamic government, during the time of Absence, we should not give up the Islamic government, rather, in the case of inaccessibility of innocent Imam, the government belongs to the individual who is the most similar person to innocent Imam from management and piety perspectives, (Mesbah Yazdi, 1391, c, Vol. 2: 103-104). This person who in religious political literature is called as "the guardianship of the Islamic juristics" is the very continuity of the way of Imams and the holy Prophet during the age of Absence (Mesbah Yazdi, 1391, d: 89-90). In fact obedience of the guardianship of the Islamic jurisdics is considered as obeying of the innocent Imam and the holy Prophet and consequently obeying of Allah, while disobeying of him will be considered as disobeying of God, (Mesbah Yazdi, 1389 b: 65). This skepticism in the stages of government which results from the skepticism in the stages of knowledge shows that in the political system of Islam, several stages have been considered for government. In fact if the superior stage is not accessible, another form and stage will be selected which is one rank lower than it. This shows that silence or even opposition of religion toward formation of government during the age of Absence is contrary to the common sense and theosophy; because one of the factors that necessitates the formation of government is elimination of disputes and disagreements among the members of societies, therefore it is impossible to represent a plan exactly contrary to this necessity which itself will contribute to create disputes and separation among individuals. Therefore, such a plan should not be attributed to Islam, (Mesbah Yazdi, 1391 c: 242). It is

based on this very intellectual origin that Ayatollah Mesbah points to the principle of the guardianship of the Islamic juristics according to original Islamic resources of Shiism. In fact he believes that it is the successor of God's blessings, not specified only to the age of Absence, but a permanent principle which should be obeyed even during the time of presence of Imam Zaman, (Mesbah Yazdi, 1391 d: 52).

3. How to Explorer and Introduce the Divine Leader

According to Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi during the absence of Imam (P.b.u.h.) or in access to him the government of guardianship of the Islamic jurisdics is considered as the closest and the most competent government. The assignment of such a person to leadership of Moslems is not limited to a specific individual according to religious texts and relevational culture such as the answer of Imam Zaman to the letter of Is'hagh-Ibne-Ya'ghoub, Maghbouleh Omar-Ibne-Hanzaleh, and it can be given to any other person conditional that all features are regarded according to Islamic orders. But the important question is that if this can be a general assignment, then what will happen if there are several qualified individuals. Ayatollah Mesbah suggests three ways to select the best choice in such a case as follows:

1. election of Faghih by direct votes of people;
2. assignment by the present Faghih and religious leader; and
3. assignment by the assembly of experts.

He believes that the first and second ways are not suitable and comprehensive, because there are two problems in them. Firstly, they open the path for enemies to begin their poisonous propaganda and represent a false, dictator picture of the guardianship of the Islamic jurisdics. And secondly, the leader may be assigned based on personal or group interests according to emotional or kinship considerations. Therefore, the third way is the best one to assign the religious leader (Mesbah Yazdi, 1391 d: 119). In assignment of the religious leader it is important to notice that three conditions of management, jurisprudence, and justice have very important place for the reason of administration of social and political affairs (specifically jurisprudence is of the highest importance). Therefore, the leader doesn't have to be comprehensive in all scientific and political scopes. In fact, he can employ several advisers and use their comments to make the final

decisions (Mesbah Yazdi, 1391 d: 60 and 79-81). This shows that Ayatollah Mesbah gives priority to revelational culture rather than intellectual and experimental cultures in order to be assigned as the religious leader. Of course this focus on revelational culture and underestimation of other conditions may lead to some difficulties in the management of social affairs, but he believes that based on common sense, the holy Imam is satisfied with such a leader, or else, he should agree to lack of government or the leader will be an unqualified person who cannot manage Moslem's benefits, (Mesbah Yazdi, 1391 e: 134-136).

4. Political Legitimacy

All political thoughts should be legitimate, Legitimacy of political system is provided in two ways:

A) Fake, or conventional legitimacy

This type of legitimacy is obtained by people who counterfeit the legitimacy of a political system (validity, necessity, and practicability). Most democratic liberal systems are of this type.

B) Inherent legitimacy

This is that type of legitimacy existing in the Islamic political system. Validity and necessity of this system is inherent, not dependent on the action of counterfeiters. According to common sense this relationship is longitudinal, that is, the power of leadership in a society is not self-dependent, rather it is limited, and borrowed, (Mesbah Yazdi, 1391 b, Vol. 1: 46-47). Ayatollah Mesbah attempts to explain the role of people in the legitimacy of government according to his reason-centered philosophical attitude which is based on four reasons (subjective reasoning, material reasoning, formal reasoning, and ultimate reasoning). He not only rejects any right of people to legitimate an affair, but also considers it as a barrier on the way of formation of the Islamic government; because legitimacy is of quality of right and no one is able to give or to enforce right because according to Islam, man is only the servant of Allah and nothing belongs to him, (Mesbah Yazdi, 1391 d: 24). According to this presumption nobody has the right of sovereignty, and people and societies also don't have such a right; because the entire universe and its creatures belong to God, (Mesbah Yazdi, 1386: 21).

Although nobody has inherently the right of sovereignty upon other individuals, with the permission of God it becomes possible to obtain this right, (Mesbah Yazdi, 1391 b, Vol. 1: 277), and this permission can be given only by God, who for the first time it was given to the holy Prophet of Islam (P.b.u.h.). All Shiites and Sunnites have common accord that the government of the holy Prophet was legitimate because God had assigned him for it. Sunnites believe that no one was assigned by God except the holy Prophet. In other words, they believe in the end of Imamat with the holy Prophet. But Shiites claim that only his prophecy has ended, and his guardianship will continue to the Resurrection Day. For this reason, Shiites suggest that after the holy Prophet, twelve Imams continue his government. The holy Prophet as the representative of Allah assigned them. In short, the legitimacy of their government is the theoretical base of political philosophy of Shiism even during the age of Absence and people have no role in its legitimacy. The legitimacy of government of Faghih also originates from their assignment by Imams from the side of Allah, (Mesbah Yazdi, 1391 d: 29).

Accordingly, the legitimacy of religious government is given only by God not by people, but their zero roles in this legitimacy change to one-hundred-percept role in objectifying and enforcing the rules of God. In fact, placing of Allah as the origin of legitimacy doesn't mean as lack of role of people and paying no attention to their rights, (Mesbah Yazdi, 1391 d: 21); because their willingness, and their votes can impact the objectifying and effectiveness of the Islamic government. There is no imposing on people and resorting to force is not permitted in order to achieve government, (Mesbah Yazdi, 1391 d: 24). For Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi the role of people within the structure of government and its decision making is to examine who is qualified to make and enact rules, then, they should assign him as the leader. This is an agreement according to which they promise to obey the orders of their religious leader, (Mesbah Yazdi, 1391 b, Vol. 1: 299). Accordingly, elections and taking votes is never to give legitimacy, and it can not eliminate the legitimacy from the leader and it is the leader who decides if the election is necessary or not. Basically, in the Islamic government the guardianship of the Islamic jurisdics is the heart of

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social unity, and the government as the coordinator of powers and supervisor of performance of all parts who determines and directs major policies, (Mesbah Yazdi, 1391 b, Vol. 2: 136), and all people's duty is to obey his orders. In such a political system, all governmental organs should be under the leadership of one person, and such a person cannot be in charge of all affairs, rather, he must remain on top of power pyramid and all managers should work under his supervision, (Mesbah Yazdi, 1391 d: 54). In fact, the religious leader is considered as the person who gives legitimacy to all parts of the system so that his absence will lead to the deviation of the government from the government of Allah to the government of devil. The above mentioned analysis has roots in the origin of divine legitimacy; because the legitimacy of powers in an ideal system should have a Godly structure and be attached to the resource of Creation. In fact the innocent Imam and religious leaders are the loops of attachment of the system to Allah, (Mesbah Yazdi, 1391, Vol. 2: 50). For this reason, obedience of their orders is religiously essential and disobedience of them is considered as practical and theoretical polytheism. This explanation from point of view of participation degree and role of people, in Mesbah Yazdi's perspective, according to Islamic texts, is specified to Moslems only, and the reason that it is at present practiced in this way is that it is according to the secondary plan and in order to consider advisability, while based on the original and ideal plan of Islam, one of conditions of citizenship is being a Moslem, and Moslems are considered to have first-rate citizenship while non-Moslems have second-class citizenship. He says, "We cannot conclude that there is no first-class and second-class citizenship with reference to this reasoning that humanity doesn't have first-class and second-class. Every country has its own conditions for its citizens, and Islam is not an exception to this rule, (Mesbah Yazdi, 1391, Vol. 2: 224).

Conclusion

One way to analyze political thoughts (specifically within political philosophy) is to analyze them according to their bases, the most important of which are: epistemology, ontology, and anthropology. Such an analysis causes some intellectual and philosophical features hidden behind those thoughts to become more visible and provides a

path for correct analysis of thoughts for researchers. In the present research, the relationship between epistemology and Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi's political thoughts were studied. A question was put forward about those two themes and our hypothesis said that the relationship between epistemology and political thoughts is a constructive relation, that is, the structure of political thoughts of Mesbah Yazdi is based on a series of principles on top of all of which are the bases of epistemology and for this reason we considered his political thoughts as based on those bases. In this research, our hypothesis was confirmed. In the following the reasons for our conclusion will be briefly represented:

1) The political thinking of Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi is based on rationalism, real absolute logic, and certain resources, in which all acquiring sciences depend on science by presence. For that reason knowledge tools in this type of thinking do not merely depend on scientific or experimental resources; because the scope of knowledge and its tools go beyond matter and spread to spiritual tools such as religious and mystical culture as well.

2) Mesbah Yazdi considers achievement to knowledge as possible and this is important from two perspectives: Firstly, his path is separated from that of skeptics and relativists who do not believe in the possibility of achievement to knowledge, and secondly, in his belief, within the realm of political thoughts also, the head of government should have the ability and quality of achieving the knowledge which he may access, and he should obtain the absolute resources in order to become the head of an Islamic society. This, highlights the elitist feature of Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi's perspective on the ideal government.

3) Regarding the above-mentioned based, Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi's ideal political system is a religious system that enjoys the presence of hierarchy of divine leaders, from the holy Prophet on top of power pyramid, to innocent Imams and finally qualified Faghih during the age of Absence.

4) Being non-elective doesn't signify an authoritarian government; because the leadership of Imam is something within the framework of divine rules, like any other task of Moslems, taken from

religious resources. In fact, Imam can use advice of people in cases that there is not a specific order, and then act according to his own recognition.

5) According to Ayatollah Mesbah, non-electivity of leader during the age of Absence is in accordance with religious texts; of course it doesn't mean to disregard people, rather divine appoint is important in the stage of demonstration, while the role of individuals is of importance in the stage of proof. For this reason without help of individuals neither the leader can perform his assigned duties, nor the religious government will be formed.

6) According to texts from innocent Imams the position of leader is sufficient imperative for just juris consults in the form of general appointment, and according to wisdom and historical experience of man, appointment by experts is the best way to realize guardianship and support of people.

7) In Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi's perspective, the origin of politics is based on "God's will". This also can be considered as his intellectual base in such a way that among knowledge tools, intuition and above it, relevation are situated on top of all resources. He believes that the leader should have complete mastery in juridical system as relevational culture. Meanwhile, he shouldn't issue recommendation against God's orders which have come from relevational resources. Thus, this political system is legitimate while it acts in the framework of divine orders. Therefore, Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi's political thoughts are more than anything else dependent on intellectual bases that were mainly addressed throughout this paper.

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