

# Islamic Philosophy in Contemporary Iran<sup>1</sup>

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**ABSTRACT:** Aiming at introducing the immense wealth of Islamic philosophy in contemporary Iran as well as its contribution to the worldly philosophical discourse, the essays mainly overviews the undertakings of the highly recognized Iranian philosophers of the age. The landmark of the discussion takes a period before and after the Islamic Revolution of Iran, which merges into the influential thoughts of those philosophers in the light of their writings. Moreover, it is notably described within the lines, the diverse shapes of Islamic philosophical thoughts regarding the plurality of its sources and dynamics which is not only limited to traditional schools but also modern ones as responses to current challenges and conversations with Western philosophical traditions.

**KEYWORDS:** contemporary Iran, philosophy, Irfan, modern, Western, Islamic

## ***Introduction***

The present research deals with the status of Islamic philosophy in contemporary Iran, providing a brief glimpse of the works and ideas of the most influential philosophers of the age. Clearly, it is not possible to draw a line of separation between different periods. Nevertheless, all figures which are discussed here are thinkers whose personality and thoughts have taken shape, and whose activities have partly taken place, before the Islamic Revolution of Iran; however, they were all alive

after its subsequent success. Some passed away after the revolution while others are still here for us to benefit from. Hence, we will not deal with philosophers who have passed away before the Islamic Revolution or the young generation of scholars who have flourished after it.

The philosophers that we will discuss are Imam Khomeini, Allamah Tabataba'i, Martyr Murtada Mutahhari, Mahdi Ha'iri Yazdi, Martyr Sayyid Muhammad Baqir Sadr,<sup>2</sup> Muhammad Taqi Ja'fari, Seyyed Jalal al-Din Ashtiyani, Hasanzadeh Amuli, Jawadi Amuli, and Misbah Yazdi. The figures mentioned here are all religious scholars who studied at the hawzas of Qom and Najaf. Currently, the first seven of the above-mentioned scholars have passed away while the latter three are still teaching at the hawza of Qom. In addition to these figures, the present essay will also deal with two other influential philosophers with different backgrounds and intellectual tendencies: Seyyed Ahmad Fardid and Seyyed Hossein Nasr, with the former having passed away.

Although I have tried not to neglect the more influential, prominent figures, since philosophers in the said era are large in number on the one hand and selection is necessary on the other, I have not been able to discuss them all. In some cases, only names have been mentioned and some figures may have been neglected, for which I apologize beforehand and hope, God willing, to compensate for this shortcoming in a more detailed future work. The present discussion demonstrates the fact that philosophical thought persists within the Islamic world and the age of Islamic philosophy has not come to an end; on the contrary, this tradition advances with greater exuberance towards unfolding new horizons in the realm of Islamic philosophy.

### ***Imam Khomeini***

Imam Seyyed Ruhollah Musawi Khomeini (1902-1989) was a jurist, mystic, and prominent philosopher in the contemporary age. Due to his great position as a political and religious leader and his juristic authority, the philosophical aspects of Imam Khomeini have not been properly recognized, whereas from a historical viewpoint, he had been a prominent master of Islamic philosophy before those positions. In fact, Imam Khomeini's mystical position has met more recognition

than his philosophical aspect, for he has left many written works on mysticism, while not many written works by him are available in the realm of philosophy – this being one of the causes of his philosophical aspect not being recognized.

Imam Khomeini was eminent in four major fields of the hawza in his time: *fiqh*, *usul*, mysticism, and philosophy. He spent years teaching high level *fiqh* and *usul* in Qom and Najaf and trained many *mujtahids*. There are many written works of Imam and transcripts of his lessons on *fiqh* and *usul*. Ayatollah Ja'far Subhani has transcribed and published a course of Imam's *usul* lessons under the title of *Tahdhib al-usul* which serves as a reference for researchers in this field. Imam's prominent master in *fiqh* and *usul* was Ayatollah Shaykh 'Abd al-Karim Ha'iri Yazdi (1855-1934).

Imam Khomeini learned mysticism from Ayatollah Mirza Javad Maleki Tabrizi (d. 1925) and Ayatollah Muhammad Ali Shahabadi (1871-1948). Between the years 1928 and 1935, he studied *Sharh fusus al-hikam*, *Misbah al-uns*, *al-Futubat al-makkiyya*, and *Manazil al-sairin* with Shahabadi. Imam has many written works on mysticism, among which *Annotations on Sharh Fusus al-Hikam Qaisari and Misbah al-Uns*, *Asrar al-Salat*, *Sharh Du'ay-i Sahar*, and *Misbah al-hidaya* can be mentioned. Imam's mastery of theoretical and practical mysticism can be observed in his writings. His mystical writings are equivalent to those of first-rate mystics.

For some time, Imam studied philosophy, mathematics, and astronomy with Ayatollah Mirza Ali Akbar Hekami Yazdi (d. 1926). His principal master in philosophy, however, was Ayatollah Seyyed Abu al-Hasan Rafi'i Qazvini (1889-1974). He studied Mulla Hadi Sabzawari's *Sharh manzuma* for four years under this sage's tutorship. He also took part in Rafi'i's *Asfar* lessons for a short period of time, but due to his firm and strong mind and his erudition in philosophy, he realized that it was not necessary to continue the course; hence, he deemed it sufficient to study and discuss *Asfar* with Ayatollah Mirza Khalil Kamarei and then became a skillful master of the subject himself.

Imam taught many courses on *Sharh Manzuma* and for ten years taught the main parts of *Asfar* for at least one course. Transcriptions of his lessons of Sabzawari's *Sharh Manzuma* and parts of Mulla Sadra's *Asfar* have been published

by Ayatollah Seyyed ‘Abd al-Ghani Ardebili (1920-1990), one of his students. Those lessons were held in Qom between the years 1944 and 1949.<sup>3</sup>

Imam wrote annotations on *Asfar* which unfortunately have been lost. Apart from Imam Khomeini’s philosophical works, his philosophical ideas can also be found in other fields such as philosophy, mysticism, theology, ethics, politics, and Qur’anic exegesis. He also presented many philosophical and intellectual discussions in *usul* which can be studied in the works he has left.

Some of Imam’s students were: Seyyed Jalal al-Din Ashtiyani, Martyr Murtada Mutahhari, Seyyed ‘Abd al-Ghani Ardebili, Mahdi Ha’iri Yazdi, Martyr Seyyed Mustafa Khomeini, Seyyed Reza Sadr, Martyr Seyyed Muhammad Ali Qazi Tabataba’i, Hossein Ali Muntazeri, and Seyyed Izz al-Din Zanjani.<sup>4</sup>

From about 1926, Imam began teaching philosophy and mysticism and worked in these fields for at least three decades. Many of these lessons were held in private and sometimes in secret. The outlook dominating hawzas of that time was against philosophy and mysticism to the extent that some accused philosophers and mystics of heresy. In such an atmosphere, Imam nurtured philosophical thought in Qom by teaching philosophy and training prominent students in this field. Through his position in *fiqh* and his religious authority (and later leadership), he managed to withstand this anti-philosophical outlook and paved the way for creating a proper social atmosphere concerning philosophy. Were it not for Imam’s peerless role in this field, the influence of Allama Tabataba’i and his students could not have gone beyond a limited horizon.

The role of Imam Khomeini in the growth and development of Islamic philosophy is a unique one. After the triumph of the Islamic Revolution under Imam Khomeini’s leadership, his positive attitude towards philosophy and his support and approval of philosophical thought, including his support of the ideas and works of Martyr Mutahhari, began a golden age regarding the public inclination towards Islamic philosophy in Iran, especially at hawzas and universities, which is unprecedented in the history of this country. One can witness the effects of this wave beyond Iran’s borders in drawing the attention of many Muslim as well as non-Muslim students and researchers to Islamic philosophy.

The comprehensiveness of Imam Khomeini's knowledge is hardly rivaled. Few people may be found who would stand at the highest rank in philosophy, mysticism, *fiqh* and *usul*, all at once. Ashtiyani asserts: '*Misbah al-Hidaya* and *Sharh Du'ay-i Sabar*, Imam's mystical works, are peerless in their respective fields ... These two works are everlasting with regard to the inclusion of secrets and the exact details of mysticism. Imam produced them in his early youth. *Misbah al-Hidaya* can be likened to the works of the seventh and eighth hijri centuries, the era of ripeness of mysticism and Sufism'.<sup>5</sup> 'Imam Khomeini has taught all of the three fields of knowledge<sup>6</sup> free from shortcomings in any of those sciences'.<sup>7</sup> From Ashtiyani's viewpoint, such a person is unique; hence, he refers to Imam using such titles as 'the unique man of the age in intellectual and narrative sciences as well as knowledge of taste, and the seal of philosophers and mystics'.<sup>8</sup> Imam Khomeini was also a poet and the collections of his mystical poetry have been published.

According to Mahdi Ha'iri Yazdi, Imam did not hold considerable interest in Peripatetic thought, but was greatly interested in the Illuminationist philosophy of Suhrawardi. He also interpreted Transcendent Wisdom with mystical tendencies. Imam paid attention to natural sciences and modern astronomy, rejecting older astronomies.<sup>9</sup> Despite the fact that Imam did not accept Peripatetic tendencies, he praised Avicenna. Regarding this matter, Ashtiyani writes, 'The prominent and unique master of our time in intellectual and narrative sciences as well as knowledge of taste, the mystic Imam, Ayatollah al-Uzma Khomeini asserts: 'Various faults can be found in Avicenna with regard to theological philosophy; nevertheless, he is peerless amongst masters of opinion and research.'<sup>10</sup>

Regarding the originality of Mulla Sadra's philosophy and its differences with Greek philosophy from Imam's viewpoint, Ashtiyani asserts, 'The seal of philosophers and mystics, Imam Khomeini, asserts that equating Mulla Sadra's Transcendent Wisdom and the thoughts of his students and followers with Greek philosophy would be utter ignorance. He has also stated several times that the philosophy of Greece should be regarded as significant *per se*'.<sup>11</sup> It is because of this matter that Imam spent many years teaching Mulla Sadra's Transcendent Wisdom, explaining his thoughts and opinions. As is mentioned in the book *Taqrirat Falsafeh*,

he commented upon the problems of this philosophy from ontology to the self and to the Resurrection.

Another aspect of Imam's thought is his politics. From his viewpoint, politics and governing society are inseparable parts of Islamic teachings. According to him, religion without politics and politics without religion are both unacceptable. Imam's theories of Islamic government and *Wilayah al-Faqih* have been considered and discussed by scholarly and political circles within Iran and the rest of the world for about half a century. It was on the basis of the ideas in question that Imam fought and overthrew the royal reign of the Pahlavi dynasty. The Islamic Republic of Iran was designed and formed on the basis of Imam Khomeini's political thought and the Iranian Constitution was codified based on his theories. With regard to political thought, Imam mostly praises Ayatollah Martyr Seyyed Hasan Modarres (d. 1937). Although many discussions have been presented regarding Imam Khomeini's political ideas, no comprehensive analysis of his political philosophy has yet been presented.

In Imam's thought, jurisprudence, philosophy, mysticism, and politics are not separate units and fields to which he paid attention solely on the basis of taste; rather, they are all connected parts and essential elements of a single, intellectual, complex world-view and philosophy of individual and collective life on the basis of Islamic teachings for which Imam Khomeini dedicated his entire life in order to bring about its actualization.

### ***Allama Tabataba'i***

Seyyed Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i was born in 1892 in Tabriz. He lost his parents in childhood and attended traditional school at the age of nine. For the next eight years, he studied various Islamic sciences including Arabic literature, theology, *fiqh* and *usul* from beginning to advanced levels, after which he moved to Najaf and undertook higher courses in various Islamic sciences which were taught by the most prominent masters of the time. He studied *fiqh* and *usul* up to the level of *ijtihad* with such masters as Ayatollah Na'ini, Ayatollah Seyyed Abu al-Hasan Isfahani, and Ayatollah Mohammad Hossein Isfahani, and learned mathematics from Seyyed Abu al-Qasim Khawansari. In philosophy, he benefited from Seyyed Hossein Badkubei

(1904-69), who was a student of Mirza Hashīm Eshkevari, Abu al-Hasan Jelveh, and Mulla Ali Modarres Zonuzi. In mysticism and spiritual progress, he benefitted from such a master as Mirza Ali Qazi.

In 1925, Tabataba'i returned to his birthplace with a treasury of knowledge and wisdom, staying there for about ten years when, while, farming to earn his living, he spent time thinking, contemplating, and creating a number of works. In 1936, following the unrest and insecurity in Azerbaijan caused by the Second World War, he moved to the hawza in Qom to begin a new and fruitful, though difficult, period of his life by teaching, researching, and writing, which continued until his death. Having left a priceless legacy, Allama Tabataba'i passed away in 1981 in Qom. The most significant aspects of his legacy are his writings, services, reforms, thoughts, and students.

The written works of Allama are diverse and manifold, encompassing various fields of Islamic knowledge and sciences such as philosophy, theology, exegesis, mysticism, *fiqh*, and *hadith*. His most significant, influential works, however, are those concerned with Qur'anic exegesis and Islamic philosophy. Without a doubt, the most important work of Allama Tabataba'i, and according to some, the most significant Shi'a work in the 14<sup>th</sup> century AH, is the twenty-volume book entitled *al-Mizan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an* and which contains a treasury of various intellectual, narrative, and spiritual Islamic sciences. Many of the philosophical and theological thoughts of Allama can be found therein. *Al-Mizan* is innovative in its methodology and contains several innovations concerning the presentation of opinions as well. The most significant philosophical works of Allama are his annotations on Mulla Sadra's *Asfar*, his *Usul falsafeh va ravesb realism*, *Bidayat al-hikmah*, and *Nihayat al-hikmah*. In addition to the aforementioned titles, he has many written works concerning various issues of philosophy, logic, mysticism, and theology some of which are in Persian and some of which are in Arabic.

Allama Tabataba'i's arrival in the hawza of Qom may be considered as a watershed in this Shi'a hawza, which breathed new life and vivacity into it. Through training prominent students and writing innovative works, Allama established a new outlook in the hawza whose influence gradually became widespread. Being endowed with both outstanding practical and scholarly characteristics, he became a very

influential figure whose impact would go beyond the time and place he lived in. Part of his influence is lasting and not limited to his special students. Indeed, it has become more or less a strong, established tradition. Concerning this matter, one of Allama's students writes, 'It would take years, even centuries, to fully recognize the aspects of his existence and to research and study the enormous impacts he has left upon our society'.<sup>12</sup>

Allama Tabataba'i is one of the pioneers of comparative philosophy. He is among the first Islamic philosophers who encountered Modern Western philosophies, critiquing and surveying them. During the early half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century S.A.H, particularly around the 30s, Marxist philosophy was being propagated in Iran, especially by the Tudeh (Masses) party, capturing the attention of many intellectuals. The publications of that party, particularly the works of Taqi Arani, may be mentioned in this regard. Furthermore, the thoughts of Classical Western philosophers such as Descartes and Kant were also drawing attention in academic circles and amongst those educated in the West. Being familiar with such philosophies through Persian and Arabic works and translations, Allama Tabataba'i reacted by inaugurating the lessons whose results appeared in the book *Usul falsafeh va ravesh realism (Principles of Philosophy and Method of Realism)*. In that book, he presented a very strong critique of Marxist philosophy as well as a new depiction of Islamic philosophy. This book was innovative and unprecedented with regard to philosophical literature, the inclusion of new ideas, the method of presenting debates, and dividing philosophical discussions. This was the first time an Islamic philosopher spoke of epistemology in a novel, innovative way and presented metaphysical discussions on existence, motion, time, and philosophical theology in a new framework while taking into consideration contemporary philosophical questions as well.

### **Martyr Murtada Mutahhari**

Murtada Mutahhari was born on February 2<sup>nd</sup> 1919 in Fariman which is located in the Khorasan province. At the age of 12, he went to the hawza of Mashhad for studying Islamic sciences and moved to Qom in 1937 to continue his education. He studied *fiqh* and *usul* to the highest level of *ijtihad* with the most prominent masters of his time such as Hojjat Kuh Kamari, Seyyed Sadroddin Sadr, Seyyed Ahmad

Khawansari, Seyyed Mohammad Damad, and Seyyed Hossein Borujerdi. Mutahhari attended Imam Khomeini's lessons of *Sharh al-manzuma* and *Asfar* in about 1944 and benefitted from his lessons on ethics, philosophy, *fiqh*, and *usul* for 12 years. After meeting Allama Tabataba'i in 1950, he joined his philosophy circle and became such an excellent student that Allama assigned him to write a commentary on his significant philosophical work *Usul falsafeh*. He also studied the philosophy of Avicenna and some parts of the Transcendent Wisdom at this stage. Mutahhari also attended some of the lessons of Hakim Mirza Mahdi Ashtiyani (1885-1951) and benefitted from Mirza Ali Agha Shirazi for some time.

Mutahhari moved to Tehran in 1952 and began his activities in the realms of hawza, university, and society on the basis of education. He also had political and social interests; hence, political activities in struggling against the royal regime were also a part of his life. Following the incidents of June 5, 1963, Mutahhari, who was a close student of Imam Khomeini, intensified his revolutionary struggles, which continued up until his martyrdom in April 1979. He was both an Islamic thinker and an active figure in political and social fields. By teaching at university, lecturing in various venues including Tehran's *Hossein-i-yi Irshad*, and publishing several books and articles, Mutahhari played a significant role in Islamic awakening and the growth of Iranian religious understanding. Mutahhari's originality of thought and eloquence of speech made him known as the theoretician of the Islamic Revolution as well as its intellectual and philosophical supporter. In 1978, Imam Khomeini assigned Mutahhari to form the Council of Revolution. One night in April 1979, when he was returning from one of his meetings, he was targeted and shot in a cowardly assassination attempt by the Forqan terrorist group, and his great wish to be martyred came true.

Teaching Islamic philosophy at hawza and universities and writing philosophical works were among his constant occupations and interests. His youthful commentary on Allama Tabataba'i's *Usul falsafeh* was the most widely-read philosophical book in contemporary Iran. Throughout his life, Mutahhari wrote several books and articles on various philosophical subjects. Many philosophical books were also published after his martyrdom on the basis of his recorded lessons, such as his commentaries on Avicenna's *Illahiyyat al-Shifa'*, Mulla Sadra's *Asfar*, and

one brief and detailed commentary on Mulla Hadi Sabzawari's *Manzuma*. Mutahhari has also left many theological works written with philosophical tendencies such as *Divine Justice* and the seven-volume work entitled *An Introduction to the Islamic Worldview*. Among his other works is the critical edition of Bahmanyar's *al-Tahsil*. He has also left various writings in such fields as Qur'anic exegesis, *fiqh*, mysticism, history, politics, and education.

Mutahhari was skillful in teaching traditional texts of Islamic philosophy, writing, and innovation, as well as understanding, analyzing, and critiquing other philosophies.

He represents a milestone in philosophical thought and literature in Iran. Philosophical works were highly specialized before his emergence, receiving the attention of only a small minority. Of course, the conditions of Mutahhari's era differed from that of the past. The facilities and background for the public attention towards philosophy were much more favorable in his time; however, the impact of his method in presenting philosophical subjects is outstanding in this regard.

Martyr Mutahhari's notable characteristic is the variety and vastness of the subjects he dealt with. Such variety is remarkable in both philosophical and non-philosophical subjects. He paid attention to and researched any subject whose discussion he felt would benefit the religion.

Ontology, epistemology, religion, anthropology, psychology, ethics, jurisprudence, law, history, economics, society, and revolution are among the subjects which Mutahhari has spoken of and written on.

Mutahhari's special characteristic in his philosophical writing was the language he used: Persian. Although one can find Persian works among previous authors, the dominant scholarly language of the Islamic hawzas, including Iran, has been Arabic, and the dominant tradition in philosophical writing had also been the same. From the very beginning, the most significant works on Islamic philosophy had been written in Arabic, though most of their authors were Persian-speakers, and since only a limited number of people were familiar with Arabic in Iran, only a small number of people were attracted to such works.

Philosophy is well-known for its difficulty and complexity. Even those philosophers who wrote their works in Persian have not really managed to demystify this subject. Mutahhari's special characteristic in explaining philosophical subjects is the clarity of his words. His inborn talent, as well as experience in teaching philosophical subjects at hawza, university, and other public environments, had given him an outstanding power in explaining difficult philosophical topics clearly. Sometimes even in speeches delivered for lay people, Mutahhari managed to present profound philosophical subjects in a comprehensible manner without reducing their precision and solidity.

Among Mutahhari's contributions to Islamic thought is the presentation of new discussions and his attempt to find Islamic answers to them. Such topics as the philosophy of ethics, the philosophy of history, and anthropology in the way they are presented today and the way Mutahhari discussed them are unprecedented in Islamic philosophy. Since Mutahhari considered Islam as being in harmony with the demands of the time and had presented that subject in a profound manner himself, he was driven into such kinds of discussion trying to present an Islamic account of those new subjects. He implemented this methodology in non-philosophical religious subjects as well.

Another feature of Mutahhari's approach to philosophy is his comparative presentation of philosophical subjects. Being familiar with a number of Western philosophies, he was among those who took the first steps towards presenting philosophical subjects in a comparative manner. Mutahhari analyzed and critiqued various aspects of Marxism from dialectic and historical materialism to Marxist economics and politics in a detailed manner, comparing the various issues of this subject with Islamic perspectives. In his commentary on *Usul falsafeh*, particularly in epistemological discussions, he has dealt with the ideas of a number of Western philosophers as well as some Western intellectual and empirical schools. Moreover, in lessons which were held for some professors and translators of Western philosophy – published under the title of *Sharh Mabsut Manzumah* after his martyrdom – Mutahhari examined ideas of such Western philosophers as Hume, Kant, and Hegel. In his various works, he has discussed and critiqued thoughts of Western philosophers from ancient Greece to modern times.

Mutahhari's other philosophical characteristic is his undertaking the history of philosophy into consideration in philosophical discussions. Although he did not get the chance to compile a complete course in the history of Islamic philosophy, perhaps he was the first Islamic philosopher who took into consideration the significance of philosophical history and took some steps in this regard. Also, he presented a new style of historiography of Islamic philosophy in his book *Khadamat Mutaqabil Iran va Islam (The Mutual Contributions of Islam and Iran.)*<sup>13</sup>

Martyr Mutahhari's contributions to contemporary Islamic thought include the explanation and interpretation of Sadrian philosophy; a critique of Marxism and other Modern Western philosophies; a new presentation of the subjects of cognition, nature (*fitrah*), and the philosophy of history; and the presentation of *Ilahiyyat* or modern theology through a new outlook. Several books, articles, and theses have been written to explain Martyr Mutahhari's thoughts; however, a comprehensive analysis of the whole structure of his philosophical thought has not been presented yet.

Without a doubt, Mutahhari has been the most influential thinker in contemporary Iran in religious thought and research, and one may certainly say that it is hard to find any research or contemplation upon the religion of Islam which does not bear traces of Mutahhari's thought, method, and literature; and this characteristic cannot be attributed to any other person.

Despite being a Sadrian philosopher, Martyr Mutahhari was an independent thinker whose job was critiquing thoughts and ideas. He even critiqued some thoughts of his beloved and revered master Allama Tabataba'i.

Mutahhari did not consider traditional theology as being capable of explaining and defending religious beliefs; however, he treated Islamic Divine philosophy as being much more capable in this regard. He held that the prominence of such theologians as Khawja Nasir al-Din Tusi lies in their philosophical thought. He endeavored to establish an intellectual theology using the Islamic heritage and contemporary knowledge.

Contrary to some traditional philosophers who regard philosophy as being solely restricted to traditional texts, Mutahhari applied philosophy to find solutions

for new intellectual problems using the philosophical method as a way of solving intellectual problems in various fields. He both paid attention to Islamic philosophy *per se* and used it to clarify and defend his beliefs and to critique opposing thoughts.

### **Mahdi Ha'iri Yazdi**

Mahdi Ha'iri Yazdi, the son of Ayatollah Sheikh 'Abd al-Karim Ha'iri, who was the founder of the hawza of Qom, was born in 1923 in the aforementioned city. After finishing his elementary education in religious sciences, he commenced learning philosophy while studying *fiqh* and *usul*. Ayatollah Borujerdi was one of his prominent masters in *fiqh*. Ha'iri learned Islamic philosophy from such masters as Mirza Mahdi Ashtiyani, Ayatollah Seyyed Ahmad Khawansari, SaifuLlah Is'i, but he learned mostly from Imam Khomeini. He studied Sabzawari's *Sharh al-Manzuma* and Mulla Sadra's *Asfar* for over ten years with Imam and undoubtedly became a master in Islamic philosophy – as his works would testify. He said that he had a scholarly relationship with Imam for about twenty years, occasionally receiving solutions to his problems in understanding mystical texts from Imam through correspondence.<sup>14</sup>

Having finished the traditional courses of hawza, Ha'iri traveled to North America studying Western philosophy at the universities of Georgetown, Michigan, and Toronto, Canada. His Ph.D. thesis was called *The Principle of Epistemology in Islamic Philosophy: Knowledge by Presence*. Ha'iri also taught at various universities in the United States and Canada for some years. In 1978, he returned to Iran and began teaching Islamic and comparative philosophy in Tehran. He passed away in 1999.

Some of his philosophical books are as follow: *Universal Knowledge* ('*Ilm kulli*'), *Investigations of the Theoretical Intellect* (*Kavoshhay-i 'Aql Nazari*), *Investigations of the Practical Intellect* (*Kavoshhay-i 'Aql Amali*), *The Pyramid of Existence* (*Hiram hasti*), *Awareness and Evidence* (*Agahi va gavahi*), *Metaphysics* (*Metafizik*), *al-Ta'liqat ala Tuhfat al-Hakim*, and *Wisdom and Government* (*Hikmat va hukumat*). There are also some other works compiled from his lessons in Tehran which were published after his death, including *Analytical Philosophy* (*Falsafi-y-i tablili*), *Journey of the Self* (*Safar nafs*), *The Theory of Cognition in Islamic Philosophy* (*Nazari-y-i Shenakht dar Falsafeh Islami*), and *Philosophical Investigations* (*Jostarhay-i Falsafi*).

Ha'iri also had a number of debates with Allama Tabataba'i and Ayatollah Jawadi Amuli regarding the metaphysical, logical, and political philosophy of Islam in the form of correspondence, which has been published in some journals.

Ha'iri's philosophical discussions are characterized by their comparative nature. The presentation of comparative philosophy in a specialized manner is his most important contribution to contemporary Islamic philosophy. Although one may find instances of comparative philosophy in some Iranian contemporary philosophers, most of them have not had direct access to Western philosophy. Since Ha'iri was an expert on Islamic philosophy and *usul* as well as the English language and Modern Western philosophy, he was the first Islamic philosopher to establish comparative philosophy in the academic sense, though he did not have time enough for its expansion and development. Despite his mastery of Western philosophy, Ha'iri was extensively loyal to and a defender of Islamic philosophy, particularly that of Mulla Sadra. According to him, Western philosophy, particularly the analytical one, is more advanced in methodology than Islamic philosophy; however, with regard to the content and solving some significant philosophical problems, Islamic philosophy has been much more successful.<sup>15</sup>

One of the advantages of Islamic philosophy, according to Ha'iri, is the lack of duality in its history. Islamic philosophy has traveled a single straight path to the zenith of perfection, contrary to Western philosophy which suffers from ruptures; it is divided into classical and modern philosophy and is full of diversity of views and deviation of thoughts.<sup>16</sup>

Although Ha'iri presented some innovations, he was mostly an interpreter of Islamic philosophy rather than an innovative philosopher. The interpretation he presented was, of course, innovative being in modern language and in comparison with Western philosophy; however, he prefers a traditional method of Islamic philosophy to most of other methods. The range of Ha'iri's work on philosophy is vast; in addition to metaphysics, epistemology, and soul, it includes such fields as philosophy of ethics, law, and political philosophy.

One feature of his philosophical discussions is that he is quite loyal to a logical framework. Therefore, the presence of logic as well as logical reasoning and expressions is remarkable in his discussions. He both follows Aristotelian-

Avicennian logic regarding it as firm and solid and uses modern logic. The impact of Avicenna's logical thought on the one hand and contemporary analytical philosophy on the other may obviously be observed in Ha'iri's method of thought. Due to his mastery in both philosophical traditions, he pays attention both to the analysis of concepts and theories and to the logical form of reasoning. Although we know of no independent work by Ha'iri on logic, his works demonstrate that he was a prominent logician and his works are mixed with logical expressions and subtleties. He asserts, 'The difference between a philosopher and others is that a philosopher presents his statements logically. In the realm of philosophy, everything must occur in a logical manner'. Ha'iri then states that he pays attention to analytical philosophy due to the fact that in this kind of philosophy, 'all philosophical discussions are presented in logical frame'. As a result, tradition and taste play no role in the presentation of philosophical subjects. According to Ha'iri, the path of mysticism is separate from that of philosophy; mystical cognition is of knowledge by presence while philosophy is of mediated knowledge, and the methods of those two are different.<sup>17</sup>

### ***Seyyed Jalal al-Din Ashtiyani***

Seyyed Jalal al-Din Ashtiyani was born in 1925 in Ashtiyani. After finishing his education in *maktab* and elementary school, he spent some time learning calligraphy. With his mother's support and a passion for learning religious sciences, Ashtiyani moved to Qom in 1944 and commenced learning Arabic literature, *fiqh*, *usul*, and theology. He studied a number of high-level courses of Arabic literature and *fiqh* with Ayatollah Martyr Saduqi. Afterwards, he studied Islamic philosophy at Sheikh Mahdi Mazandarani Amirkolahi. Ashtiyani studied high level courses of *fiqh* and *usul* at Ayatollah Seyyed Hossein Tabataba'i Borujerdi and Ayatollah Seyyed Mohammad Taqi Khawansari. In the years 1957 and 1958, he benefited from Ayatollah Seyyed Muhsin al-Hakim, Ayatollah Seyyed "Abd al-Hadi Shirazi, and Ayatollah Mirza Hassan Bojnurdi in Najaf. Then he returned to Qom and attended Allama Seyyed Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i's lessons on philosophy and Qur'anic exegesis. Along with Ayatollah Seyyed Mustafa Khomeini, he attended the *Asfar* lessons of Ayatollah Seyyed Ab al-Hasan Rafi'i in Qazvin for some time. During his education, due to his longtime friendship with Seyyed Mustafa

Khomeini, he had relationships with Imam Khomeini and benefited from his knowledge in various fields. By writing the book *Existence from the Viewpoint of Philosophy and Mysticism (Hasti az Nazar Falsafe va Irfan)*, he entered Ferdowsi University of Mashhad in 1959 and began teaching philosophy and mysticism. He commenced teaching mystical texts at the hawza of Mashhad from 1971 until 1984.<sup>18</sup> Ashtiyani passed away in 2005 in Mashhad.

Although Ashtiyani taught mysticism and philosophy, his main role in the advancement of philosophy and mysticism goes back to his written works. He has left several works on Islamic philosophy and mysticism. Reviving the works of his predecessors was one of his remarkable contributions in this regard. Ashtiyani edited, introduced, and published several philosophical and mystical books and treatises. An important part of his research and contemplations appeared in lengthy introductions he wrote for such works. Some of such introductions are valuable works themselves and one may regard any of them as an independent book. Such work was almost unprecedented amongst religious scholars and even after Ashtiyani no one can be compared to him in this respect. Every researcher on Islamic philosophy and mysticism is indebted to him in this regard.

Some works which were revived, annotated, introduced, and very usefully commented upon by Ashtiyani are as follows: Mulla Sadra's *Shawahid al-Rububiyyah* and his *Zad al-musafir*; al-Fayz al-Kashani's *Usul al-ma'arif*; Mu'ayyid al-Din al-Jandi's *Sharh Fusus al-Hikam*; Qaysari's *Sharh Fusus al-hikam* and his *Rasa'il*; Qunawi's *Tafsir Surah al-Hamd*; Farghani's *Mashariq al-Darari*; and Ibn Turka's *Tamhid al-Qawa'id*.

Not only did Ashtiyani revive many of the works of his predecessors, he also took great steps in introducing Islamic philosophers. His mastery of the history of Islamic philosophy and his knowledge regarding the lives of philosophers, particularly later ones, is unique. He made known and introduced a great number of philosophers. Although Ashtiyani did not have the chance to write a comprehensive book on the history of Islamic philosophy, he took great steps in this regard and provided valuable material for the compilation of such history.<sup>19</sup> Every historiographer of Islamic philosophy and mysticism is in need of Ashtiyani's works. A great part of his historical knowledge regarding contemporary philosophers is

acquired firsthand through his direct acquaintance with them and cannot be found in any other source. Also, regarding the history of the past, especially the last four centuries, a great portion of his knowledge was acquired from the direct verbal narrations of masters, and it is this very fact that gives his works a unique value. Ashtiyani was also remarkably acquainted with Iranian history.

One of Ashtiyani's significant works on the historiography of Islamic philosophy is the four-volume book *Selections from the Works of Iran's Divine Philosophers* in which he demonstrates the itinerary of philosophy and mysticism from the time of Mir Damad and Mir Fendereski to the era of Agha Ali Hakim and Agha Mohammad Reza Qomshe'i. Henry Corbin has written an introduction to this book.<sup>20</sup>

Not only was Ashtiyani skillful in the history of the Islamic philosophical-mystical legacy, in the analysis and interpretation of its issues, and in critiques of various positions, but he had his own particular views regarding certain theological problems.<sup>21</sup>

Ashtiyani was not concerned with Western philosophy and did not discuss it. In Islamic philosophy, however, he believed in revision and transformation and held that the consideration of new sciences within the philosophical subjects which are related to science is necessary.

Ashtiyani was an expert on both philosophy and mysticism, with a unique mastery in the Islamic philosophical, mystical legacy, especially in theology. He was attached to mysticism, regarding it as being superior to philosophy.<sup>22</sup> Most of his works are also dedicated to mysticism. He was an eminent commentator and interpreter of Ibn Arabi's theoretical mysticism. According to Ashtiyani, 'by using the theoretical intellect alone one cannot step into a field known by the masters of *Wilayat*.<sup>23</sup> The theoretical intellect merely helps in knowing the characteristics and necessities of things but not their reality. Such intellect deals with concepts and no concept can indicate the whole identity of the Necessary Being; but what belongs to mystical cognition is outward reality and not concepts. Of course, not everyone can take the path of mysticism.

Ashtiyani's viewpoint regarding mysticism is of course a Shi'a one and he evaluates Ibn Arabi's mysticism from such a standpoint. He rejects reclusive and monk-like Sufism. His mysticism is based on the teachings of school of the *Ahl al-Bayt*. According to Ashtiyani, mysticism has two principles: *tawhid* and *wilaya*, both of which have been presented in the most perfect form only in the school of the *Ahl al-Bayt*. Thus, like Henry Corbin, he emphasizes the unbreakable bond between Mysticism and Shi'ism, and holds that one cannot pursue mysticism properly through the Mu'tazilite and Ash'arite points of view.<sup>24</sup>

### **Martyr al-Sayyid Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr**

Ayatollah Martyr Sayyid Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr (1932-79) was a prominent contemporary thinker in the hawza in Najaf and peerless in genius and innovation amongst contemporary figures. He was a master in *fiqh* and *usul*, an innovator of brilliant opinions, a pioneer in philosophical thought, unique in understanding the modern world, and a pioneer in the struggle for actualizing Islamic ideals; and that is why he was martyred innocently along with his learned sister, Bint al-Huda, under the brutal torture of the Saddam Husain regime in Iraq.

For a report and analysis of Martyr Sadr's philosophical thoughts, one must engage oneself in a deep study and research of all of his works, including those he has left on *usul*. Another part of his philosophical thoughts can be found in his writings regarding religion, politics, government, society, and economics.

Without a doubt, Martyr Sadr had been aware of the new wave of thought in Iran, being familiar with works of Allama Tabataba'i, Martyr Mutahhari, and other Iranian contemporary thinkers. Like the thinkers mentioned above, in his confrontation with Western thought, he first encountered Marxism and analyzed and criticized its various aspects such as philosophy, economics, and history. Sadr's criticism of Marxism was also fundamental, strong, and innovative. His first philosophical work was the book *Our Philosophy (Falsafatuna)*<sup>25</sup> which bears similarities to *The Principles of Philosophy and the Method of Realism* of Allama Tabataba'i and Ayatollah Martyr Murtada Mutahhari, especially in regard to the criticism of Marxism. *Our Philosophy* found a vast audience in the Arab and Islamic world and beyond, becoming highly influential. Some religious seminaries, including

the hawza of Qom, used the work as a textbook critical of Marxism and modern philosophies. In the book, Martyr Sadr scrutinized various philosophical subjects such as cognition, perception, causality, matter, and God from the viewpoint of various philosophical schools. Also, in the book *Our Economy (Iqtisaduna)*, he strongly criticized the economic systems of Marxism and Capitalism and for the first time reconstructed the Islamic economical system. Moreover, in so many of the treatises which he wrote after the Iranian Islamic Revolution, Martyr Sadr presented his political, legal, economical, and social viewpoints.<sup>26</sup> A detailed analysis of his philosophical thoughts is outside the scope of the present work. Here, we will cast a brief glance at one of his philosophical works.

Undoubtedly, Martyr Sadr's most significant philosophical effort is the presentation of a new theory on induction presented in his book *al-Usus al-Mantiqiyya li al-Istiqra'* (The Logical Essentials of Induction).<sup>27</sup> In that book, he presents a theory of probabilities as well as its related logical and epistemological discussions, analyzes and critiques Western philosophers' views in this connection and presents a new, logical and epistemological system he uses not only in epistemology in general, but in theology and even jurisprudence.

### **Mohammad Taqi Ja'fari**

Mohammad Taqi Ja'fari (1925-1998) learned elementary Islamic sciences in his birthplace, Tabriz, and then became acquainted with the intermediary levels of Islamic sciences in Tehran's Marvi seminary, and later in Qom. He studied Sabzawari's *Sharh al-Manzuma* and a portion of *Asfar* in Tehran with Mirza Mahdi Ashtiyani. In 1948 he joined the hawza of Najaf and studied high-level Islamic sciences for eleven years with such prominent masters of the time as Ayatollah Seyyed Abu al-Qasim al-Khu'i, Seyyed Muhsin al-Hakim, and Seyyed Jamal Gulpaygani. Ja'fari attended the philosophical lessons of Shaykh Sadra Qafqazi and Shaykh Murtada Taleqani for some time as well. Afterwards he lived in Mashhad for a while and finally decided to live in Tehran teaching Islamic sciences at the Islamic seminaries and giving lectures in religious circles. Delivering speeches at universities and Islamic seminaries, meeting and talking with clear-sighted figures, and interviews with journals were among his permanent occupations.

Ja'fari began his studies, as well as extensive research, in various fields of philosophy, Islamic sciences, and humanities in earnest from the time of his education in Najaf continuing it till the end of his life. In addition to studying Islamic works, he also extensively studied the works of Western authors in various fields, such as philosophy, humanities, and literature. The usage of such a variety of sources is evident in his works. While benefitting from the views of thinkers, Ja'fari also endeavored to criticize them. Among such works, one can mention his criticisms of Machiavelli, Thomas Hobbes, David Hume, Bertrand Russell, and Alfred North Whitehead.

Ja'fari left about 150 scholarly works. His first philosophical work, written in his thirties, was the book *The Man-World Relationship (Irtibat Insan-Jahan)*. His most significant works are the 15-volume interpretation of Mawlawi's *Mathnawi*<sup>28</sup> and the incomplete 27-volume commentary on *Nahj al-Balaghah*. In the latter work he examined various philosophical subjects from epistemology and theology to the philosophies of history and society. Moreover, in his various books and treatises he discussed various subjects of philosophy, religion, and humanities such as God, determinism and free will, conscience, man, science, life, justice, freedom, art, human rights, and mysticism.

In Ja'fari's works, one cannot find a considerable interest in pursuing the traditional subjects of Islamic philosophy such as ontology or commentaries on Peripatetic, Illuminationist philosophies or Transcendent Wisdom. One may say that, from amongst Islamic philosophers, he is more interested in Avicenna. Also, from his introduction to the third volume of *The Philosophy of Avicenna (Hikmat Bu-Ali Sina)*<sup>29</sup> by Sheikh Mohammad Saleh Ha'iri Mazandarani and his sympathy with the author in some of his criticisms of Mulla Sadra, especially in regards to the discussions of the principality of existence and the unity of existence, one may conclude that, at least in his youth, Ja'fari had such tendencies. Ja'fari was mostly independent in his selection of subjects, the method of his discussion, and at times, in his views, and it is not really possible to consider him as belonging to one of the prevailing traditions of Islamic philosophy and theology. The reason is perhaps due to the fact that Ja'fari had not spent a considerable time in studying philosophy with a particular philosopher. He officially spent a rather short time studying this subject

with his masters. Most of his philosophical thought had been shaped during his study of Eastern and Western philosophers' works, especially on the philosophical problems of the time, and not through spending a long time studying traditional philosophical texts – a fact whose effects can be seen in his philosophical literature<sup>30</sup> and the way he encounters, begins, and ends discussions.

Ja'fari was independent in mysticism as well. Although he was interested in Islamic mysticism, one can hardly consider him as a follower of a particular trend or figure in that field. His interest lies in a kind of mysticism that he, himself, grasps from the Qur'an, *Sunnah*, and thoughts of Islamic mystics.

Ja'fari was an Islamic, Shi'a scholar and thinker who tried to find answers to the questions of contemporary man on the basis of Islamic teachings using the culture and literature of the time. Like most contemporary Islamic philosophers, he believed in the harmony of the intellect, revelation, and intuition, as well as philosophy, science, mysticism, and religion. He therefore uses various intellectual, narrative, experimental, and mystical methods; however, his main tendency and concern was intellectual and philosophical. As his works testify, one could hardly find a discussion in which he would distance himself from intellectual analysis.

Ja'fari had a particular interest in Persian literature, especially the poetry of aphorism and mysticism. Ja'fari's several works deal with the analysis and interpretation of the works of great Persian poets. In his detailed commentary on Mawlawi's *Mathnawi*, he has endeavored to extract Mowlawi's worldview from his poems, interpret them, and at times criticize them. In other works, he has examined and analyzed the thoughts of Khayyam, Jami, and Sa'di. In almost all of his works, Ja'fari uses poems of Persian-speaking poets in various discussions.

### ***Ayatollah Hasanzadeh Amuli***

Ayatollah Hasan Hasanzadeh Amuli was born in 1928 in Amul. He finished his elementary education and basic religious science courses in his birthplace. In 1950, he went to Tehran to continue his education, entering the Hajj Abu al-Fath and then the Marvi seminary, benefitting from such masters as Ayatollah Abu al-Hasan Sha'rani, Muhyi al-Din Ilahi Qomsha'i, Mohammad Taqi Amuli, Mirza Ahmad Ashtiyani, Fazel Tuni, and Mirza Abu al-hasan Rafi'i Qazvini in various fields such

as *fiqh*, *usul*, Qur'anic exegesis, philosophy, mysticism, mathematics, astronomy, and medicine. In 1963, Hasanzadeh traveled to Qom and likewise benefitted from such great masters as Allama Seyyed Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i, Mohammad Hasan Ilahi, and Seyyed Mahdi Qazi in the fields of exegesis, philosophy, mysticism, and occult sciences.

As can be seen, Ayatollah Hasanzadeh has had the opportunity of learning from many prominent and unique masters of the time. He had close relationships with many scholars, benefitting from them in private lessons. Such an opportunity does not occur to everyone. Not only were his masters diligent in teaching him, but they were eager in his training and spiritual progress, due to the capability they saw in him.

Ayatollah Hasanzadeh is endowed with a comprehensive knowledge of traditional sciences and is among the last philosophers who have gathered within themselves both intellectual and traditional knowledge. He is a clear-sighted figure and an author in Arabic and Persian literature, *fiqh*, *hadith*, Qur'anic exegesis, logic, philosophy, mysticism, mathematics, astronomy, medicine, and occult sciences having taught in all these fields. In this respect, he is the scholarly and spiritual heir of his learned master Abu al-Hasan Sha'rani who was an expert on all the above-mentioned fields as well as other sciences. Hasanzadeh is the author of about two hundred books and treatises. He also has a talent for composing poetry in Persian and Arabic. His poetry collection is entitled *The Book of the Heart (Daftar Del)*. He has also written an elegy in Arabic named '*Yanba'u al-Hayab*'. His greatest interest lies in philosophy and mysticism and most of his works and lessons are in these two fields. Most of his writings are either completely mystical or tinged with mysticism. Although some of his works are in Arabic, he has mostly written in Persian.

Ayatollah Hasanzadeh's critical editions and annotations on many philosophical and mystical texts including *Asfar* and some commentaries on *Fusus al-bikam*, such as the one by Khawarazmi, are among his other contributions to those sciences. He is also an expert on transcriptions owning a valuable personal library, though he is the embodiment of a hawza and a library himself.

Ayatollah Hasanzadeh's mastery of Islamic texts, especially the philosophical and mystical ones, is unique. He has taught traditional philosophical texts such as *al-*

*Shifa'*, *al-Isharat*, and *Asfar* many times. Without a doubt, he is a master of the Islamic sciences, especially philosophy and mysticism. A remarkable characteristic in his writings is his extensive study of predecessors' works and his selection, narration, and explanation of their words. His works clearly indicate that he is an outstanding researcher and a prominent commentator in Islamic philosophy.

Ayatollah Hasanzadeh strongly believes in the strength of Islamic philosophy and its ability to provide answers to conceptual problems, and despite being familiar with the French language, he does not pay much attention to Western philosophy. According to him, despite the fact that the West has achieved some developments in experimental sciences, its philosophy is incomparable to Islamic mysticism and Transcendent Wisdom with regard to theology as well as inner knowledge and spiritual progress.<sup>31</sup>

As a supporter of Transcendent Wisdom, Ayatollah Hasanzadeh does not regard philosophy, mysticism, and religion as being separate and in his works he has spoken repeatedly and emphatically of the companionship and harmony between logical reasoning, mysticism, and the Qur'an. According to him, without revelation, philosophy and mysticism are fruitless; it is only revelation that brings transcendence to man; true philosophy is the Qur'an itself; and Divine Religion and Divine Philosophy are the same. On the other hand, religion and mysticism are also dependent upon reasoning, for proving religious beliefs has precedence over everything else, and doing that is the job of philosophy. The Qur'an itself is based on and confirms reasoning. One can even extract logical standards from the Qur'an. Therefore, not only is there harmony between philosophy, mysticism, and religion, but separating them would be impossible; to consider their separation and incompatibility would be baseless.<sup>32</sup> Perhaps it is due to this matter that philosophical, theological, and mystical subjects are intertwined in Ayatollah Hasanzadeh's works and his writings are full of the words of philosophers, mystics, and poets as well as *hadiths* and Qur'anic verses.

Ayatollah Hasanzadeh has taught such mystical books as *Tambhid al-Qawa'id*, *Fusus al-Hikam*, and *Misbah al-Uns* for many years and has annotated and commented upon them. *Mumidd al-Himam dar Sharh Fusus al-Hikam* is a commentary which he wrote on Ibn Arabi's *Fusus al-Hikam*. One of his innovations

in this regard is adding a *Fass* to *Fusus al-Hikam* entitled '*Fass Hikmat ismatiyyat fi kalimat fatimiyyat*'. He himself has written a commentary on this *Fass* which was published in a separate volume.<sup>33</sup>

### **Ayatollah Jawadi Amuli**

"Abd Allah Jawadi Amuli was born in 1933 in Amul. After finishing elementary school, he studied the basic courses in Islamic sciences in his local Islamic seminary until 1950. Then he moved to Tehran and continued his education in the Marvi seminary. He studied the higher levels of such religious sciences as *fiqh*, *usul*, philosophy, and mysticism with the prominent masters of the time. Among his masters in intellectual sciences were Ayatollah Abu al-Hasan Sha'rani, Muhyi al-Din Ilahi Qomsha'i, Mohammad Taqi Amuli, and Mohammad Hossein Fazel Tuni. In 1955, he moved to Qom, staying at the Hojjatiyyeh seminari, and benefitting from the *Fiqh* and *Usul* courses of such masters of the time as Ayatollah Mohaqqueq Damad, Ayatollah Borujerdi, Ayatollah Mirza Hashim Amuli, and Imam Khomeini. He also benefitted for a long time from Allama Tabataba'i courses in philosophy, mysticism, and Qur'anic exegesis.

Influenced by Imam Khomeini, Ayatollah Amuli actively participated in social, political, and propagation activities before and after the Revolution. Notably, Ayatollah Jawadi Amuli was the person who delivered Imam Khomeini's historic letter to Gorbachev, the last leader of the communist Soviet Union.

Among his other activities were teaching philosophical texts from Allama Tabataba'i's *Bidayat al-Hikmat* to Avicenna's *al-Shifa'* and Mulla Sadra's *Asfar*, and mystical texts from Ibn Turka's *Tambid al-Qawa'id* to Ibn Arabi's *Fusus al-Hikam*. He has published several works on Islamic philosophy and mysticism. *Rabiq Makhtum* is the title of his commentary on Mulla Sadra's *Asfar* and *Tabrir Tambid al-Qawa'id* is a commentary on *Tambid al-Qawa'id* written on the basis of his lessons.

Following his master Allama Tabataba'i, Ayatollah Jawadi Amoli is very much concerned with Qur'anic exegesis and has the biggest circle of Qur'anic interpretation courses in the hawza of Qom. In these courses, he makes use of all his knowledge from *hadith*, *fiqh*, Qur'anic sciences, literature, theology, mysticism, and

philosophy in order to get his audience close to understanding the Divine Words. Ayatollah Jawadi's courses on Qur'anic exegesis are being published under the title *Tafsir Tasnim*.

Like other philosophers of Transcendent Wisdom, Ayatollah Jawadi believes in the harmony of philosophy, the Qur'an, and mysticism or intellect, tradition, and intuition. He himself is a master of philosophy, a researcher of mysticism, and an interpreter of the Qur'an; and his firmness and capability in all those three fields is very well known. The strong and sympathetic way in which he speaks of Ibn Arabi and Mulla Sadra has given a particular allure to his lessons.

Being deeply concerned with matters of Transcendent Wisdom, theoretical mysticism, and Qur'anic exegesis has not made this sage neglect the consideration of questions and issues of the modern world. Although the above-mentioned fields are his main scholarly occupations, he uses those fundamentals to contemplate on and reply to questions regarding a number of modern problems, such as the Islamic perspective on the environment, the issue of women, governmental ethics, and the relation between the intellect and revelation as well as science and religion.

There are epistemological and metaphysical foundations behind Ayatollah Jawadi's endeavors in philosophy, mysticism, and exegesis, as well as his efforts in bringing the reasoning and mysticism of the Qur'an together. Basically, Transcendent Wisdom is but a system of bringing together these three kinds of knowledge. According to this sage, each one of these three types of cognition is a firm and credible way towards the truth; however, the perfection of knowledge lies in bringing them together. This of course does not mean that those three kinds of knowledge are of equal value; the pure and infallible knowledge must only be demanded from revelation. Although philosophical thought and mystical asceticism generally help us reach the truth, they are not infallible when used by a fallible person. Reasoning and mysticism should therefore be eventually evaluated by the Qur'an.

Transcendent Wisdom does not consist merely of knowing various sciences. It is simply not true that by knowing philosophy, theology, mysticism, and other manifold sciences that a person can attain transcendent wisdom. It is rather a single,

simple extensive knowledge which includes other sciences at a higher level, just as the Absolute includes confined multiplicities while being One.<sup>34</sup>

According to Ayatollah Jawadi, not only does transcendent wisdom and thought result from all those sources mentioned, but the philosopher's own being and personality is formed in light of those sources of illumination as well: the way of achieving this wisdom is to use theoretical reason-based thought and lawful mystical asceticism, to evaluate them on the basis of Qur'anic revelation (and its interpretation in the words of the Infallible, innocent personalities), and to live in accordance with the revealed teachings – through which one would attain pure knowledge and essential, existential transformation which contains both knowledge and practice, and thus attains transcendent wisdom.<sup>35</sup>

An effect of such wisdom is that its achievement is acceptable and authoritative for the logical philosopher, the mystical man of intuition, and the scholar committed to revealed narration.<sup>36</sup>

### ***Ayatollah Mohammad Taqi Misbah Yazdi***

After finishing his elementary education and courses in basic religious sciences in Yazd, Mohammad Taqi Misbah Yazdi (b. 1934) moved to Najaf to continue his religious studies in 1951, resided there for a year, and then went to Qom. He studied *Fiqh* and *Usul* with Ayatollah "Abd lkarim Ha'iri Yazdi, Ayatollah Seyyed Hossein Borujerdi, Imam Khomeini, and Ayatollah Mohammad Taqi Bahjat, at the same time benefiting by Ayatollah Bahjat's ethical and spiritual teachings. He also became a student of Allama Seyyed Mohammad Husayn Tabataba'i for over two decades in order to learn philosophy, Qur'anic exegesis, ethics, and spirituality.

Ayatollah Misbah used the Qur'anic and philosophical subjects which he had learned from Allama Tabataba'i as the basis of his research and studies, contemplating and independently researching in those two fields and attaining novel views in both areas. The courses of 'Qur'anic knowledge' that he taught in various subjects of Islamic thought, which were eventually published, had a remarkable impact upon the formation of contemporary Islamic thought in hawzas and afterwards in the larger realm of Islamic society.

Ayatollah Misbah has taught various branches of philosophy such as logic, metaphysics, epistemology, politics, philosophy of ethics, and philosophy of religion having several works, as well as his own views, in those fields. His lessons on *Nihayat al-Hikmat*, *Ilahiyyat al-Shifa'*, *Burhan al-Shifa'*, and parts of *Asfar* have been transcribed and published, serving as a base for reference and study by many researchers in the field of Islamic philosophy.

Ayatollah Misbah's treatment of philosophy is characterized by his precise analysis of concepts and terms and his attempt to clarify the point of dispute. Another characteristic is that, in his speech and writing, he endeavors to maintain purity of thought and philosophical language and does not mix them with other sciences.

Due to his familiarity with Modern Western thought and philosophy, he has presented and examined a great number of philosophical and theological subjects in a comparative fashion.

Criticism of the views of philosophers, both Muslim and non-Muslim, is also a characteristic observable in most of Ayatollah Misbah's discussions. The book *Ta'liqat 'ala Nihayat al-Hikmat* contains his criticisms of the views of Islamic philosophers, particularly those of his master, Allama Tabataba'i.

Ayatollah Misbah has also discussed and criticized Marxist philosophy and thought in detail. At the time of its publication, his book *Defending Ideological Fortifications (Pasdari az sangarhaye ideolozhik)* was regarded as the most exact work in rejecting Marxist dialectic principles and was studied by the intellectuals of the hawza and the university with great zeal.

In various fields, Ayatollah Misbah has systematically both analyzed and criticized the views of Western philosophers and established and expounded the Islamic perspectives. Such fields include epistemology, theology, religion, and philosophies of ethics, law, and politics.

Ayatollah Misbah presents many innovations in various philosophical subjects. In the book *Teaching Philosophy (Amuzesh Falsafeh)*, now among the textbooks of philosophy which are used in the hawza, he has stated his philosophical analyses and views in a rather simple yet profound language.

According to some authorities in Islamic philosophy, Ayatollah Misbah's innovations go beyond criticizing a portion of philosophers' views and presenting new viewpoints in a number of philosophical issues; rather, one must say that using Peripatetic, Illuminationist philosophies and Transcendent Wisdom, as well as the experiences of the West in philosophy and the humanities, he has established a special philosophical system.<sup>37</sup>

### **Seyyed Ahmad Fardid**

Seyyed Ahmad Fardid (1910-1994) is among the most influential contemporary philosophers in Iran. His real name is Ahmad Mahini Yazdi. After learning the basic traditional sciences in Yazd – his birthplace – he went to Tehran in 1926 and continued his education at Darolfonun. Afterwards, he managed to complete his B.A. in philosophy at Tehran University. For some time he attended the lessons of Ayatollah Tunekabuni, Seyyed Kazim Assar, and Shari'at Sangalaji. Fardid learned Arabic, French, and German as well and later became familiar with some ancient languages of the East and West. In the years after the world war, he studied philosophy in Germany and France for some time and made contact with Heideggerian philosophers. Fardid taught philosophy at Danishsaray-i Āli for some time and at Tehran University for a while. After his retirement, he engaged in declaring his views in speeches.

Fardid left very few written works and for that reason some have called him a 'verbal philosopher'. Some of his articles have been published in the *Sokhan* journal, demonstrating his profound knowledge of Western philosophy. He was among the first in Iran to introduce and analyze German philosophies such as those of Heidegger and Husserl. Some works about Fardid and some transcriptions of his lessons have been published by his students. The book *The Meeting of Grandeur and Conquests of the Last Days (Didar Farabi va Futubat Akhar-i zaman)* contains some material of Fardid's lessons which Mohammad Madadpur has transcribed and published along with a detailed epilogue by himself entitled '*Hekmat va 'Ilmulasma' Tarikhi: Tafsil ba'd az Ijmal*'. Influenced and inspired by Fardid's views, Madadpour has also written other books on the history of thought and art. There is another book entitled *Seyyed Ahmad Fardid's Views and Beliefs (Ara' va Aqayid Seyyed Ahmad Fardid)* containing Fardid's words, arranged in alphabetical order, and

published by Seyyed Mostafa Dibaj. The writings of Martyr Seyyed Murtada Avini reflect a number of Fardidian thoughts. Some aspects of such thought can also be found in Reza Davari's works. The most significant published books on the explanation and defense of Fardid's system of thought, however, belong to the late Seyyed Abbas Ma'arif (1954-2002). He refers to Fardid with such titles as 'the great master of Eastern philosophy', 'the great contemporary Unsi philosopher', and 'the master of Unsi philosophy and historical knowledge of Names'. Ma'arif was perhaps the most suitable person for the presentation and explanation of Fardid's thoughts; his early death, however, took away the opportunity to carry out such an important task. His book *A New Glance at the Fundamentals of Unsi Philosophy* which was supposed to be compiled in three volumes, but of which only one was published, gives an overview of Fardid's philosophical and mystical thought.

Those mentioned are all students of Fardid in a way. His influence, however, is not limited to his students. Traces of Fardidian concepts and literature can be seen in the works of many thinkers and intellectuals who are both for and against him. Nevertheless, the thoughts and views of Fardid have rarely undergone analytical and critical examination and evaluation. Without a doubt, the shortage of written sources regarding his thoughts and the ambiguity in his language are some of the causes.

Fardid differs from other philosophers and thinkers, whether traditional or modern, in various ways and his positions and views have always been a subject of great dispute. He spoke about a great variety of subjects; however, the focus of his thought was his questions regarding existence and history. To understand Fardid's thought, one must pay attention to these four important elements:

1. Islamic mysticism, particularly the views of Ibn Arabi
2. The philosophy of Martin Heidegger
3. Fundamentals of etymology or '*ilm al-asma'*
4. The Holy Qur'an. The Qur'an and *hadith*, with the special Fardidian interpretation, of course, play a fundamental role in Fardid's thought. His theology, etymology, and also wisdom of history would not have been possible without such resources. Many of the concepts and fundamental

terms of his thought are also taken from the Qur'an. As he puts it, 'The fountain of wisdom is the Holy Qur'an'.<sup>38</sup>

The above-mentioned sources have been the main source of Fardid's thought; however, he has been influenced by a number of such philosophers as Plato, Aristotle, Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, as well as Islamic philosophers. In Islamic mysticism, he frequently cites such mystical poets as Mawlawi, Fakhr al-Din Iraqi, Mahmud Shabistari, 'Abd al-Rahman Jami, and Hafiz, among which Hafiz had a special position in Fardid's view.

### ***Seyyed Hossein Nasr***

Seyyed Hossein Nasr was born in 1934 in Tehran. At the age of 13, he went to America and after finishing high school pursued his university education at M.I.T. and Harvard University in physics, history, and philosophy of science. Then he became interested in the thoughts of such traditionalists as Rene Guenon (1886-1951), Frithjof Schuon (1907-98), Titus Burckhardt (1908-84), Coomaraswamy (1877-1947), and Martin Lings (1909-2005). Nasr became familiar with practical mysticism through the Algerian Sufi Ahmad al-Alawi. He began teaching at Tehran University after coming back to Iran. At that time, he benefitted from three prominent Islamic philosophers, namely Seyyed Abu al-Hasan Rafi'i Qazwini, Seyyed Mohammad Kazim Assar, and Seyyed Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i, in Islamic philosophy and mysticism. Nasr has taught for years at various universities of the globe including Beirut American University, Princeton, Utah, Temple, and George Washington. He is also influenced by such orientalist as Louis Massignon and especially Henry Corbin. With such a background, and due to his extensive studies, travels, and countless meetings with the intellectuals of the East and West, Nasr has contemplated upon such important fields as philosophy, mysticism, religion, science, and human culture producing several works in those fields. A great number of his works have been translated into various languages. Nasr has played a significant role in introducing Islamic philosophy, especially the later philosophers, particularly Mulla Sadra, to the West. He is among the pioneers in the historiography of Islamic philosophy and sciences in the contemporary period.

Nasr is a prominent representative of traditionalism, a trend which has followers in the East and West among followers of various religions and schools such as Christianity and Hinduism. The new, Islamic branch of traditionalism began with Rene Guenon and reached its peak with Schuon - Nasr being a Shi'a traditionalist.<sup>39</sup>

'Tradition' and 'perennial philosophy' are the most fundamental concepts of the school in question. What traditionalists mean by 'tradition' is not customs and habits or attachment to the past. It refers to the Qur'an's *Sunnah al-Awwalin* (8:38) and *Sunnah Allah* which is eternal and everlasting and not subject to change and transformation (33:62; 35:43). Traditional principles are universal; they are not limited to a particular geography or nation. Tradition is the eternal essence and the inner truth of all divine religions. It includes revelation itself which has been revealed to mankind as well as its expansion and dissemination throughout history.

Like other traditionalists, Nasr does not summarize philosophy in its logical and demonstrative facet, but rather defends a more expanded worldview in which illumination and revelation play key roles in addition to the intellect. He considers that approach as characteristic of the perennial philosophy which has been present from India, China, ancient Iran, and ancient Greece to the Islamic period, and has survived dynamically in Shi'a Iran more than anywhere else. The birthplace and source of that wisdom is the Orient, both in its geographical and philosophical, mystical sense.

### ***A Glance at Other Iranian Contemporary Philosophers***

Without question, there are more contemporary Islamic philosophers, masters, and authors than what has been mentioned in this work. Among the others which we have not been able to include are Hossein-Ali Rashid, author of the book *Two Philosophers of the East and West*; Jalal al-Din Huma'i, researcher in Islamic philosophy and mysticism and author of the book *Mawlawi Nameh*; Martyr Seyyed Mohammad Hosseini Beheshti, master of comparative philosophy and author of a number of works in theology; Mahmud Shahabi, author of the book *Leader of the Intellect* in logic and a treatise on the unity of existence; 'Abd al-Jawad Hakimi Falaturi, a clear-sighted author in Islamic philosophy; Yahya Ansari, author of a work concerning the *Sharh al-Manzuma* of Mulla Hadi Sabzawari; Ja'far Sobhani,

author of some commentaries on the philosophy of Mulla Sadra and philosophy of ethics; Seyyed Mustafa Khomeini, annotator of a number of philosophical books and author of a commentary on the Holy Qur'an; Ghulamhossein Ibrahimi Dinani, master of Islamic philosophy and author of several philosophical works including the book *General Rules in Islamic Philosophy*; and Ahmad Ahmadi, professor of comparative philosophy and translator of some significant works of Western philosophy. The above-mentioned scholars are only a few in the long list of contemporary masters of philosophy in Iran.

It must be noted that the present work was intended to deal with the study of the itinerary of traditional Islamic philosophical thought in Iran. There are thinkers who do not belong to this tradition and have contemplated Islam under the influence of the contemporary trend of modernism. Ali Shari'ati, Mahdi Bazargan, and 'Abd al-Karim Soroush are the most prominent figures in this trend, with each influencing Iranian contemporary religious thought in some way. Soroush has published several works concerning the philosophy of science and the philosophy of religion provoking a number of debates and disputes.

There are also many masters in Iran who engaged in researching and teaching Western, and occasionally comparative, philosophy, such as Yahya Mahdavi, Karim Mojtahedi, Mohsen Jahangiri, Reza Davari, and Gholam-Ali Haddad Ādel.

As we have seen, a remarkable variety can be observed in the philosophical positions and tendencies as well. The existence of various philosophical trends and tendencies in contemporary Iran (such as philosophers who follow the Sadrian tradition which itself includes various tendencies, those who criticize Sadrian philosophy, the traditionalist trend of Nasr, the companions of Fardid, the followers of various Western philosophical schools, and those against philosophy who are sometimes engaged in philosophical discussions) indicates the presence and dynamism of philosophical thought in this country.

The brief discussion presented in this essay was limited to the views of contemporary philosophers of the past generation. The story of philosophical thought in Iran, however, has not come to an end and a new generation of philosophers and thinkers in whom one can have great hope are growing within the hawzas and universities of the country.

It would be fruitful here to mention a list of some observable changes in the way Contemporary Islamic philosophy deals with this field of knowledge. The consideration of the history of philosophy, the study of Western philosophy, comparative studies in philosophy, paying attention to various branches of philosophy rather than merely metaphysics, the transformation in teaching philosophy, philosophy becoming public, creating Persian works of philosophy, overcoming those who are against philosophy, the centrality of Qom's philosophical circle, and the continuation of the domination of Sadrian philosophy are some of the characteristics of the way philosophy is treated in contemporary Iran.

Though neither comprehensive nor perfect, this report and analysis demonstrates to some extent the presence, dynamism, variety, and richness of thought in Islamic Iran and presents a garland of flowers from the fruitful garden of wisdom and knowledge in contemporary Iran to those who are in search of the truth.

### **Notes**

1. The present essay is a selection from the forthcoming book *An Introduction to Contemporary Islamic Philosophy* by the same author.
2. Martyr Sadr is the only non-Iranian philosopher discussed in this work. Though not an Iranian himself, he is of Iranian origin and belongs to the Iranian Shi'ite philosophical realm.
3. Imam Khomeini, *Taqrirat Falsafah (Sharh Manzuma va Asfar)*, 3 vols. (Tehran: Institute of Arrangement and Publication of Imam Khomeini's Works, 1381 S.A.H.).
4. See Seyyed 'Abd al-Ghani Ardebili, *Taqrira-y-i Falsafi-y-i Imam Khomeini: Sharh Manzuma (1)*, introduction, (Tehran: Institute of Arrangement and Publication of Imam Khomeini's Works, 1381 S.A.H.).
5. Seyyed Jalal al-Din Ashtiyani, *Dar Hikmat va Ma'rifat*, p. 404.
6. Referring to philosophy, mysticism, and *fiqh*.

7. Ashtiyani, *Dar Hikmat va Ma'rifat*, p. 469.
8. Seyyed Jalal al-Din Ashtiyani, *Naqdi bar Tahafut al-Falasifi-y-i Ghazzali*, p. 30.
9. Mahdi Ha'iri Yazdi, *Jostarhay-i Falsafi*, pp. 356-57, 482.
10. Seyyed Jalal al-Din Ashtiyani, *Naqdi bar tahafut al-falsafi-y-i Ghazzali*, p. 30.
11. Ibid.
12. Mohammad Taqi Misbah Yazdi, '*Naqsh Allama Tabataba'i dar Ma'arif Islami*' in *Yadnamah Allama Tabataba'i*, p. 189.
13. Murtada Mutahhari, '*Khadamat Motaghbil Iran va Islam*' in *Majmuah Asar*, vol. 14, pp. 461-547.
14. Mahdi Ha'iri Yazdi, *Jostarhay-i falsafi*, p. 482.
15. Ibid., pp. 395-396.
16. Ibid., pp. 38-39.
17. Ibid., p. 193.
18. See Hasan Jamshidi, *Ganj Panhan Falsafah va Irfan (The Hidden Treasure of Philosophy and Mysticism)* in *Shari'eye shohud* (with the efforts of Abdolhossain Khosrowpanah) (Tehran: Research Center of Islamic Culture and Thought Publications, 1385 S.A.H.), pp. 30-39.
19. Apparently a book entitled *Chibrihay-i Dirakhsban Falsafih va Irfan* has been written based on Ashtiyani's works. See *Hikmat va Ma'rifat*, with the efforts of Hasan Jamshidi (Tehran: Research Center of Islamic Culture and Thought Publications, 1385 S.A.H.), p. 25.
20. Seyyed Jalal al-Din Ashtiyani, *Montakhabati az Asar bukamay-i Ilabi Iran* (Tehran, Iran and France Institute, 1354 S.A.H.).
21. Some thoughts of Ashtiyani have been discussed in articles presented in the book *Shari'iy-i shuhud*.
22. *Hikmat va Ma'rifat*, p. 496.
23. Seyyed Jalaloddin Ashtiyani, *Naqdi bar Tahafut al-Falasafay-is Ghazzali*, p. 451.

24. Ibid, p. 274.
25. Sayyid Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr, *Falsafatuna* (Beirut: Dar al-Ta'aruf, 1402 AH).
26. Those treatises can be found in the following work: al-Seyyed Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr, *Al-Islam Yaqud al-Hayat* (Tehran: al-Huda, 1421 AH).
27. Sayyid Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr, *Al-Usus al-Mantiqiyya li'l-Istiqra'* (Beirut: Dar al-Ta'aruf lil Matbu'at, 1391 AH).
28. Mohammad Taqi Ja'fari, *Tafsir va Naqd va Tablil Mathnavi Jalal al-Din Mohammad Balkhi*, 12<sup>th</sup> edition. (Tehran: Eslami Publications, 1373 S.A.H.).
29. Mohammad Saleh Ha'iri Mazandarani, *Hikmat Bu-Ali Sina*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, vol. 3 (Hossein Elmi Publications, 1362 S.A.H).
30. See Mohammad Taqi Ja'fari, *Irfan Islami* (Tehran: Keramat Publishing Institute).
31. '*Uyun Masa'il al-Nafs*, pp. 116-121.
32. See Hasan Hasanzadeh Amuli, *Qur'an va Irfan va Burhan az Ham Joda'i nadarand*.
33. Hasan Hasanzadeh Amuli, *Sharh Fass Hikmat Ismatiyya fi Kalimat Fatimiyya*, p. 8.
34. Abdollah Jawadi Amuli, *Rabiq Makbtum: Sharh Hikmat Muta'alayah*, vol. 1, part 1, p. 20.
35. Ibid, Commentator's preface, chapters one and two.
36. Ibid, p. 19.
37. This is Gholamreza Fayyazi's opinion quoted in the book *Andishiy-i Mandagar*, written by Hossein-Ali Arabi, pp. 135, 144.
38. Seyyed Musa Dibaj, *Ara' va Aqay-id Seyyed Ahmad Fardid*, p. 146.
39. Some teachings of traditionalists have received attention in Iran as well, being supported by such persons as Gholamreza A'vani and Mahmud Binaye Motlaq.