



Revisiting Practical Wisdom: A Reinterpretation of Hikmah Muta'aliyah in Political Thought

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ABSTRACT

Philosophy is often reduced to a static enterprise of systematizing inherited traditions, losing its fundamental role in re-interpreting reality. In the context of Islamic thought, *Hikmah Muta'aliyah*—despite its core principle of "becoming" (*ṣayrūrah*)—frequently faces stagnation due to museological approaches. There is an urgent need to bridge the gap between this classical metaphysical tradition and contemporary political challenges. This study aims to provide a renewed interpretation of *Hikmah Muta'aliyah* by rethinking its practical wisdom (*hikmah 'amalī*) to establish a dynamic framework for political rationality. It seeks to demonstrate how this tradition can serve as a living horizon for political insight. The research employs a combination of critical philosophical hermeneutics and reconstructive analysis. The methodological framework unfolds through conceptual retrieval, critical rearticulation, and the development of orienting principles for modern political judgment. The study reveals that *Hikmah Muta'aliyah* functions as a robust framework that naturally accommodates methodological pluralism. By its integrative nature, it synthesizes intuitive, rational, and empirical modes of inquiry, providing a platform for interdisciplinary studies where metaphysics, ethics, and social sciences converge. This approach allows for a "scientific" political analysis that is neither dogmatic nor detached from historical reality. Rereading *Hikmah Muta'aliyah* enables the development of an emergent political foundation. It concludes that this tradition's greatest strength lies in its ability to foster a "fusion of horizons," acting as an interdisciplinary bridge that invites diverse methodological perspectives to address complex contemporary political issues.

Keyword: Islamic Philosophy, Hikmah Muta'aliyah, Practical Wisdom, Methodological Pluralism, Interdisciplinary Studies.

ABSTRAK

Filsafat kerap direduksi menjadi upaya sistematisasi tradisi yang diwariskan secara statis, sehingga kehilangan peran fundamentalnya dalam menafsirkan ulang realitas. Dalam konteks pemikiran Islam, *Hikmah Muta'aliyah*—meskipun berangkat dari prinsip inti "menjadi" (*ṣayrūrah*)—sering kali mengalami stagnasi akibat pendekatan yang bersifat museologis. Karena itu, terdapat kebutuhan mendesak untuk menjembatani kesenjangan antara tradisi metafisika klasik ini dan tantangan politik kontemporer. Kajian ini bertujuan menawarkan pembacaan baru terhadap *Hikmah Muta'aliyah* dengan menafsir ulang hikmah praktis (*hikmah 'amalī*) guna membangun kerangka rasionalitas politik yang lebih dinamis. Penelitian ini berupaya menunjukkan bagaimana tradisi tersebut dapat berfungsi sebagai horizon hidup bagi pemikiran politik. Secara metodologis, studi ini menggabungkan hermeneutika filosofis kritis dan analisis rekonstruktif. Kerangka kerjanya dikembangkan melalui tiga langkah utama: penelusuran kembali konsep-konsep kunci, reartikulasi kritis atas konsep-konsep tersebut, serta perumusan prinsip-prinsip orientatif bagi pertimbangan politik modern. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa *Hikmah Muta'aliyah* merupakan kerangka yang kokoh dan secara inheren terbuka terhadap pluralisme metodologis. Melalui karakter integratifnya, ia menyintesis mode penyelidikan intuitif, rasional, dan empiris, serta menyediakan dasar bagi kajian interdisipliner yang mempertemukan metafisika, etika, dan ilmu-ilmu sosial. Dengan demikian, pendekatan ini memungkinkan analisis politik yang bersifat "ilmiah" tanpa terjebak dalam dogmatisme maupun keterputusan dari realitas historis. Pembacaan ulang terhadap *Hikmah Muta'aliyah* membuka kemungkinan bagi perumusan dasar pemikiran politik yang lebih relevan dengan kondisi kekinian. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa kekuatan utama tradisi tersebut terletak pada kemampuannya menciptakan "fusi horizon", yakni berfungsi sebagai jembatan interdisipliner yang mempertemukan berbagai perspektif metodologis guna merespons persoalan-persoalan politik kontemporer yang kompleks.

Keyword: Filsafat Islam, Hikmah Muta'aliyah, Kebijaksanaan Praktis, Pluralisme Metodologis, Studi Interdisipliner



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1. Introduction

Offering a new reading and interpretation of the world and its phenomena should be regarded as one of the fundamental tasks of philosophy. However, for various reasons, this profound mission has largely been removed from the arena of philosophical practice. Over time, philosophers have increasingly tended to confine themselves to explicating and systematizing their inherited intellectual traditions, rather than engaging in the creative re-interpretation of reality itself (Sollace et al., 2013).

Consequently, philosophy—despite its intrinsic demand for dynamism—has been transformed into a static and inert enterprise. In contrast, according to Mulla Ṣadra, philosophy is nothing other than the process of human becoming (*ṣayrūrāt al-insān*) (Mulla Ṣadra, 1989). On this account, even if one refrains from asserting that dynamism and transformation belong to the very essence of philosophy, it remains clear that they are always concomitant with philosophical inquiry.

Concerning the notion of philosophy as becoming (*ṣayrūrah*), some authors construe this definition in teleological terms (Jawadi, 2007). Others deny its teleological status and instead identify becoming with philosophy itself (Davari, 2011). On this latter view, the truth of philosophy does not belong to the order of knowledge—neither representational knowledge nor knowledge by presence—but rather to the realm of encounter and transformative activity.

While the former view locates the realization of philosophy at the terminus of becoming, the latter maintains that philosophy is already realized from the outset of becoming and throughout its course. (Davari, 2011). Nevertheless, whether becoming is understood teleologically or in terms of encounter, whether philosophy is said to be realized at the end of becoming or from its inception and in its midst, philosophy becomes philosophy only insofar as it remains inseparable from becoming.

A process-oriented perspective on philosophy enables philosophers to continually subject their knowledge and philosophical heritage to examination, critique, and reinterpretation, so that it does not stagnate or become obsolete. This need becomes even more pressing when the limitation of human capacity is taken into account. Under such a view, the necessity of renewed readings is intensified: no philosopher can ever attain the very essence of things, but can grasp truths only in accordance with their own capacities and historical conditions. At the same time, this understanding does not necessarily lead to scepticism or to the closure of the path to knowledge. The finitude of human capability, as defined here, merely signifies that human knowledge is limited, not that it is impossible or inaccessible (Jawadi, 2007).

In this regard, attention to intellectual, cognitive, and psychological obstacles can significantly contribute to the advancement of philosophy. Some individuals have shown such an excessive attachment to philosophy that they have endowed it with a sacred status, while others have adopted such a dismissive attitude toward it that they have gone so far as to prohibit it altogether. These forms of excess and deficiency constitute some of the most serious obstacles preventing philosophy from manifesting its proper role in addressing fundamental problems and from exercising an effective influence on human life. Moreover, at times ethnic and national biases have prevailed to such an extent that they have resulted in hostility toward the “other,” whereas in other cases self-alienation and inferiority complexes have become so dominant that they have led to uncritical admiration of the “foreign” (Fanai, 2021).

In light of these considerations, one may distinguish three approaches to reading the intellectual legacy of the past: the museological approach, the treasure-hunting approach, and the scientific approach. In the museological approach, the researcher’s attitude toward the past is marked by aversion; in the treasure-hunting approach, the scholar’s stance is characterized by fascination. Owing to the prejudgments inherent in both orientations, neither is capable of disclosing the truth: aversion leads the researcher to overlook the strengths of a tradition, while fascination causes the scholar to neglect its weaknesses. The only approach that can bring inquiry closer to truth is the scientific approach, which seeks to exclude affection and aversion from its modes of investigation and interpretation. Admittedly, the suspension of prejudgments is by no means an easy task; nevertheless, even the attempt to undertake such a path remains methodologically more sound than approaches that adopt either an optimistic or a pessimistic stance toward the past from the outset (Najaf, 2019).

Accordingly, a critical re-engagement with political wisdom through a renewed interpretation of *ḥikmah muta’āliyah* becomes urgent; not as an exercise in preservation or idealization, but as a philosophical effort to rethink political rationality in light of contemporary conditions.

2. Method

Methodologically, this study combines critical philosophical hermeneutics with reconstructive analysis in order to reread *Ḥikmah Muta'āliyah* as a living and dynamic philosophical tradition. Rather than approaching this tradition as a closed metaphysical system or a sacrosanct legacy immune to critique, the study treats it as an open horizon of meaning whose conceptual resources remain capable of generating new political insights under contemporary conditions. This approach is grounded in the assumption that philosophical traditions endure not through repetition, but through continuous reinterpretation and critical engagement.

From a hermeneutic perspective, the study is informed by the insight that understanding is always historically situated and mediated by the interpreter's horizon. Accordingly, rereading *Ḥikmah Muta'āliyah* entails neither a purely descriptive exegesis nor an anachronistic imposition of modern political categories. Instead, it proceeds through a dialogical engagement between classical metaphysical concepts and present political concerns, allowing meaning to emerge through the fusion of horizons between text and interpreter (Gadamer, 2004). This hermeneutic orientation enables the study to respect the internal coherence of Mulla Ṣadra's philosophical project while affirming the legitimacy of rearticulating its insights within new theoretical contexts.

In line with Alireza's (2017) methodological framework, the reconstructive dimension of the methodology unfolds through three interrelated stages. First, at the level of conceptual retrieval, the study proceeds by reconstructing the fundamental conceptual framework of *Ḥikmah Muta'āliyah* as it is articulated in contemporary readings of the tradition. At this stage, priority is given to achieving a precise and coherent understanding of key notions such as *ḥikmah* as an integrative form of insight, *ḥikmah 'amalī* as the domain in which practical wisdom is oriented toward action, *Ḥikmah Muta'āliyah* as a comprehensive philosophical synthesis, and *siyāsah* as a mode of deliberation concerned with the ordering of collective life. This stage corresponds to the phase of preparatory understanding, in which careful explication, conceptual clarification, and fidelity to the internal logic of the tradition take precedence over evaluation or application.

Second, the study advances to a stage of critical rearticulation, in which the conceptual relations between *ḥikmah*, *ḥikmah 'amalī*, *ḥikmah muta'āliyah*, and *siyāsah* are critically examined for their implicit political and normative significance. At this stage, the analysis moves beyond descriptive clarification toward a reflective reassessment of how wisdom, when understood as an integrative form of rational insight, becomes oriented toward collective life and political practice. Rather than extracting a ready-made political doctrine from the philosophical tradition, this stage explores how *siyāsah* may be rearticulated as a mode of practical wisdom grounded in philosophical reflection, and how *ḥikmah 'amalī* mediates between speculative insight and political judgment. In this sense, inherited concepts are neither merely preserved nor rejected, but are critically reworked and theoretically repositioned in response to new political questions and problematics. (Alireza, 2017).

Third, the reconstructive process culminates in the articulation of orienting principles of political wisdom. At this stage, the study investigates the extent to which a rereading of *Ḥikmah Muta'āliyah* can give rise to an emergent and non-dogmatic political foundation. Such a foundation is not conceived as an absolute or immutable ground, but as a set of revisable principles that orient political judgment and practice without collapsing into ideological closure. This final stage, corresponding to application, emphasizes philosophical guidance rather than institutional prescription (Fanai, 2021).

While the primary aim of this methodological framework remains interpretive, it deliberately opens space for advancing a weak and emergent political foundation grounded in philosophical wisdom rather than doctrinal closure. In this sense, the study aligns with non-foundational approaches in contemporary political theory, while showing how a tradition such as *Ḥikmah Muta'āliyah*—understood through the interrelation of *ḥikmah*, *ḥikmah 'amalī*, and *siyāsah*—can nevertheless contribute to the renewal of political foundations as orienting horizons of judgment and practice. Importantly, the three methodological phases outlined above are not treated as strictly sequential or separable stages. Rather, they are analytically distinguished yet conceptually interwoven, such that conceptual retrieval, critical rearticulation, and contextual application operate in a mutually implicative manner within each section of the analysis.

3. Result and Discussion

The Meaning of *Ḥikmah*: Conceptual and Philosophical Clarifications

Before turning to the meaning of *ḥikmah*, it is first necessary to clarify the meaning of philosophy. With respect to the meaning of philosophy, a return to its original Greek usage allows us to identify a foundational understanding that brings together its various later interpretations. According to what is attributed to Plato, philosophy is fundamentally the act of “distinguishing knowledge from opinion.” This distinction between knowledge (*epistēmē*) and opinion (*doxa*) is intelligible insofar as knowledge consists of what is

certain, whereas opinion pertains to what lacks certainty. The production of certainty, however, does not proceed through mathematical demonstration nor through empirical experience in natural philosophy, but through dialectic. For the gradational nature of truth requires that reason not remain static; rather, it must undergo a dialectical movement through which it attains its proper perfection (Plato, 1997).

According to some scholars, the reason *ḥikmah* came to be regarded as equivalent to philosophy lies in the fact that Muslim philosophers incorporated their theological reflections into classical philosophical problems and maintained that, just as *ḥikmah* has a divine origin, philosophy too could possess a divine source. Nevertheless, one should not overlook the fact that the Islamic sciences—such as *kalām* and Sufism—also claimed *ḥikmah* as their own. Consequently, within the space of Islamic philosophy there were persistent efforts to either identify philosophy with *ḥikmah* or elevate it toward *ḥikmah*, ranging from Ibn Sīnā's *Al-Ḥikmah al-Mashriqiyyah* to *Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq* and *Al-Ḥikmah al-Muta'āliyah*. (Nasr, 1996).

At this point, it is crucial to note that although the concept of *ḥikmah* is sometimes used interchangeably with that of philosophy, a closer examination of the Islamic intellectual tradition and the explicit statements of the sages themselves reveals that this term was originally established precisely to distinguish it from philosophy. (Soroush, 1994). If we wish to articulate the precautionary or differentiating aspect of *ḥikmah* vis-à-vis philosophy, we may identify three principal elements of *ḥikmah*: its orientation toward tradition, its orientation toward practice, and its refusal to confine itself exclusively to demonstrative reasoning.

Muslim philosophers divide wisdom (*ḥikmah*) into theoretical (*nazarī*) and practical (*'amalī*) domains. The criterion underlying this division is the subject matter of each domain: the subject of theoretical wisdom is described as non-constructive (*ghayr irādī*) being, whereas the subject of practical wisdom is constructive being (*irādī*). It is commonly maintained that Aristotle was the first to classify philosophy or wisdom into theoretical and practical branches based on this criterion (Copleston, 1993). Among Muslim philosophers, Shaykh al-Ra'īs (Ibn Sina) explicitly articulates the division of philosophy according to the constructive and non-constructive character of beings (Ibn Sina, 1985). However, it appears that Ibn Sina formulated this definition under the influence of al-Farabi, who likewise distinguished the subjects of the sciences according to whether they pertain to constructive or non-constructive realities (Al-Farabi, 1996).

Nevertheless, Ibn Sina offers explicit formulations in which the criterion for this division is not traced to the nature of beings themselves, but rather to the distinction between the theoretical and practical faculties (Ibn Sina, 1985). Mulla Ṣadra accords priority to Ibn Sina's position as articulated in the natural sciences and does not directly attribute the theoretical–practical dichotomy to external reality; instead, he regards it because of the duality of human faculties (Mulla Sadra, 1989).

This shift appears to carry significant implications. For if the distinction between theoretical and practical philosophy is grounded in the differentiation of cognitive faculties, the divergence between the two forms of wisdom cannot be reduced merely to differences in the mode of existence of their respective subjects, but also entails a methodological divergence. In other words, practical reason possesses an epistemic identity independent of theoretical reason, one that necessitates its own distinctive mode of knowledge production.

***Ḥikmah Muta'āliyah* as a Method**

Mulla Ṣadra consistently sought to establish a harmonious relationship between *ḥikmah*, *'irfān* (gnostic insight), and the fundamental principles of Islam, aiming to reconcile these distinct yet interrelated modes of knowledge. His sustained effort to integrate revelation, spiritual intuition, and rational demonstration culminated in the emergence of a new philosophical framework and paradigm, which Jawadi Amoli identifies as constituting the core elements of *Ḥikmah Muta'āliyah* (Jawadi, 2007). Even so, some scholars maintain that the term *Ḥikmah Muta'āliyah* should not be regarded as exclusive to Mulla Ṣadra alone, but may be extended to encompass a broader circle of Shi'i Iranian sages who succeeded in achieving a synthesis between religion, experiential insight, and rational argumentation (Mohaqqeq, 2005).

The very term “Transcendent Wisdom” (*ḥikmah muta'āliyah*) had already been employed prior to Ṣadr al-Muta'allihin. For instance, in the ninth chapter of the tenth *namaʿ* of *Al-Ishārāt wa al-Tanbīhāt*, Avicenna speaks of the “firmly rooted” (*rāsikhūn*) in “Transcendent Wisdom,” describing them as those who have witnessed that the celestial bodies possess rational souls (Ibn Sina, 2002). Notably, in his commentary on this term, Nasir al-Din al-Ṭusi explicitly states that Peripatetic (*mashshā'ī*) wisdom is merely discursive, whereas Transcendent Wisdom is unveiling (*kashfī*) and intuitive (*dhawqī*), and is therefore superior to Peripatetic wisdom (Tusi, 2007). Similarly, Qaysari, in his treatises, characterizes—within the context of discussing the levels of the Prophet's existence—those who are “veiled” (*mahjūb*) as individuals who lack access to Transcendent Wisdom (Qaysari, 2002). It is perhaps in light of these earlier usages that Mulla Ṣadra titled his major work *Al-Ḥikmah al-Muta'āliyah fī al-Asfār al-Arba'ah* (Hasanzadeh, 2001).

The meaning of Transcendent Wisdom (*ḥikmah muta'āliyah*) can be understood through a conceptual analysis of this composite expression, for both “wisdom” (*ḥikmah*) and “transcendent” (*muta'āliyah*) may bear different meanings within it. If “wisdom,” in accordance with its methodological exigencies, has a nature distinct from “philosophy,” then the qualifier “transcendent” functions as an explicative (*tawdhīh*) attribute that emphasizes (*ta'kid*) the very meaning of wisdom. However, if “wisdom” is taken to be identical with “philosophy,” two possibilities arise: either “transcendent” serves as an explicative qualifier or as a restrictive (*iḥtirāz*) one. If it is explicative, then all forms of wisdom are transcendent, since transcendence (*ta'ālī*) or “perfection” (*takāmūl*) would be an essential attribute of wisdom as such. If, however, it is restrictive, then “Transcendent Wisdom” refers specifically to Mulla Ṣadra's distinct school with its particular method (Mohaqqeq-Damad, 2021).

Muṭahhari proposes two possible meanings of the term “Transcendent Wisdom” (*ḥikmah muta'āliyah*): first, in the sense of “supreme wisdom” (*ḥikmah 'ulyā*) in contrast to mathematics and natural sciences; and second, as referring to Mulla Ṣadra's specific school in first philosophy. Accordingly, setting aside the historical usages of the term, he holds that “Transcendent Wisdom” can be regarded as a distinct philosophical school that is different from Peripatetic (*mashshā'ī*), Illuminationist (*ishrāqī*), mystical (*'irfānī*), and theological (*kalāmī*) traditions, yet at the same time surpasses all these intellectual systems and functions as a crossroads where they converge (Muṭahhari, 2021).

However, the claim to the superiority of Transcendent Wisdom (*ḥikmah muta'āliyah*) is neither self-evident nor beyond dispute; rather, it requires justification and may even be internally problematic. For the notion of being a “crossroads” does not in itself establish any form of pre-eminence, and mere convergence at a point of intersection does not necessarily generate a new and coherent philosophical system. In other words, such convergence might just as well result in confusion, eclecticism, and a lack of internal coherence within that very wisdom. Hence, as one scholar of Ṣadra aptly puts it, the question remains: “What genuine superiority does Transcendent Wisdom truly possess over other forms of wisdom that have been available to students of philosophy—from the time of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle to the present—in both the East and the West?” (Hairi, 2019).

Various perspectives and approaches have been proposed regarding this issue, ranging from outright critics of the purported superiority of *Ḥikmah Muta'āliyah* to its proponents. In some studies, these positions have been classified into seven distinct theories, which, when the author's own view is included, amount to a total of eight (Qaramaliki, 2009). Nonetheless, the most prevalent objection directed against Mulla Ṣadra's philosophy is the charge of *eclecticism*. This accusation itself may be understood in two senses: (1) substantive eclecticism, and (2) methodological eclecticism. Although the former has been more frequently advanced than the latter, it is methodological eclecticism that warrants particular attention here, insofar as it opens a productive space for rethinking philosophical coherence and may serve as a viable foundation for inquiry in the human sciences.

With regard to Mulla Ṣadra's method, Misbah Yazdi characterizes *Ḥikmah Muta'āliyah* as a synthesis of Peripatetic philosophy and Illuminationist wisdom (Misbah Yazdi, 2014), yet without clarifying the methodological meaning of such a synthesis. Read alongside Henry Corbin's observation that Mulla Ṣadra aligns with Illuminationism in order to move beyond, rather than oppose, Peripatetic philosophy, this view ultimately suggests continuity with earlier traditions rather than the articulation of a distinct method (Corbin, 2002). While such interpretations do not reduce Ṣadra's thought to mere eclecticism, they also fail to explain how he reconciles divergent schools or distinguishes his project from them, leaving unresolved whether he affirms both traditions as equally fundamental, subordinates one to the other, or genuinely proposes a third methodological path.

These questions can be adequately addressed only through a careful examination of Mulla Ṣadra's method or research paradigm. The distinctiveness of his philosophy lies not merely in the novelty of its doctrines, but more fundamentally in the originality of its method of inquiry; consequently, the *distinctiveness* and *autonomy* of *Ḥikmah Muta'āliyah* can be established only by attending to how philosophical knowledge is produced and organized. In more precise Islamic philosophical terms, a proper understanding of the demonstrative reason (*limm ithbātī*) of Ṣadra's epistemic distinctiveness presupposes an inquiry into its ontological cause (*limm thubūtī*), that is, the conditions that made the emergence and determination of this philosophical project possible. Without resolving this methodological question, comparisons with earlier philosophers cannot adequately answer the charge of eclecticism, since the innovative character of Ṣadra's doctrines—such as the primacy of existence—ultimately derives from his logic, method, and research paradigm rather than from the doctrines themselves.

Mulla Ṣadra consistently sought to ground his doctrines on three methods: demonstration (*burhān*), gnosis (*'irfān*), and the Qur'an. Although in some of his works he insists on the demonstrative character of his

arguments (Mulla Sadra, 1989), in *Al-Mabda' wa al-Ma'ād* he articulates far more clearly what he means by “being demonstrative.” After explaining the necessity of attending to Qur’anic verses and prophetic traditions in matters of eschatology, and after judging the Peripatetic (*mashshā’ī*) and Illuminationist (*ishrāqī*) methods to be inadequate for such issues, he invites seekers of truth to follow his own method, namely the method of the “intermixture” (*mumāzajat*) of demonstration and unveiling (*kashf*) (Mulla Sadra, 1975).

Such statements indicate that Mulla Ṣadra’s method of knowledge production differs from conventional approaches, and that this method and mode of thinking provided the conditions for the development of original insights and a new philosophical system. These passages suggest that he considered the failure of philosophers and mystics to grasp and communicate certain truths to be rooted primarily in methodological shortcomings. Accordingly, it can be argued that Sadr al-Din al-Shirazi’s most significant contribution lies in the formulation of a “method” rather than in particular “findings,” and in the establishment of a “research paradigm” rather than in specific results. On this basis, the terms “Transcendent Wisdom (*Hikmat al-Muta’āliyyah*)” and “Neo-Ṣadrian” can be understood as referring primarily to the adoption of a distinct method rather than to a specific set of doctrines or a closed system (Qaramaliki, 2009). In this sense, even if one were to reject Mulla Ṣadra’s theoretical framework as a whole, a sustained commitment to his method would still place that individual within the broader continuity of this school of thought.

It should be further emphasized that the combination of demonstration (*burhān*), mysticism (*irfān*), and the Qur’an does not necessarily entail methodological eclecticism in a pejorative sense; for the integration of different methods can also be understood as a form of “methodological pluralism” or “interdisciplinary inquiry.” Considering the distinctions current in contemporary methodology of science, neither of these can be regarded as a case of incoherent or unprincipled eclecticism (Qaramaliki, 2009b).

Revisiting the Idea of Practical Wisdom (*Hikmah ‘Amalī*)

Based on the foregoing discussion, *ḥikmah ‘amalī* can be said to possess a kind of epistemological and methodological independence from *ḥikmah naẓarī*. For this reason, thinkers such as Al-Farabi went so far as to posit a distinct category for practical reason (*al-‘aql al-‘amalī*) alongside that of theoretical reason (*al-‘aql al-naẓarī*). In *al-Hurūf*, he states that some categories (*maqūlāt*) come into being through human will, while others emerge independently of it. Those categories that arise through human will constitute, in his view, the subject matter of “political science” (*‘ilm madanī*), whereas those that appear without human will belong to “natural science” (*‘ilm ṭabī‘ī*) (Farabi, 1970).

On this basis, a number of contemporary scholars have identified seven categories pertaining specifically to practical intellect: categories of direction (*jihah*), condition (*syarṭ*) and the conditioned (*masyrūṭ*), cause (*illah*) and effect (*ma‘lūl*), normative rulings (*ahkām*), subject (*mawdhū‘*)—predicate (*mahmūl*)—predication (*haml*)—judgment (*hukm*), intrinsic ordering (*taqwīm dzātī*), and covenant (*‘ahd*) and fidelity (*wafā’*) (Abidi Shahrudi, 2015).

The independence of practical reason creates a distinctive capacity that allows practical wisdom (*ḥikmah ‘amalī*) to acquire an identity distinct from theoretical wisdom (*ḥikmah naẓarī*), an identity that bridges the gap between the domains of theory and practice. According to some contemporary scholars, although epistemic discussions—distinct from normative ones—can be found in the works of classical philosophers, it was Ṭabaṭaba’i who for the first time succeeded in systematizing this legacy and, based on his theory of *i‘tibāriyyāt* (conventional postulates), brought it to bear on modern human sciences. He regarded the theory of *i‘tibāriyyāt* as an advanced formulation of practical wisdom and considered it a turning point in the emergence of a modern conception of practical wisdom (Hasani, 2019).

This indicates that human action is not only always accompanied by knowledge, but that assertive knowledge (*tasdīq*) occurs specifically within this domain. If one were to object that some human actions are shaped by non-cognitive factors—such as character traits or habits—Ṭabaṭaba’i maintains that this does not entail the absence of cognitive factors; rather, it only means that such factors operate at an unconscious level, for behind these actions there still lies a form of unconscious *i‘tibāriyyāt* (conventional postulates) (Ṭabaṭaba’i, 1985).

In this regard, he further argues that every human action is accompanied not only by conventional knowledge, but also by conventional knowledge concerning *ḥusn* (rightness) and *qubḥ* (wrongness). In other words, every act is accompanied by the attribution of *ḥusn*, and every omission by the attribution of *qubḥ*, even if, from the standpoint of rational ethics, that act or omission may in fact contradict what is truly right or wrong (Ṭabaṭaba’i, 2007).

With this clarification, the problem of the multiplicity and diversity of human action—one of the central issues in the philosophy of the human sciences—also becomes intelligible, for the mutability of conventional knowledge (*i‘tibāriyyāt*) allows human will to assume diverse determinations at both individual

and social levels of action (Tabataba'i, 2007). Indeed, conventional postulates may take on different forms in accordance with variations in geographical conditions, patterns of thought, and scientific development (Tabataba'i, 1985).

On the basis of the reciprocal relation between *i'tibāriyyāt* and human action, one might conclude that the simpler human action is, the simpler its corresponding conventional postulate will be, whereas the greater the diversity and complexity of action, the more complex the conventional postulates in practical reason become (Tabataba'i, 1985). Moreover, the contingent and changeable character of *i'tibāriyyāt* renders demonstrative proof (*burhān*) inapplicable in such matters (Tabataba'i, 2007, p. 329). Nevertheless, Tabataba'i maintains that the inapplicability of demonstration does not entail the non-permanence of conventional postulates. He explicitly states that although *i'tibāriyyāt* are non-real meanings, they can—under preserved conditions—possess enduring truth, much like words that, within certain conditions, continue to signify their meanings over time (Tabataba'i, 2007).

It seems that these foundations led Tabataba'i to define philosophy based on its origin. Accordingly, he undertook an original move by conceiving philosophy as the discernment between real, conventional, and imaginary beings (Tabataba'i, 1985). This definition appears to be more comprehensive and more practically operative than the definitions mentioned above, for it both preserves the boundaries of the sciences and clarifies the manner of their interrelation. More importantly, it may be the only definition capable of absorbing and actualizing the methodology of *ḥikmah muta'āliyah*.

Political Wisdom through *Ḥikmah Muta'āliyah*

Regarding the meaning of political philosophy, much like the meaning of philosophy itself, a wide range of views and extensive discussions can be advanced, which fall beyond the scope of the present inquiry (Larmore, 2012). Among the various approaches in this field, however, the approach of conceptual analysis appears to most clearly illuminate the nature of political philosophy.

Leo Strauss is one of the prominent thinkers who adopts this approach. He maintains that, in order to properly understand what political philosophy is, one must first analyse each component of this composite expression. Drawing on Plato, Strauss regards the most original meaning of philosophy as the transformation of “belief” (*doxa*) into “knowledge” (*epistēmē*). More precisely, philosophy becomes philosophy when it transforms beliefs about the “whole” into knowledge of the “whole.” Accordingly, political philosophy consists in an effort to replace belief about the nature of political affairs with knowledge of their nature (Strauss, 1989).

Following this perspective, some contemporary scholars define “Islamic political philosophy” as a mode and style of inquiry that seeks to transform belief in the teachings and principles of Islam and Muslim political tradition into knowledge and systematic understanding. On this view, Islamic political philosophy does not merely reiterate or defend inherited doctrinal positions, but critically examines their conceptual foundations, internal coherence, and rational justifications. (Alikhani, 2015).

Moreover, when one speaks of political philosophy, what is meant is a specific form of political thought. Political thought, in fact, is a general and encompassing term that includes any kind of reflection on politics; accordingly, one can speak of various forms of political thought, of which political philosophy is only one. In other words, one may also refer to other forms of political thought—such as political jurisprudence (*fiqh siyāsī*), political theology (*kalām siyāsī*), political ethics (*akhlāq siyāsī*), political mysticism (*irfān siyāsī*), and so forth—which are distinct from political philosophy. Consequently, every political philosophy is a form of political thought, but not every form of political thought is political philosophy (Sharif, 2016).

On the other hand, it should be noted that Political Philosophy carries a different semantic connotation from the Philosophy of Politics. *Political Philosophy* is an attributive compound and denotes a first-order discipline that independently possesses its own subject matter, problems, and aims. By contrast, the *Philosophy of Politics* is a genitive construction and refers to a second-order discipline—namely, an instance of “philosophy of X”—which seeks to clarify the philosophy of the relevant sciences or the philosophical foundations of their propositions. In short, the two are distinguished by their status as first-order and second-order inquiries (Rezvani, 2013).

Another important point concerns the distinction between political philosophy and political theory. According to some scholars, three principal positions can be identified regarding the relationship between political philosophy and political theory. First, positivist approaches fundamentally reject political philosophy on the grounds of its lack of scientific status and instead endorse political theory understood as political science. Second, John Plamenatz regards political philosophy and political theory as essentially identical and, in contrast to positivist views, considers it to be a living and evolving form of inquiry. Third, Leo Strauss clearly distinguishes political philosophy from political theory, maintaining that political philosophy possesses

a transhistorical dimension, whereas political theory is bound to specific historical and social conditions. A further point emphasized by Strauss is that political philosophy, despite its transhistorical character, may nevertheless experience decline in practical relevance due to the dominance of modern theoretical paradigms (Rezvani, 2013).

Nevertheless, it seems possible to establish a coherent relationship among political philosophy, political theory, and political science. In this framework, philosophical foundations give rise to political theory, while political theory, in turn, organizes a set of political problems in a systematic manner, thereby producing political science. Some scholars conceptualize the relationship among these three domains in organic terms. On this view, science is likened to a living organism, in which theory functions as the heart. The *fields* in which theory operates are comparable to the organism's organs, while applied methodology serves as the network of channels connecting the heart to these organs. The foundational principles and presuppositions are regarded as the soul or animating force of theory, and fundamental methodology is what sustains the connection between the soul and the heart (Parsaniya, 2016).

It has been noted earlier that *ḥikmah* carries a broader semantic range than “philosophy” and is deeply shaped by religious foundations. At the same time, it was also indicated that philosophy in general—and political philosophy in particular—may itself acquire the qualifier “religious.” Some scholars argue that if Islamic political philosophy is understood as the interpretation of politics, political affairs, and political behavior within Muslim societies, or as reflected in Islamic texts and intellectual traditions, then even if one were to deny the possibility of “Islamic philosophy” as such, the possibility of Islamic political philosophy could no longer be dismissed (Alikhani, 2015).

On this understanding, the fundamental distinction between Islamic political philosophy and Islamic political wisdom would appear to dissolve, since both are ultimately concerned with rational reflection on political life as articulated within an Islamic intellectual horizon. Even so, a number of scholars have still pointed to meaningful differences between Islamic political philosophy and Islamic political wisdom, particularly with regard to their respective epistemological orientations, sources of normativity, and modes of engagement with religious tradition. These distinctions suggest that, while the two may overlap substantially in scope and concern, they cannot be treated as entirely interchangeable without a loss of conceptual precision (Alikhani, 2015).

Toward Transcendent Political Wisdom

In light of the foregoing meanings, it is first necessary to recall that although, in the opening section of the introduction, the re-examination of a philosopher's thought was identified as a philosophical task, it must now be emphasized that mere reinterpretation—when confined to the political ideas of a single thinker—does not suffice to fulfil the proper meaning of political philosophy. Political philosophy becomes such only when the philosopher does not limit political questions to a past historical moment or a bygone society, but instead engages in independent and contemporaneous reflection upon political problems as such (Quinton, 1967).

Yet even the independent and contemporaneous reflection of a philosopher, by itself, does not suffice. For once political philosophy is defined primarily as such reflection, a further question inevitably arises: can political philosophy remain meaningful when articulated within the framework of a particular school of thought? If political philosophy is to be reconciled with a school-based orientation, it would seem that the criterion of a school should not be sought in specific doctrines or determinate theoretical positions, but rather in distinctive intellectual dispositions or methodological orientations.

It is precisely at this point that transcendent political philosophy (*ḥikmah siyāsī muta'ālī*) becomes genuinely transcendent only insofar as it follows a particular intellectual path or *mashrab*, rather than by the mere acceptance of Mullā Ṣadrā's substantive views. In other words, transcendent political philosophy ought to be identified primarily through its method and mode of inquiry, and not reduced to its conformity with a given set of theories or predetermined ends.

Nonetheless, a survey of the existing literature on transcendent political wisdom (*ḥikmah siyāsī muta'ālī*) reveals a prevailing tendency to emphasize its transcendent end (*ghāyah muta'ālīyah*), while references to method—when they appear at all—are typically confined to characterizing it as demonstrative (*burhānī*) (Alireza, 2010). Such an understanding, however, appears insufficient. For *ḥikmah siyāsī muta'ālī* is not primarily a project of foundational construction, but rather one of methodological coherence.

The coherence-oriented character of this tradition lies in its capacity to confer unity upon diverse intellectual achievements, rather than reducing them—under the pretext of foundationalism—to a single method or a single conception of reality. To construe *ḥikmah siyāsī muta'ālī* merely as demonstrative wisdom

risks transforming it into a one-dimensional system, one that approaches political phenomena in the manner of mathematical objects, apprehended exclusively through the lens of formal demonstration.

In light of this issue, the following definition may be more compatible with the notion of transcendent political wisdom: transcendent political philosophy consists in the rational ordering of political life through fundamental concepts, in accordance with the limits of human capacity, such that political life, once so ordered, becomes a manifestation of the divine order (Abolhasan, 2011). It should be noted, however, that the expression “rational ordering” in this definition does not imply that political wisdom—being concerned with normative and conventional matters—can be rendered demonstrative in the strict sense. Rather, it signifies that political wisdom is intelligible to reason. Put more simply, rational ordering here means possessing a coherent and intelligible structure. Accordingly, even if transcendent political wisdom is not constituted through demonstrative method, the normative ordering of its concepts may nevertheless attain a degree of rational validity (Pezeshgi, 2021).

From this perspective, transcendent political wisdom can be fully realized only within the paradigm of *Hikmah Muta‘aliyah*. This paradigm provides the most adequate methodological framework because it is capable of integrating demonstration (*burhān*), intellectual intuition (*‘irfān*), and scriptural guidance (Qur’ān) within a coherent epistemic architecture. By accommodating methodological pluralism and fostering genuinely interdisciplinary engagement between philosophy, theology, ethics, and the human sciences, *Hikmah Muta‘aliyah* allows political wisdom to remain normatively grounded, rationally intelligible, and spiritually oriented. Consequently, transcendent political wisdom should be understood not merely as a set of substantive doctrines, but as a methodological orientation whose realization depends on the comprehensive and integrative approach characteristic of *Hikmah Muta‘aliyah*.

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