

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE HISTORY OF POLITICAL IDEAS IN IRAN

Dr. Seyyed Javad Tabatabai
University of Tehran

Abstract

The history of political ideas and the logic behind its development is the most complicated section of the general history of thought in the Islamic Era. The first question raised in our critical study of the history of political ideas is the following: what is the domain of Iranian civilization at the Islamic period? The answer to this question would have a philosophical coloring. The author of this article has tried to answer this question neatly. The second question raised in the paper is the following: Is political discourse based on philosophical discourse? In sum, the author has dealt with different facets of the history of political ideas in the domains of Iranian civilization at the time of the Islamic Era.

Preface

The history of political ideas¹ and the logic behind its development is the most complicated and gloomy section of the general history of thought in the Islamic Era². It could be stated doubtlessly that no critic or analysis of the political ideas of this era has ever been started yet. Neither do we possess the essential tools to delve into such a topic or even to appreciate its relevance. Technically, there are two main obstacles on our way to do such a research: In the first place, most of the significant texts on political ideas in the Islamic Era are either unknown to us, or we do not have available a critic or analysis of them. Except for some common Farsi (Persian) editions, such as Khaje

Nezam-ol-Molk Tusi's *Syasatnameh* (work on politics) and Khaje Nasireddin Tusi's *Akhlagh-e Naseri*, which have been printed several times, other Farsi texts on political ideas are either unpublished manuscripts buried in library shelves or their single copy, unanalyzed, is rare indeed. We could easily find ourselves in a similar predicament when we refer to Arabic texts on political ideas at the Islamic Era: These texts are either in the manuscript form, or are printed in Arab countries. Therefore, they are rarely available in Iranian libraries. It should also be mentioned that, except for very rare occasions, such books are not translated into Farsi yet.

The second obstacle on our way is our lack of

attention towards such researches. Such investigations could both illuminate the development of political ideas in the Islamic Era and facilitate the establishment of a new political philosophy which would include the modern periods as well. What has been referred to as modernism in the political philosophy is, in fact, this modern political philosophy. This modernism in political philosophy, which does not involve itself in modernity nor in modernization is indeed a research in the nature of our modern times³.

The first question raised in our critical study of the history of political ideas is the following: What is the nature of the political ideas which came about in the domain of Iranian civilization at the Islamic Era? The answer to this question would have a philosophical coloring. That is to say, if we disregard historical considerations and the applied political stance for the moment, we should analyze the logic behind the political discourse which is based on political affairs *per se*, or on the polis or city affairs. Thus, we will deal with political discourse as a portion of discourse in general in which the topics of city and polis are raised, and in which power and its distribution is dealt with. Such a power is an essential ingredient of the city life and relations. This power is called "Political power" by the proponents of political philosophy.

This political discourse could be studied with an eye to philosophical discourse; that is to say, we would like to study the relationship of these two. Then, this question could be raised: *Is political discourse based on philosophical discourse? Is the former included in the latter? Or does political discourse independently study political affairs on its own footing? It is natural for any logical discourse to be ultimately based on philosophical standards; but not every philosophical basis is a philosophical discourse in its own right.* To clarify the subject, let us observe that from this view-point, Aristotle's political discourse is based on and somehow derived from his philosophical or supernatural standings. That is, the general verdicts of Aristotle's supernatural philosophy are valid in his political views which deal with society, city and polis as well. In Aristotle's views, man's specific political aspects are governed by his general aspects as a whole. But in Machiavellian

perspective, political discourse is not dependent on philosophical discourse. Machiavelli discusses on man's political affairs without dealing with philosophical considerations. This, however, does not lead us to conclude that there is no trace of philosophical considerations in Machiavellian political ideas. Naturally, Machiavelli, like our modern writers on politics, considers the philosophy of his time and involves himself in thinking accordingly. However, he does not necessarily derive his political discourse from philosophical thinking.

If we look at the nature of political ideas in the Islamic Iran, we may state that within the political ideas of that era existed both political philosophers of Aristotle and of Machiavelli kind. But we should immediately mention that if there is a relation between Farabi's and Aristotle's syllogisms, there is no relation whatever between those of Khaje Nezam-ol-Molk or Fazlol-lah-Ibn-e Ruzbehan on the one hand, and those of Machiavelli, on the other. We will later return to this topic at the end of the present article.

Of course, we still lack the necessary instruments to deal with this topic. In this preface, we will try to discuss on different view-points on the one hand, and to underline those topics for which we do not intend to present ready answers, but which we will call problematic, on the other.

In order to make our first question more exact, let us repeat it here: What is the nature of the political ideas which came about in the domains of Iranian civilization of the Islamic Era? As we said before, the first answer to this question is a philosophical one. Now, we will try to answer this question which will involve the nature of Iranian political ideas during history, i.e. a historical answer. Of course, there is a clear relation between the first answer which was philosophical and the second one which we will call historical. A historical answer (or an answer which is based on history) is in fact a philosophical one and is its complementary. But, what does this mean? If we refer to historical era, we do not mean a historical attitude or the priority of historical affairs. Rather, we will look at historical era philosophically. We are interested in the nature of time and history not because of its historical nature, but from the point of view of thinking. This attitude neatly classifies historical

periods. By raising this topic, we intend to disregard two philosophical approaches:

The first of these two approaches is the historical approach which derives thinking from historical events. It is evident that this approach negates the originality, independence, and internal integration of thinking. The second approach is the non-historical and anti-historical approach. This approach both considers thinking independent of historical events, and negates any relation between the nature of historical periods and the thinker's life-span. It is evident that these two aspects of thinking are not the same. Although we may not lower thinking to the secondary position of historical events, we are not justified to deny its relation with historical events. A thinker necessarily involves in thinking within a historical time. Thinking is a genuine affair, and since it is logical, a mere historical explanation will not do.

It should be noted that a research in the history of political ideas considers the relation of historical context and thinking. Since such a research analyzes political discourse, it will not limit itself to the historical background *per se*. Thus, the critical analysis of the history of political ideas is a discourse analysis which describes the structure, function and factors which build up a political discourse. In this approach the internal coherence and self-sufficiency of thinking is emphasized. This is because thinking is a genuine and independent affair. That is the reason why our second answer to the question on the nature of political ideas in the Islamic Iran had a philosophical aspect. However, this answer has an eye to historical periods as well.

Now, we are allowed to divide political ideas into two classes. They are "classical political philosophy" if they refer to historical times, and they are "modern political philosophy" if they refer to modern times. It should also be noted that political ideas in the old times are of the sort of political philosophies; and in our times, especially in Europe, they are of the political kind. Thus, we normally speak of "classical political philosophy" but "Modern political ideas."

Now, we would like to contend that the whole of Iranian political ideas belong to the old times and that this collection is unable to have a clear understanding of modern times. In other words, modernism in the

sense of thinking about the nature of modern times is absent in our thinking.

One of the most important sections of political ideas is the political philosophy whose main proponent is Iran's Great Hakim, Mohammad Farabi. No doubt, he is Iran's most prominent political philosopher. Considering the introductory notes in the Preface to this article, we may clearly refer to Farabi's political philosophy. This is because Farabi's thinking on political affairs has a root in his philosophy. A philosopher arrives at political conclusions by working on philosophical backgrounds. A cursory look at Farabi's *the ideas of the dwellers of Utopia* confirms this notion. In this book, Farabi deals firstly with the traits of The Almighty God and how all creatures are created by Him; in other words, the relation of the Creator and Creatures. Then, he studies the position of man in relation to all creation in detail. It is in relation to such discussions that he brings up the issue of human prosperity and man's need for cooperation and society.

This consideration is crucial for grasping Farabi's political philosophy. It can be globally assented that a clear comprehension of Farabi's political philosophy or of any other political philosophy would be impossible without considering its philosophical basis. This matter can be readily understood by observing Dr Reza Davari's two articles on philosophy in general and on Farabi's philosophy in particular. Dr Davari writes, "Farabi has finished his philosophical discussion with a reference to politics. But this cannot be taken to mean that his thinking is political *per se*. In his philosophy, politics does not even occupy secondary status. But since philosophy deals with all creatures, and since all worldly affairs are dominated by the justifiable order of creation, a city, as well as an individual, should follow the general rules of creation. Lack of interest in city life would be a short-coming for a philosophy. This fault is noted in Farabi's philosophy. Nowhere in Farabi's books is there any discussion on politics as such. Rather, his discussions on politics always follow his discussions on theoretical sciences⁴. As we observe, Farabi's thinking is political in nature; that is to say, politics is not a secondary phenomenon in his philosophy. In his view, all the rules and regulations which pertain to all

creatures and to creation would include individuals and regulations of a city as well.

Farabi's political philosophy does not interfere the rules of creation and man; rather, it deals with man's gaining prosperity by following virtue. He indicates, 'Man can attain virtue only if proper deeds and customs are common in cities among nations and if everybody can abide by them.'⁵ This would be impossible, of course, unless under the protection of a government these proper deeds and customs and virtues and ethics become prevalent among people in cities. Such a government should make people interested in these deeds and customs so that they may become stable. Thus, according to Farabi's philosophy, "such a government is established only if people accept it, and if the government can make people obedient to its moral obligations."⁶

But "planting virtues in man" and leading him toward "genuine prosperity" are attainable only in Utopia and under the leadership of a Utopian government. This is due to the fact that there is a relation between the whole creation and man as such. In the view of a political philosopher, man is a small mass on which the great creator (Governor) has absolute domination. This is a prerequisite for arriving at genuine prosperity in a Utopia. In other words, the establishment of a Utopia becomes possible only if "the prime governor" can abide by the "Active Wisdom". Following active wisdom, or its existence in "a governor"⁸ has a specific value in Farabi's political philosophy because the Active Wisdom is the very center of the whole universe. It is the Active Wisdom which makes it possible for both the prime governor and man to benefit from the assets of Almighty God.

In fact, the prime governor in Farabi's Utopia occupies the same position occupied by the creator of the whole creation. A prime governor is a creature "who is a good sample for followers, who is free from any shortcomings."⁹ On the other hand, in the matter of virtues and perfection, a prime governor is likened to "the principal organ of a body." "The human body is the most perfect portion of human being. All other organs are obedient to this portion. Each organ has other organs under its protection. Each organ dominates other lower organs. Naturally, each organ and portion of human body is dominated by a higher

organ. Thus, each limb is ultimately under the domination of prime governor."¹⁰

Thus, the status of the prime governor in a city (Utopia) is like the status of the Almighty God in the universe and like the heart in the body. "The Almighty God causes order and discipline in the world of creation; in the same manner, the heart keeps other organs alive and nourishes all bodyparts."¹¹ The prime governor of the Utopia establishes a new Utopia instead of changing the previous one. The prime governor establishes the Utopia and has control over Utopia, not the other way round. On the basis of the governor's virtues and moral perfection, the Utopia can possess virtues and moral perfection. Therefore, the prime governor should be established first, "and then he can cause the establishment of the Utopia and its departments. He may also bring forth the fulfilment of virtuous activities in the departments and its individuals. If one organ or the other of this Utopia is damaged, it is the prime governor who will remedy the situation. Those individuals who are close to the governor should engage in those activities which are desirable to him. He would take part in those activities which are the noblest. The inferior individuals should partake in inferior activities."¹²

From the cursory glance which we had from the nature of Farabi's political philosophy, we may conclude that his philosophy is naturally related to the classical political philosophy. This emphasis is well-founded because the lack of understanding of this relationship will lead us to confuse Farabi's Utopia with modern Utopias. As Dr Reza Davari has noticed¹³, Farabi's Utopia and modern Utopias do not share the same traits. Of course, we may attribute one common status to all Utopias which have been suggested from Plato down to the modern times within the context of western civilization. Then we may compare this status with that of Farabi. However, lack of an understanding of the differences between the modern Utopias and that of Plato may lead us astray. These differences are due to the modern ways of thinking and the classical philosophy. Farabi's and Plato's political philosophies are related to the classical period of thinking: thus, they are comparable. Whereas the classical ways of thinking of both Farabi and Plato can not be compared with the modern ways

of thinking. The very basis of modern thinking is to dominate both the universe and man; whereas in the classical thinking there is no place for domination over the universe or man. Therefore, both Farabi and Plato belong to the classical thinking period. Their philosophy may be grasped in the light of classical thinking.

To sum up, Farabi's philosophical politics is based on his philosophical ideas as a whole. These philosophical ideas of his are the basis of the philosophical ideas which were started in the Islamic Era within the context of Iranian civilization. Therefore, Farabi's political philosophy has no relation whatsoever with the modern political science, in the real sense of the word. Neither does his Utopia have any relation with the Utopias in the modern era of western civilization. Thus, the nature of Farabi's political philosophy is the same as the nature of the classical political philosophy of the western civilization. But, as it was mentioned above, Farabi's political philosophy is in contradiction with western political philosophies in modern times. In the same fashion, his political philosophy is different from the political views of the modern writers on politics. We will deal with these departures in the following sections.

II. The History of Political ideas within the context of Iranian civilization at the Islamic Era is not dependent solely on the history of political philosophies in the sense employed in the present article. The main bulk of political ideas are introduced in those works on politics whose writers have studied the political relations in the society without being philosophers. Most of these writers had a practical knowledge of politics even if they were not at the service of some sultan (king). Thus, it could be stated that, unlike political philosophers, they have had a crucial role in the establishment of the country's political order and political idealogy. In the present article, we will introduce one of the most eminent of these works on politics.

The most significant work on politics in the Persian language is written by Khaje Nezamol Molk, the prime minister (Grand Vizir) of Malekshah, the Saljuquid King. In the Introduction to this book, the special script, Mohammad Maghrebi, whose job was

to copy the book from the main manuscript and to put topics in different chapters, writes, "The reason for writing this book on politics was that Malek Shah ordered some of the scholars, wise men and the aged alike, to deliberate on the affairs of our country and to find out the improper activities of our reign and to find out the proper actions which should be carried out in our court, and in our government departments. He asked these scholars to disclose what has been hidden from the king's eyes. The king wanted to know what sorts of jobs and activities were done by previous kings of which we are not aware. The king asked these scholars to delve into the courtly customs of the previous kings and let him know what kind of actions those kings were involved in so that he could order the proper engagement in worldly and religious affairs and could prevent any involvement in improper affairs. The king said since Almighty God has bestowed upon us every asset and has defeated our enemies, nothing should be defective in our country from now on."¹⁴

In this work on politics, mention is frequently made of political power and its implementation. As we saw it before, it is worthy to note that in these works on politics, the analysis of political power, i.e., the discussion on power, has been independently brought up by political thinkers and their analysis does not stem from philosophical bases in the true sense of word. This is contradistinctive with workers on political philosophies, however. This does not imply that in the establishment of political ideas no form of philosophy in its general sense is involved. The writers on works on politics, being among the elites of society, have each a specific philosophy of their own and this philosophy somehow has an impact on their political ideas. But their philosophical outlook, or what is now called world's view, should not be mistaken for the philosophy of philosophers. Philosophers are thinkers; whereas writers of works on politics deliberate on political affairs and nothing more.

Thus, the authors of works on politics (Syasatnamehs) have generally dealt with the gaining of political power, how to keep it, how to suppress the opponents, and how to make city dwellers obedient to the king. But maintaining political power should not

be taken for granted anyway. And even at the time of peace and quiet, and on those occasions when opponents are suppressed, the governor should continue getting involved in arranging affairs on the basis of political standards. This is because "when some caliph's were enjoying prosperity, they were never free in neglecting the likelihood of the rise of their opponents."¹⁵

This means that probable insecurity and disorder always threaten the very basis of each government. The likelihood of the rebellion of the enemies is a constant means for each governor's anxiety. It is odd not to face any opposition within a governor's territory. Khaje Nezamol-Molk claims to have lived in such a quiet time. He writes, "Thanks God at this auspicious time there is no opponent at the realm of our government."¹⁶ But this so-called auspicious time is a transient time, however. This is because there are tribes of people against whom these works of politics (*syasatnamehs*) are written, and who are looking for right chances to rebel. The tribes of Bawateneh, Ghermatian, Khorramdinan and Rafezian, against whom the main bulk of Khaje's book is written are true infidels who try to ruin religion and are waiting to find some weakpoints in the basis of government so that they could attack and revenge." There are no people more wicked, more heathenish and more evil-doer than these people who are fighting against the prosperity of the country and also are engaged in destroying religion." "If a weakpoint becomes, apparent in the power of this government, these dogs will leave caves to attack our government and their claim for religion and power would be more than that of Rafezian and Korramdinan. They would perform whatever crime they could. In speech they pretend to be true-believers; in action they are true infidels. There is nobody more ominous than these. There is nobody more menacing to the welfare of citizens than these."¹⁷

In order to maintain his political power, Khajeh Nezamol-Molk determines first to identify these opponent "dogs". This is due to the fact that political power cannot be explained unless the wrong-doer enemies who are ready at any moment to destroy the existing government are properly identified. Thus, there is a chapter is *Syasatnameh* (work on politics) on

"who are Bawateneh and how is their religion and faith?"¹⁸ He adds, "there should be written a voluminous book on each of these dogs. Batenis (Bawateneh) have rebelled each time under different names and titles. They are called by different names in different cities."¹⁹

To sum up, "Bawateneh" was not a proper name; rather, it was a general name which had a general meaning, people who acted like a jin which appears in different forms at different times. As it is noted, in the eyes of the writers on *Syasatnamehs* (works on politics) political power is always in contradistinction with anti-power; in other words, it is a competing power which desires to replace the first one. It is only under such an analysis that the topic of the maintaining of power is possible.

The safeguarding of political power and its subsequent peace and quiet is well-nigh impossible unless there is a virtuous and well-wisher governor. What is of crucial importance in Khaje Nezamol-Molk's political ideas is the function and role of the governor. In his view, citizens' affairs are not performed well unless there is a just governor who engages in proper justice and policy-making. "By this we mean a time of prosperity and providence is the sign of the presence of a good king who has punished the wrong-doers, who has employed just and proper ministers and officials, who has bestowed upon to experts their proper duties, who has denied a person two tasks, who is always with his peasants, who has not given children a hard time, who engages in consultation with the wise, who arranges the religious and worldly affairs of people decently, who has given asset to each citizen according to his merits, who has stopped anything against the welfare of citizens and who has regarded justice in his affairs."²⁰

The main pivot of the political analysis in *Syasatnameh* (work on politics) is the governor. And Khaje Nezamol Molk does his best to introduce the approaches to the right government; in other words, he endeavors to indicate the best ways for keeping one's political power. He deems all other social activities crucial for the attainment of such a power. For instance, in Khaje Nezamol-Moks's views, religion is at the service of policy-making (politics) and its righteousness." It is the duty of the king to research in

religion, to perform the obligatory religious duties, to carry out God's orders, to respect *Olamas* (jurisprudents), to supply these olamas with financial means from the General Treasury, to endear the pious, to visit jurisprudents at least once or twice a week, to listen to their religious messages, to hear interpretation on the Glorious Koran and narrations from the Great prophet of Islam (May God Bless Him), and to listen to the stories of the just kings in the past..."²¹

It should not be assumed, however, that a king's being religious is because of his religion-loving. Rather, religion is a means to justify the political power and to strengthen kingdom and country. This, however, should not be taken as our doubt on Khajeh's being truly religious. There are many pieces of evidence for his being pious. But we should note that Khajeh is a statesman and knows the proper place and time for every social and political affair. He further states: If a king rules in accordance with sharia (religion) "he will learn the way to manage religious and worldly affairs properly. Such a king would not go astray through any infidel; rather, he would be well-determined, he would employ justice, he would stop the presence of any wrong-innovation, he would be skillful in performing feats, and he would un-root the plant of corruption. If the well-wishers are given a chance, there will not be any place for wrong-doers."²²

In Khajeh's view, religion is equal to politics and is one of the social functions. This relationship explains the justification of politics by religion. Religion and politics, without being identical, are reciprocal, inter-related, this statement should be immediately stipulated by the following condition: religion is one of the traits of a king and should be the very basis of his kingdom. "The king should be loyal to his religion. This is because kingdom and religion are two identical twins. When a country faces a great failure, religion will suffer as well, anti-religious and corrupted souls will appear. And if religion is not carried out properly, the country will badly suffer and wrong-doers will become strong."²³

The reason for this significant inter-relation (in *Syosatnameh*) between kingdom and religion is due to the fact that Khaje lived in a time in which all social and political campaigns were performed under the protection of a heresy or wrong-innovation in sharia

(religion). This fact justifies the reason for genuine faith and religion in both king and his prime minister (Grand vizir). Khajeh is sorry for the period within which sultan Mahmoud Ghaznavid in Beyhaghi's (a historian) wording, "was looking every corner of the globe to locate even one Gharmati (a group of opponents)."²⁴ whereas in Khajeh's time proponents of such heresy showed low profile, and every jew, christian, and zoroastrian engaged in important position. In "Sultan Ghazi's time" arrangement of affairs was important. Anybody who went astray would face the sword of the caliph. Kings believed in Hanafi and Shafei sects and would demolish those favoring Shiism. "Today, such a distinction is non-existent. Jews, christians, and Zoroastrians are living together. Government is in its perfect form. But I am worried. I do not know how long this is going to last. At the time of Sultan Mahmoud, Masud and Toghrol Alb-Arsalan, no Zoroastrian, jew, christian or Rafezi dared to leave the city or to meet one of the dignitaries."²⁵

One of the most important characteristics of Khaje Nezamol-Molk's political ideas is his concern for the Iranian view of kingdom prior to the Islamic Era, and his endeavor to juxtapose these two. Most of the basic stories of *Syosatnameh* in which Khajeh's political ideas are expounded are related to the kings of classic Iran such as Bahram Gur, Anoshirvan, Afridun, Ardshir, Keykhosrow, etc. It should be added, however, that Khajeh's reference to Iranian Kings is not to stir Iranian nationalism, or to underline it; rather, it is his intention to discourage caliphs to refer to the advent of Islam. He encourages them to look for a proper sample of kingdom in the Iranian political policy-makings; he wants them to adopt "the ways of the Iranian kings"²⁶ as the genuine sample for political power. Khaje Nezamol Molk, following many other Iranian ministers (Grand Vizirs) working in the caliph's court, tried to bring caliphate close to kingdom, to establish a new "ideology" for the caliphate, and to make sharia (religion) and a caliphate based on it, on the one hand, and Iran's socio-political management prior to Islam, on the other hand, isomorphic.

Khajeh, on the one hand, ascribes Godly favor to the just king, writing, "If a king possesses both Godly

favor and knowledge, he will be prosperous both here and Hereafter,"²⁷ and he compares a king with "the world owner," on the other hand. He writes, "the king is the world owner. World citizens are his family members and peasants."²⁸ Such a comparison makes the difference between a prosperous king and a caliph non-existent: caliphate is a kingdom which is religiously justified. Nobody is allowed to disobey such a caliph whose power is two-dimensional. In order to justify his views and statement, Khajeh even does not avoid creating historical falsehood. For instance, against Yaaghub Leith "who disobeyed caliphate,"²⁹ Khajeh levels the following accusation "Yaagub converted his religion to Ismailism and rebelled against Baghdad's caliphate."³⁰

From such a political view on kingdom and caliphate it is logically concluded that citizens are the king's peasants. In this occasion, Khajeh quotes Bahram Gur who had previously stated, "our peasants are our flock."³¹ But a just king should treat his herds and flocks kindly. Such an issue on justice has a specific position in the political view of *Syasatnamehs* (works on politics). Justice commands us to observe the social differences between the rich and the poor. On the occasions when peasants were allowed by the king to attend his court, Khajeh writes, "Since everybody attends the court, there should be a difference between the noble and the low-ranking peasants."³² Now, it is by observing such different ranks among "flocks" and noting such segregation that we are able to grasp the true meaning of justice mentioned in *Syasatnameh*.

It is to be noted that the notion of justice has a specific meaning in the history of political ideas because it is one of the fundamental concepts of classic political philosophies and of the modern political ideas. It is obvious that there is no relation between justice in classic political ideas and that in modern political ideas. By the same token, it is not easy to raise such an issue within differing branches of classic political ideas. At the outset, it is assumed that the notion of justice in Khajeh Nezamol-Molk's *Syasatnameh* and the ideas of the dwellers in Farabi's Utopia belong to one historical era and these two play an identical role in political discourse. Although it is true that Khajeh Nezamol Molk has a special eye on

classic tradition and traits and has stated, "... at all times, since Hathrat Adam (May God Bless Him) up to now, justice has been done; they have truly endeavored to keep the country alive,"³³ and in spite of his statement that "to satisfy God is to treat people justly,"³⁴ all his statements and his emphasis on justice is for the survival of the country and kingdom and not for existing justice *per se*; this is because "it is possible for a kingdom to survive within blasphemy, but it cannot survive within injustice."³⁵

The basis of *Syasatnamehs* (works on politics) is generally on the keeping of political power. For this reason, the notion of justice, which is superficially like justice in classic political philosophies, should not be misleading. For Abu Nasr Farabi, and generally for classic political philosophies, justice refers to the order in the creation. Thus, if this order which exists in creation is observed by the leader of Utopia, it can be said that justice is done. Whereas in *Syasatnamehs* justice refers to political domination, and not to virtues and prosperity in society.

III. Up to now we have talked about the differences between the logic behind political philosophy and political ideas as defined in this article. Now we should closely examine the logic behind political ideas, and distinguish another kind of *Syasatnameh* which deals with the establishment of the notion of government and kingdom on the basis of a superficial interpretation of sharia (religion) and which presents another facet of domination-based governments. Thus, we may identify two different kinds of *Syasatnamehs*; one is *Syasatnameh* in its general meaning; the other is political ideas (a collection of political ideas). The basic characteristic of Khajeh Nezamol Molk's *Syasatnameh*, as we have seen, is its concern for a sample of government based on Iranian classic policy-making approaches and on the Iranian kings' customs. In this respect, the "notion of kingdom" in classic Persia is the center of discussion and in its light, other ideological factors, such as the factors taken from classic political philosophy and Islamic Sharia, are given new emphasis and coloring. On the basis of such grounds, the new concept of kingdom and caliphate is established.

Unlike usual *Syasatnamehs*, this second kind of

Syasatnamehs, which somehow carelessly may be referred to as "Shariat Namehs" (works on Shariat), which are written on political ideas, like Syasatnamehs explain the basis of caliphate. But in writing their ideology, authors separate themselves from kingdom ideology and put Shariat at the center of their discussion. To clarify our point, we should mention that most of these books, and perhaps all of them, are written on the basis of Hanafi and Shafei jurisprudences. The book of Fazlol-lah-Ibn Ruzbehan Khonji Isphahani, called *Sulukol Moluk* is a typical representative of such books. What comes in the following paragraphs is taken from the above book the critic of which is recently published by Dr Mohammad Ali Movahhed.³⁶

What draws the reader's attention in studying *Sulukol Moluk* from the outset is its anti-philosophy outlook. From the beginning Fazlol-lah Isphahani issues orders to prohibit studying philosophy so that he may justify the notion of "political domination." However, it should be kept in mind that the basis of Farabi's civil politics and of his Utopia is the lack of domination. In other words, in his view the only desirable Utopia is a Utopia which is in accord with Shariah. All other Utopias, on whatever basis they rely, in Farabi's conception are domination-based Utopias. Thus, his statement could be taken to mean that according to his civil politics, any other Utopia is undesirable. Without dealing with any specific order, Farabi considers his Utopia an ideal one for human societies toward which they can move if they want to attain virtue and prosperity. The author of *Sulukol Moluk*, in his objection to any kind of political philosophy and to any sort of idealism on which these philosophies are based, critically criticizes and rejects philosophy. Fazlol-Lah Isphahani has published his book at the beginning of the revival of philosophy in Iran (about the year 92 Lunar calendar). He anticipates the dangers of philosophical ideas for the kingdom and for the dominated-based caliphate.

Upon his emphasis on gaining knowledge on three kinds of "olum sharie" (Shariah Sciences) i.e., "Arabic literary sciences", "narration, Hadith and jurisprudence", "Systematic theology and jurisprudence,"³⁷ Fazlol-Lah Isphahani writes, "Anything beyond these three branches belong to philosophy. We would need

medicine and a little arithmetic and logic. Medicine is necessary for our health. Arithmetic is required for an understanding of some chapters of jurisprudence, and logic is needed for the identification between right and wrong statements. Experts in systematic theology have included logic in their domain so that they would not need any other science. Thus, as these experts have recommended a little logic would be sufficient; too much of it is forbidden. Thus, philosopher's books are not required."

"Thus, it is evident that the study of philosophy is not necessary except for that amount of which Shariah scholars included within their syllabus. Therefore, it is obligatory for a sheikhol-Islam (a high-ranking expert in Islamic jurisprudence) to prohibit his students to study philosophy; This is due to the fact that all corruptions raised in Islam originate from philosophy."³⁸.

Therefore, in order for a king to strengthen his political power, he should "identify the most learned jurists" in his country and perform religious obligations. "But it is extremely hard to locate such experts nowadays since most of them have shown their inclination toward natural philosophy. These philosophers are pretty strong in their argumentation. It happens for an expert to know sharia sciences (religious sciences) but to lack skill in philosophy. He, therefore, does not have the ability to take part in discussions with these philosophers. When the king tried to locate the best scholars, these philosophers pretended to know a lot and misled the king by passing themselves off as genuine scientists. However, their studies would not benefit Moslems in any way; rather their studies are hazardous to Islam."³⁹

Space would not allow us here to examine the anti-philosophy outlook of Fazlol-Lah-Ibn Ruzbehan and generally of Sunnit writers of Shariah. But we should refer to two issues here. Firstly, the basis of Farabi's political philosophy rests on a rejection of domination in his Utopia.⁴⁰ Thus, it could be said that Farabi is close to Aristotle and his followers in this regard because they distinguish between political relations in the real sense of the word and domination relations. For instance, Aristotle has distinguished "Arche' politike'" and "Arche' despolitike'", and his followers, including Thomas Aquinas, have distinguished

"potestas" and "domonica potestas." In Farabi's contexts these expressions could be translated into "dominating relations" and "domination relations", respectively.⁴¹ Farabi's philosophical background and his attention towards philosophical thinking forces him to consider virtue and prosperity in city and in Utopia as prime factors in his civil philosophy. However, the author of *Sulukol Moluk*, unlike the common trends in political philosophies, arranges the basic argumentation in such a way that he could justify his domination-based hypothesis. Rejecting the position of Ravafez (i.e., Rafezis), Fazlol-Lah-Ruzbehan writes, "It is not obligatory for Imam to be innocent, nor to be of the tribe of *Ghoreish*."⁴²

Severely criticizing the notion of Imam as held by Ravafez, Ruzbehan introduces a fourth way of electing the Imam: this is the notion of domination. Discussing on the three ways of electing Imam, i.e., (a) consensus of opinions, (b) reelection of the incumbent Imam, and (c) election of a council, the author of *Suluk-ol Moluk* writes, "the fourth way of the establishment of kingdom and Imam is domination. Scholars have said that if an Imam passes away, the person who on his own substitutes Imam without having oath of allegiance, and through force army possesses the office of Imam, whether he is a Ghoreshid or not, whether he is Arabi, Persian or Turk, whether he is qualified or not, whether he is well-doer or a wrong-doer, such a substitute is called a king: he has occupied Imam's position because of his army and force. Such a person may be referred to as sultan, Imam or caliph."⁴³

Secondly, the justification of domination as a fourth way of establishing Imam which is based on the negation of Imam's being innocent is, in fact, the rejection of shiit notion on Imam. For Ruzbehan's political ideas, this rejection of shiit conception is of utmost significance. In the book *Sulukol Moluk*, narrating Abu Hafath Nasfi (from his book *Majmaol Olum*), Ruzbehan writes, "It is suitable for Imam to be visible rather than invisible, as the Shiits say; Imam should belong to the tribe of Ghoreish and no other tribe. Imam could be among Hashem's or Ali's descendants; it is not mandatory for Imam to be innocent; neither is it compulsory for Imam to be the most learned of his time. It is necessary for Imam to

belong to Velayat; he should as well be a statesman, be able to carry out Islamic verdicts and to protect Islamic boundaries; he should implement justice as well. He may not be deposed unless he has engaged in debauchery and libertinism."⁴⁴ But the rejection of shiit conception of Imam which is one of the foundations of political view of Sunna could raise another issue from the view point of the history of political ideas. It could be said that in this respect the shiit conception is quite close to the notion of political philosophy which generally rejects domination and sets the stage for the criticism of the existing order and plans for a desired one. Fazlol-Lah Ruzbehan, imitating the Sunnit political thinkers, such as Maverdy, and Imam Mohammad Ghazzali, severely criticizes philosophy *per se* and political philosophy so that in this way he could justify his position. In sum, he advocates that people need Imam, so if there is not available a qualified Imam, a Man could take power by using force and implementing domination; "such a man is referred to as a sultan."⁴⁵ In our conception, the significant point in Ruzbehan's political views is the justification of the existing order and the rejection of the desired political philosophy which, necessarily emphasizes virtue and prosperity. The basis of Ruzbehan's view is "the alleviation of conspiracy"⁴⁶ in the country. Of course, this is not possible unless in the light of "the erection of Shariat commands."⁴⁷ Thus even in those cases where the writer of *Sulukol Moluk* writes "the basis of Imam is the protection of Islamic territories,"⁴⁸ or "the basis of Imam is the protection of Islam,"⁴⁹ he refers to the existing order, rather than to the desired one.

Another important point should be emphasized here, however. From what we have studied so far, we could conclude that Ruzbehan fundamentally considers social welfare and the establishment of political order important. In this respect, a sultan may even "betray God and God's Messenger."⁵⁰ This is because "if a governor makes a corrupt man the emir of a state, this verdict is effective, but the sultan has some injustice."⁵¹ According to the views of *Sulukol Moluk*, "the sultan is eligible to do whatever changes necessary in the city."⁵² Thus, if a sultan is responsible in the eyes of Shariat, he is of independent verdict in the domain of politics. He may engage in the

establishment of peace and order however far away he is from "erection of Shariat verdict." It is natural for Ruzbehan to consider the implementation of Shariat verdicts as the precondition for the attainment of genuine prosperity. He writes, "therefore, it is mandatory for the learned king to protect Shariat, and to force people to erect it. And if jurisprudents deem it necessary, he may bring about whatever changes necessary in the ketab and Sunnah."⁵³ He condemns the rising against a corrupt sultan; in his view, sultan's verdicts and actions are politically justified and valid.

The following sample indicates how Ruzbehan, through benefiting from narrations, believes in the absolute obedience to governors, and considers this obedience in harmony with Shariat, "It is narrated from the Great prophet of Islam (May God Bless Him): if anybody dies without recognizing his Imam, he is dead like ignorant people prior to the advent of Islam. Olama (jurisprudents) have stated that the content of the narration is this: whoever disobeys either Imam or his officials, his death is like that of infidels because at the time of infidelity (kufr) people disobey sultans and their officials. That is why the Great prophet of Islam (May God Bless Him) has specifically underlined the obedience of people toward the official even if the official is not noble, or Seyyed. We read in another narration: Obey whoever is appointed as Emir (official) even if he is a Etiopi slave. In another narration, the Messenger of Islam has stated: One who obeys my Emir, has obeyed me; Conversely, anybody who obeys me, has obeyed God; one who disobeys my Emir, has shown his disobedience toward me; anybody who disobeys me has shown his disobedience toward God. There are many other narrations which emphasize obedience toward Emirs. This is because Arabs did not recognize the obedience toward Emirs (officials appointed by the prophet). Thus, the Great prophet has encouraged them to show their obedience."⁵⁴ To sum up, "Imam and Emir become Imam and Emir even if they are wrong-doers. If they are just at first, but convert into wrong-doers, they will remain Imam and Emir."⁵⁵

Conclusion

Now that we have dealt with the different facets of the history of political ideas in the domain of Iranian

civilization at the time of Islam Era, we may return to the issue we raised at the preface to this paper and arrive at some tentative conclusion. At the outset, we should realize that these are three phases of the Persian history: classic era, old period, and the modern period. The political ideas brought up in our discussions refer to the old period of the Persian history. If these conclusions are valid, we should add that despite our living during the modern phase of the world history, from the point of view of thinking, we have been absent from it. That is to say, although constitutionalism was the beginning of the modern phase of Iranian history, modernization, i.e., new ideas which could be established through the movement of constitution never reached us.

The Iranian constitutionalism and its subsequent revolution was on the shaky foundation of ideologies, and not on the basis of thinking. It was thus doomed to failure. The constitutionalism was first closed down, then met with unsurmountable obstacles, and finally failed. The ideology behind constitutionalism and other ideologies raised for or against it within time each had its role in keeping us behind in thinking. Each of these ideologies levelled a decisive stroke at the very foundation of thinking during the old phase of our history. This caused us to cut our relation with the old phase and to encounter difficulties to engage in modern thinking. Lack of the attainment of modern thinking was the inevitable consequence of our breaking away from our past.

Thus, we arrived at the arena of the modern phase of world history when this phase and all its consequence were imposed on us and on our history; our presence at this modern phase was just physical, not mental. At the classic time of the Persian history and at the Islamic Era, the Persian civilization was very active because of its thinking aspect. Thus, it had a significant role in the world history and civilization. But up to now, modernism and its consequences are imposed on us; we have been unable to have any active role in it. In our view, this is because modernism was difficult to get. Most of the problems relating to the modern times have not yet been raised for us. Because of the strength of the ideologies present in Iran, thinking was impossible in Iran. Even the rudimentary questions were not brought up

logically. We have been farther from thinking each day. We even lack an opportunity to return to our past.

Of course, a return to the old era and the chance to establish modern thinking are just two faces of one coin. This could be unattainable without that. It is felt necessary more than before to revive, "the struggle between old-timers and modernists" which at the outset of the new phase of western history paved the way for the establishment of thinking of modern times. It is mandatory to critically and logically examine our thinking capacities and to judge the validity of the old approaches and conception. The prevalence of ideologies and our inability to distinguish between ideology and thinking has had this unfortunate consequence as to make us unable to realize the nature of the modern thinking and the thinking in the west and the obstacle, on the way of thinking in Iran.

In the above paragraphs we raised up the problems with political ideas within the Iranian civilization at the Islamic Era. We endeavored to explain its nature. The first result of this cursory glance is to say that political ideas by their very nature belong to the old phase of Persian history. Thus, any comparison between the writers at this period and the thinkers of modern time in Europe would be baseless. As Farabi's Utopia has no relation whatever with that of Thomas Moore, a comparison between Nezamol-Molk's and Ruzbehan's political ideas on the one hand and those of Machiavelli, on the other hand, will show no relation whatsoever, even if the time of the edition of both *Sulukol Moluk* and *Shahryar* is the same. Such a comparison shows our ignorance towards the bases and approaches within two historical phases.

Machiavelli belongs to the beginning of the modern period of western history; Fazlol-Lah Ibn Ruzbehan belongs to the old phase of the Persian history. Machiavelli involves in thinking based on the realities of modern times; he does his best to bring about a solid base for the modern era through his political ideas. The foundation of his thinking, unlike that of the writer of *Sulukol Moluk*, is based on an analysis of those factors the elimination of which made the new history possible. This very analysis of relations among factors paved the way for the democratic political thinking in the next centuries. But

the political analysis of Khaje Nezamol-Molk and Fazlol-Lah Ibn Ruzbehan is carried out from the views of sultans and kings. Their analyses are not based on the relations among factors. Among the peasants who are the king's (or caliph's) flocks, no political relation except that of domination is possible. The employment of "political" relation to this "dominating" relation is somewhat loose and unfounded, however.

Political ideas in Iran, as we saw are, in the final analysis, of the sort of *Sulukol Moluk* and cannot be compared with political ideas in the west in any way. The "power" which Machiavelli has in mind and on whose nature, attainment and maintaining he has discussed is basically different from that of Khaje Nezamol Molk or Ruzbehan.

The modern political ideas, like new thinking, is absent from our civilization. Sooner or later, the reasons for this absence should be studied and the ways should be identified to establish the new thinking. The political ideas of classic Iran at the Islamic Era may not comprehend the characteristics of modern times and to answer its questions. The modern era of the world history in our absence has established technological wisdom and new political wisdom based on democratic relations. Our ignorance of these affairs will not stop their progress. Rather, those affairs will ultimately impose themselves upon us. The only way open to us is to delve on those affairs which are inevitable for us to encounter.

Notes

1. We have used the word "idea" (pensée) in its general sense which includes philosophy, ideas and opinions. Without dealing with details, it should be noted that by political philosophy we mean some ideas on political affairs which based on philosophical backgrounds try to establish political philosophy. Thus, the history of political ideas is used in two senses: political philosophy and political thinking.
2. The expression "at the Islamic Era" is not to be taken to mean that a thorough research has been done relating the classic time. The above expression only shows that we are concerned with this period.

3. Regarding this, refer to the notes of Henri le Febvre, *Introduction à la modernité*, E. d. de Minuit, Paris, (1972).
4. Dr Reza Davari, *Farabi's civil philosophy*, the High Council for Culture and Art, Tehran 1354, p. 90. Compare this with Dr Davari's other work, *Farabi*, the founder of Islamic philosophy, the society of philosophy of Iran, Tehran, (1356).
5. Abu Nasr Farabi, *Ehsa'ol olum*, translation by Hossein Khadiv Jam. Scientific and cultural publishing company, Tehran, (1364), p. 107.
6. *Loc cit.*
7. Abu Nasr Farabi, *The ideas of the dwellers of Utopia*, translated and expounded by Dr sayyed Jafar Sajjadi, Tahuri library, Tehran, (1361), p. 269.
8. *Loc cit.*, p. 261
9. *Loc cit*, p. 73
10. *Loc cit*, p. 26
11. *Loc cit*, p. 261
12. *Loc cit.* pp. 261-2 "The status of the world creatures was the same. This is because the ratio the First Cause to other creatures is like the ratio of the king of Utopia to other members and individuals. *loc. cit.* p. 262
13. Dr Reza Davari, Farabi, *The Founder of the Islamic philosophy*, p. 56.
14. Abu Ali Hassan Ibn Ali Khaje Nezamol-Molk *Syosatnameh* (work on politics), edited by Mohammad Ghazvini, and by Morteza Modarres chahardahi, Tahuri, Tehran, (1334), pp. 1-2.
15. *Loc cit.* p. 8.
16. *Loc cit.*
17. *Loc cit*, pp. 143-4.
18. *Loc cit*, p. 194
19. *Loc cit*, p. 236.
20. *Loc cit*, pp. 182-3.
21. *Lic cit*, pp. 62-63.
22. *Loc cit.*
23. *Loc cit*, pp. 43-4.
24. *Tarikh-e Beihaghi* (Beihaghi's history), by Dr Ghani and Dr Fayyaz, Tehran, (1324). Beihaghi narrates sultan Mahmoud to have said, "It should be written to this stupid caliph that I am looking for Gharmati everywhere. If I find them, they then will be hanged," p. 183.
25. *Syosatnameh*, pp. 161-2.
26. *Loc cit.* p. 44.
27. *Loc cit.* p. 64.
28. *Loc cit.* p. 128.
29. *Loc cit* p. 12.
30. *Loc cit.*
31. *Loc cit.* p. 24 "Sultan is the owner of the world, world-dwellers and his family-members and servants." *Loc cit.* p 128.
32. *Loc cit.* p. 127.
33. *Loc cit.* p. 63.
34. *Loc cit*, p. 9.
35. *Loc cit.*
36. Fazlol-Lah Ibn-e Ruzbehan Khajei Isphehani, *Sulukol Moluk*, edited by Mohammad Ali Movahhed, Kharazmi-publishing House, Tehran (1362).
37. *Loc cit*, p. 97.
38. *Loc cit*, pp. 97-8. The emphasis is ours.
39. *Loc cit*, p. 93.
40. To see a critic on political ideas based on domination, refer to Abu Nasr Farabi, the ideas of the dwellers of Utopia, p. 323.
41. Compare with Aristotle, *Syosat*.
42. Fazlol-Lah Ibn-e Ruzbehan, *Loc cit.* p. 790.
43. *Loc cit.* p. 82.
44. *Loc cit.* p. 79 (the emphasis is ours)
45. *Loc cit.* p. 78.
46. *Loc cit.* p. 146.
47. *Loc cit.* p. 47.
48. *Loc cit.* p. 80.
49. *Loc cit.* p. 279.
50. *Loc cit.* p. 205.
51. *Loc cit.*
52. *Loc cit.* p. 209.
53. *Loc cit.* p. 91, "Thus, it could be understood that if the king does not protect Shariat and then there is some shortcomings in human society, the king is responsible for all of this. God will punish the king in the severest way possible. The prophet Mohammad (May God Bless Him), in a letter to Kesra and Gheysar, refers to the same thing and asks them to convert to Islam or else they will be

responsible for the sins of all their peasants. pp. 92-3.

54. *Loc cit*, pp. 200-1.

55. *Loc cit*, p. 205.

53. *Loc cit*, p. 91. Thus, it could be understood that the king does not protect Shari'ah and that there is some stonemason in human society, the king is responsible for all of this. God will punish the king in the severest way possible. The prophet Muhammad (May God Bless Him) in a letter to Kays and Ghayyar, refers to the same thing and asks them to convert to Islam or else they will be

52. *Loc cit*, p. 208.

51. *Loc cit*, pp. 85-87.

50. *Loc cit*, pp. 182-3.

49. *Loc cit*, p. 218.

48. *Loc cit*, p. 80.

47. *Loc cit*, p. 47.

46. *Loc cit*, p. 148.

45. *Loc cit*, p. 78.

44. *Loc cit*, p. 78 (the emphasis is ours).

43. *Loc cit*, p. 82.

42. Fatah al-Jah al-Rushdiyyah, *Loc cit*, p. 180.

41. Compare with Aristotle, *Syaset*.

40. To see a critic on political ideas based on domination, refer to Abu Nasr Farabi, the ideas of the dwellers of Utopia, p. 323.

39. To see a critic on political ideas based on domination, refer to Abu Nasr Farabi, the ideas of the dwellers of Utopia, p. 323.

38. *Loc cit*, pp. 97-8. The emphasis is ours.

37. *Loc cit*, p. 97.

36. Fatah al-Jah al-Rushdiyyah, *Loc cit*, p. 180.

35. *Loc cit*, p. 8.

34. *Loc cit*, p. 8.

33. *Loc cit*, p. 83.

32. *Loc cit*, p. 127.

31. *Loc cit*, p. 127.

30. *Loc cit*, p. 128.

29. *Loc cit*, p. 128.

28. *Loc cit*, p. 128.

27. *Loc cit*, p. 128.

26. *Loc cit*, p. 128.

25. *Loc cit*, p. 128.

24. *Loc cit*, p. 128.

23. *Loc cit*, p. 128.

22. *Loc cit*, p. 128.

21. *Loc cit*, p. 128.

20. *Loc cit*, p. 128.

19. *Loc cit*, p. 128.

18. *Loc cit*, p. 128.

17. *Loc cit*, p. 128.

16. *Loc cit*, p. 128.

15. *Loc cit*, p. 128.

14. *Loc cit*, p. 128.

13. *Loc cit*, p. 128.

12. *Loc cit*, p. 128.

11. *Loc cit*, p. 128.

10. *Loc cit*, p. 128.

9. *Loc cit*, p. 128.

8. *Loc cit*, p. 128.

7. *Loc cit*, p. 128.

6. *Loc cit*, p. 128.

5. *Loc cit*, p. 128.

4. *Loc cit*, p. 128.

3. *Loc cit*, p. 128.

2. *Loc cit*, p. 128.

1. *Loc cit*, p. 128.

24. *Yamh-e Bahagh (Bahagh's history)*, by Dr Ghani and Dr Fayyaz, Tehran, (1324). Bahagh narrates Sultan Mahmud to have said, "I should be written

23. *Loc cit*, pp. 43-4.

22. *Loc cit*.

21. *Loc cit*, pp. 85-87.

20. *Loc cit*, pp. 182-3.

19. *Loc cit*, p. 208.

18. *Loc cit*, p. 184.

17. *Loc cit*, pp. 143-4.

16. *Loc cit*.

15. *Loc cit*, p. 8.

14. *Loc cit*, pp. 1-2.

13. *Loc cit*, pp. 1-2.

12. *Loc cit*, pp. 1-2.

11. *Loc cit*, pp. 1-2.

10. *Loc cit*, pp. 1-2.

9. *Loc cit*, pp. 1-2.

8. *Loc cit*, pp. 1-2.

7. *Loc cit*, pp. 1-2.

6. *Loc cit*, pp. 1-2.

5. *Loc cit*, pp. 1-2.

4. *Loc cit*, pp. 1-2.

3. *Loc cit*, pp. 1-2.

2. *Loc cit*, pp. 1-2.

1. *Loc cit*, pp. 1-2.