



In the Name of Allah, the All-Beneficent, the All-Merciful







THE THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE





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An Islamic Perspective

Murtaḍā Muṭahharī

Translated by
Mansoor Limba

Amin Research and Cultural Centre

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Title: The Theory of Knowledge
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Translator: Mansoor Limba, PhD

Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

Murtada Mutahhari 1920-

The theory of knowledge : an Islamic perspective / Murtada Mutahhari;
translated by Mansoor Limba. [translated from : Mas'aleh-ye Shinakht]
ISBN 978-967-10379-5-9

I. Knowledge, Theory of. I. Mansoor Limba.
II. Title. III. Title: Mas'aleh-ye Shinakht..
181.0882971

First published 2011
Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies (IHCS)
Tehran

Second edition 2012 by
Amin Research and Cultural Centre (ARCC)
No. 314, Jalan 4, Taman Ampang Utama
68000 Selangor Darul Ehsan
Tel: 00603 4257 3080

Printed by
Atlas Cetak(M) Sdn Bhd
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

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Contents

<i>Translator's Foreword</i>	xiii
<i>About the Author</i>	xvii
<i>Preface</i>	xxi
1 The Possibility of Knowledge	1
The relationship between ideology and worldview	2
The root of differences among worldviews	4
The importance and power of the issue of knowledge	4
The possibility of knowing	5
Pyrrho and the possibility of knowledge	6
The skepticism of Ghazālī	6
Descartes and the theory of knowledge	8
Reply to the skepticism of Pyrrho	9
The most destructive distortion in history	12
The Qur'an and the story of Ādam (A)	15
The Qur'an's invitation to [seek] knowledge	17
2 The Tools for Knowledge	27
The senses as an essential tool for knowledge	28
The role of the rational faculty in knowing	30
The Qur'anic viewpoint on the tools for knowledge	32
The word <i>shukr</i> in the Qur'an	34
The heart as a tool (refinement of the self)	38
The parable of Mawlānā Rūmī	39
3 The Sources of Knowledge	53
Nature as a source of knowledge	54
The heart and intellect as two other sources of knowledge	56
The Qur'anic viewpoint on the heart as a source of knowledge	58

	A manifestation of the oneness of inward and outward struggle	61
	The Qur'an and the inseparability of introvertism and extrovertism	63
	Imām 'Alī's (A) description of a mystic (<i>'ārif</i>)	66
	History as another source of knowledge	69
	The philosophy of history in the Qur'an	71
4	The Stages and Degrees of Knowledge	77
	Theories upholding that knowledge has a single stage	77
	The mechanism of mystical knowledge	79
	The theories of Kant and Hegel	82
	The theory of Spencer	83
	The theory of dialectical materialists	85
	Stages of knowledge according to Islamic philosophy	88
	Sensory knowledge and its salient features	89
	Rational knowledge and its extent	91
5	The Mechanism for Generalization of Sensory Knowledge	101
	Sensory knowledge turning into logical knowledge	102
	Marxism and its relapse into idealism	103
	Russell's view	107
	The views of Abū 'Alī Sīnā (Avicenna) and Khwājah Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī	108
	Felicien Challaye's view	110
6	Symbolic Knowledge	115
	The mind's similarity to a mirror	116
	Prejudice as an obstacle to knowledge	117
	The differences between the mind and a mirror	121
	1. <i>Reflection of meaning</i>	121
	2. <i>Detection of error</i>	122
	3. <i>Self-consciousness</i>	123

	4. <i>Universality</i>	124
	5. <i>Profundity</i>	124
	Symbolic knowledge	124
7	The Discovery of the Unconscious Mind as an Example of Symbolic Knowledge	133
	Two salient features of the unconscious mind	134
	Hidden secrets of the human mind in the Qur'an and <i>Du 'ā' Kumayl</i>	136
	Freud's theory	138
	Jung's theory	140
	The issue of inculcation (<i>talqīn</i>)	141
	The unconscious mind and the proof of the soul's existence	142
	The discovery of the unconscious mind and symbolic knowledge	143
	A comparison between the knowledge of Prophet Ibrāhīm (Abraham) (A) and that of psychoanalysts	145
8	True Knowledge	151
	The definition of "truth" according to classical scholars and the objections to it	152
	Other definitions of "truth"	155
	The relationship between the "truth" and the "useful" in "particular" and "general" cases	157
	The Qur'anic viewpoint regarding the correlativity of the "truth" and "usefulness" in general cases	158
	Third definition of "truth"	159
	Fourth view	162
	An accusation against the Muslim scholars (<i>'ulamā'</i>)	164
	Is action the key to an idea or its criterion?	165
9	An Examination of the Definitions of "Truth" and the "Logic of Action"	171
	The similarity between consensus (<i>ijmā'</i>) according to the Ahl al-Sunnah and Auguste Comte's view	173
	Rejection of Auguste Comte's view	174

Rejection of the relativity of truth	176
The origin of this error	177
The difference between the basis of knowledge and the criterion for knowledge	178
Knowledge of the “criterion itself”	179
Aristotelian logic on experience	181
The criterion for knowledge according to modern logic	183
The impact of the “logic of action” upon religious beliefs	184
Objections to the “logic of action”	186
Third objection	187
What Russell says about the “logic of action”	189
Two other examples	190
10 Objections to the “Logic of Action”	195
Summary of the objections to the “logic of action”	195
Second objection	197
Third objection	198
“Practical success” according to <i>Nahj al-Balāghah</i>	198
Is Christianity’s “advancement” a proof of its truthfulness?	201
The issue of pragmatism and utilitarianism	204
Is action the only key to knowledge?	207
“Natural man” (<i>insān-e fiṭrī</i>) and “acquisitive man” (<i>insān-e muktasib</i>)	209
<i>Index</i>	215

Transliteration Symbols

Symbol	Transliteration	Symbol	Transliteration
ء	'	أ	a
ب	b	ت	t
ث	th	ج	j
ح	ḥ	خ	kh
د	d	ذ	dh
ر	r	ز	z
س	s	ش	sh
ص	ṣ	ض	ḍ
ط	ṭ	ظ	ẓ
ع	'	غ	gh
ف	f	ق	q
ك	k	ل	l
م	m	ن	n
هـ	h	و	w
ي	y	ة	ah
Long Vowels		Short Vowels	
آ	ā	اَ	a
ای	ī	اِ	i
او	ū	اُ	u
Persian Letters			
Symbol	Transliteration	Symbol	Transliteration
پ	p	چ	ch
ژ	zh	گ	g

At the end of Farsi words, 'eh', '-e', and '-ye' have been used.





Translator's Foreword



In the Name of Allah, the All-beneficent, the All-merciful

The present volume is an English rendition of the 252-page Persian book *Mas'aleh-ye Shinakht* by the great Muslim thinker and reformer, Āyatullāh al-Shahīd Murtaḍā Muṭahharī, 19th printing (Tehran: Ṣadrā Publications, Bahman 1385 AHS (circa February 2006)).

From the Arabic *mas'alah* (مسئله), the Fārsī word *mas'aleh* (مسئله) means “problem,” “question,” “affair,” or “issue” while *shinakht* (شناخت) means “knowledge,” “recognition,” acquaintance,” or “cognizance”. So, I initially translated the title as *The Issue of Cognizance*. However, after a brief yet fruitful exchange of ideas on the ontology-epistemology matrix with Dr. Seyed Mohsen Miri of the Philosophy and Mysticism Department of the Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies (IHCS) on August 5, 2009 and a rereading of Shams Inati's English translation of 'Allāmah Muḥammad Bāqir al-Ṣadr's *Falsafātunā (Our Philosophy)* (London: The Muhammadi Trust, 1987), I finally translated it as *The Theory of Knowledge*. Here, by “knowledge” we do not mean “the information, understanding and skills that are gained through education or experience”, but “the state of knowing about a particular fact



or situation”. This translation of the title is also corroborated by no less than the author in his introductory words, thus:

The topic of our discussion is the issue of knowledge according to the Qur’an. The issue of knowledge or the theory of knowledge, and according to the present-day Arabic-speaking scholars, *Nazariyyat al-Ma’rifah*, has nowadays gained immense importance...

Unless otherwise stated, the translation of Qur’anic passages is adapted from Sayyid ‘Alī Qulī Qarā’ī’s *The Qur’an with a Phrase-by-Phrase English Translation* (London: Islamic College for Advanced Studies, 2004). The translation of quotations from *Nahj al-Balāghah* is based on that of Syed ‘Ali Raza (Qum: Foundation of Islamic Cultural Propagation in the World, 1995). For the poetic quotations from Sa’dī’s *Gulistān*, *Būstān*, Rūmī’s *Mathnawī-ye Ma’nawī*, and the *Diwān* of Ḥāfīz, the translations of Edward Rehatsek [*Gulistan or Rose Garden of Sa’di* (Tehran: Peyk-e Farhang, 1998)], Henry Wilberforce Clarke [*The Bustan of Sa’di* (Tehran: Peyk-e Farhang, 2004)] and Reynold A. Nicholson, *The Mathnawī of Jalālu’d-dīn Rūmī* (Tehran: Soad Publisher, 2002), and Henry Wilberforce Clarke [*The Divan of Hafiz* (Tehran: Aban Book, 2005)], respectively, are hereby adapted.

In a number of places, words or expressions marked by brackets were added to the text either to fill a gap or to render the meaning clearer.

Footnotes with the sign “[Trans.]” are not those of the author, and thus, not in the original Persian text, but provided by the translator to facilitate better understanding for the English readers. Footnotes in brackets are those of Āyatullāh Murtaḍā Muṭahharī’s Works Supervisory Council or the publisher.



About the Author

It needs mentioning that this project could not have been realized had it not been for the full support and trust given by Professor Hamidreza Ayatollahy, Director of the IHCS, and Mr. Naser Zafaranchi of the publication and marketing division of IHCS for giving me an ample time to render the last stroke of my pen.

I am also indebted to Salahaddin Limba for proofreading the initial manuscript and to the editor, Amina Inloes, who went through the manuscript most meticulously. Yet, any error that may be detected in the text is mine.

Mansoor L. Limba

December 31, 2009

Muharram 14, 1431 AH



About the Author

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Professor Āyatullāh Murtaḍā Muṭahharī (1920-1979) was born to a family of clergymen on Bahman 13, 1298 AHS (February 3, 1920) in the village of Farīmān near Mashhad. At the age of 12, he went to Mashhad where he learned the basics of Islamic sciences and then moved to Qum where he attended the sessions of the great authorities of the theological center.

From 1319 AHS (1940) Muṭahharī attended the sessions held by Imām Khomeinī and other famous teachers of the time. Moreover, he himself gave lectures in subjects like Arabic literature, logic, *kalām* (theology), jurisprudence (*fiqh*), and philosophy.

In 1331 AHS (1952) Muṭahharī moved to Tehran and in 1334 AHS (1955) he was invited to teach Islamic sciences at the Faculty of Islamic Sciences, Tehran University. He was arrested at midnight on Khordād 15, 1342 AHS (1963) and

remained in prison for 43 days. After Imām Khomeinī's migration to Paris in France, Muṭahharī went to meet him, and the Imām assigned him the responsibility of organizing the Revolutionary Council.

On the night of Ordībehesht 11, 1358 AHS (May 1, 1979) Muṭahharī was martyred by one of the agents of the terrorist Furqān group. He wrote more than 50 books and tens of articles, and delivered scores of speeches.

A cursory examination of the 22-volume *Ṣahīfeh-ye Imām¹*—the largest ever compiled anthology of Imām Khomeinī's speeches, messages, interviews, religious decrees, permissions, and letters—reveals that the martyred Professor Muṭahharī undoubtedly occupied a distinct station in the sight of the Great Leader of the Islamic Revolution and the Idol-Breaker of the 20th Century.

Imām Khomeinī's communications with Āyatullāh Muṭahharī in the form of religious permissions (*ijāzāt*) and personal letters as well as descriptions of him in the Imām's letters, speeches, messages, statements, interviews, autobiography, and memorial note during and after Muṭahharī's lifetime as indicated in the encyclopedic authentic reference source suggest that the former considered the latter a trustworthy representative, compassionate teacher, erudite scholar, competent jurist, eloquent speaker, combatant *'ālim*, and an epitome of martyrdom in the way of truth and freedom of thought.

These benevolent views regarding him are consistent in an encyclopedic reference source of Imām Khomeinī's works—from the first volume of the anthology in which Professor Muṭahharī is indicated having been granted authority (*ijāzah*) on Dhu'l-Ḥijjah 24, 1388 AHS (March 13, 1969) by the Imām in the financial and religious law affairs, up to the 21st volume (volume 22 being the indexes of the whole voluminous treatise) wherein he—in the Imām's message dated Shahrīvar 14, 1367 AHS (September 5, 1988)



About the Author

addressed the Muslim nation of Pakistan and the *'ulamā'* of Islam on the occasion of the martyrdom of Sayyid 'Ārif Ḥusayn Ḥusaynī—is mentioned as having been among “the freedom-loving *'ulamā'* of the Islamic world subjected to conspiracy and terrorism”.

To the Imām, Shahīd Muṭahharī was more than a student, representative, associate, confidant, friend, or son. Indeed, it can be said that to him, Muṭahharī could not be confined to a single dimension as he embodied a totality of aspects. Muṭahharī is Muṭahharī.



Note

¹ *Ṣahīfeh-ye Imām: An Anthology of Imām Khomeinī's Speeches, Messages, Interviews, Religious Decrees, Permissions, and Letters*, volumes 1-22 (Tehran: The Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imām Khomeinī's Works, 2007). [Trans.]

