Article

Modern Shia Islamic and Jewish Political Theosophy: An Elective Affinity?

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Abstract: The present study will focus on core parallels and nodes of theopolitical exchange between the two most politically and theologically consequential jurist "theosophers" of the twentieth century, the Religious Zionist founding father, the Jewish Rav Avraham Yitzchak Hacohen Kook (1865–1935), and the Shia Islamic Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini (1900–1989). Unquestioned masters of the tradition of both medieval philosophy and mysticism, as well as the theosophies of the early-modern and modern eras, both Kook and Khomeini attempted to embed the rhetoric of theosophy within revolutionary notions of both clerical religious authority and the necessity of their respective nomoi to assume political form. The study will also correlate contemporary Shia reformist theosophies undergirded with anti-theocratic exoteric postures with pre-WW2 German-Jewish "existence philosophies" as represented by Franz Rosenzweig, noting a common appreciation for what the study will term "theopolitical risk". It argues that the retrieval of medieval Judeo-Islamic political philosophy for the successful negotiation of reason and revelation in modernity against both theocratic juridical extremism and the iron cages of positivistic-realist secularism must be rethought in light of the theopolitics coursing through Iran and Israel, two states at the geographic periphery though fully within the horizons of the Modern West.

Keywords: political theology; political philosophy; legal philosophy; theosophy; Judaism; Islam; Shia Islam; Zionism; Rav Kook; Khomeini; Soroush; Rosenzweig; Jewish philosophy; Islamic philosophy; Leo Strauss

1. Introduction

"The most extreme example of modern theocracy is without a doubt the Islamic Republic of Iran. Its unelected head of State, who functions as a representative of the Hidden Imam responsible only to God, stands above the head of the judiciary, the Expediency Council of Parliament, the Guardian Council, and last but not least the instruments of state coercion projected both domestically and internationally. He functions as the dominant force vis a vis the elected parliament and the State President. In contradistinction to Israel, the fight between clerical theocracy and democracy heavily leans to theocracy in the "Divine State of Iran". Indeed, the legality of legislation must be measured against the Quran and the Islamic tradition. And so, in the Israeli context, one must imagine the scenario of an attempt by Ultra-orthodox clerical scholars to assume power, certainly not in a revolution, but through the emergence of demographic realities, in which a modern theocracy emerges. This remains hard to imagine, but does the logic of the theocratic concept pushed to its radical conclusion not indicate the possible emergence of theocracy in the Jewish context? It remains naïve to assume that a Jewish theocracy would look too terribly different from Iran's Islamic theocracy."[1]

—Peter Schaefer (2017, p. 240)

Leo Strauss is famous for claiming that the normative political thrust of medieval Judeo-Islamic thought has been lost and in need of esoteric retrieval to legally orient the contemporary Western public sphere for the sake of both sociopolitical cohesion and the expansion of the philosopher's autonomy.[2] In its own day, the medieval philosophies of Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes on the Islamic side, and Saadia Gaon, Judah Halevi, and Maimonides on the Jewish side, maneuvered for intellectual survival against the anti-philosophic legalism of jurists and theologians whose ideas animate Sunni fundamentalists across the Muslim world and Europe today.[3] Strauss taught that both their metaphysical work and body of juridical scholarship should be analytically evaluated and normatively appropriated considering the political-philosophic need to esoterically conceal a private commitment to a potentially heretical metaphysics, a philosophic worldview bordering on atheism lying at the heart of their metaphysical Neo-Platonic and Neo-Aristotelian goal of contemplating highest ideals and goods and thereby achieving felicity. The potentially esoteric antinomianism associated with such doctrine would be blunted by the exoteric promotion of a rationalized form of law nevertheless tied to a Biblical, revelation-based morality.

However, the legacy of medieval Judeo-Islamic philosophy was never truly forgotten and has in fact possessed an unbroken albeit evolving form of continuity in both the Muslim and Jewish worlds. While medieval Judeo-Islamic political philosophy has often been used in both traditions to defend modern theocratic governance as a divinely inspired endeavor rooted in revelation rather than "mere" administration or Greek-inspired practical philosophy, the legacy of the medieval metaphysical tradition has evolved over the course of Jewish and Islamic intellectual history into doctrines of "theosophy", fusing philosophy and mysticism.[4] This fusion has allowed medieval metaphysics to achieve concrete political form within streams of Religious Zionism in the Jewish State of Israel and the clerical leadership of the Shia Islamic Republic of Iran. These are two states lying at the geographic periphery, although thoroughly within the political horizons of the modern Western nation state and the public spheres such states are capable of erecting with their own coercive epistemological powers.

The present study will focus on core parallels between the two most politically and theologically consequential jurist "theosophers" of the twentieth century, the Jewish Rav Avraham Yitzchak Hacohen Kook (1865–1935) and the Shia Islamic Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini (1900–1989).[5] Masters of the tradition of both medieval philosophy and mysticism, as well as the theosophies of the early-modern and modern eras, both Kook and Khomeini attempted to embed the rhetoric of theosophy within revolutionary notions of both clerical religious authority and the necessity of their respective nomoi to assume political form. They recognized the dangers and opportunities, both for their own authoritative status as religious leaders and the legal integrity of their faith traditions, that are pursuant to the charismatic and revolutionary public rhetorical deployment of theosophy for the purposes of ensuring the properly delimited epistemic horizons for contemplative felicity and human autonomy.

This study will aim to accomplish two chief goals. Firstly, it will demonstrate how an encounter with Rav Kook as one of the key protagonists in Israel's unfinished Jewish Revolution, a revolution whose essential theological and political grounding remains contested to this day, can help us better understand how Ayatollah Khomeini legitimized his theocratically fused concept of juridical-legislative and mystical-cosmological political authority in the leadup to the 1979 revolution. Thereafter, it will correlate contemporary Shia reformist theosophies undergirded with anti-theocratic exoteric and esoteric postures with pre-World War II (WW2) German-Jewish "existence philosophies", as represented by Franz Rosenzweig, noting a common appreciation for what I will term anti-authoritarian "theopolitical risk".

It argues that the retrieval of "lost" Judeo-Islamic esoteric political-philosophical practices for the successful protection of philosophy and the negotiation of reason and revelation in modernity against theocratic juridical extremism and positivistic-realist secularism must

be rethought in light of the philosophic continuity and evolution which this tradition has experienced in the post-medieval era and into today, as reflected by politically influential streams within Judaism and Shia Islam. Rather, it is a rigorous exoteric theosophic political-philosophical response to the continuity of medieval philosophy's contemporary political relevance in modernity in the form of "esoteric theocracy", which can best protect the prospect of human autonomy and philosophical felicity in today's era of rising ethnocratic and theocratic nationalism.

The study will proceed along the following lines. First, we will present an overview of the small and hitherto largely overlooked literature on both the intellectual transfer and elective affinities between Shia Islam and Judaism. Thereafter, we will sketch the parallel conceptual evolution of medieval philosophy and mysticism into theosophy with an eye to this tradition's relevance to questions of theocratic authority in the contemporary era. Next, we will elucidate how both Rav Kook and Khomeini theocratically conceived esoteric theosophy's capacity for allowing the authority of jurists (or "a" jurist) to revolutionarily transform the boundaries of their respective nomoi through the linkage of ontologies of divine immanence with the epistemic capacities of clerical leadership to orient and order the nomos both cosmologically and juridically in the "existential" encounter with state-based secularism. Finally, we will zero-in on a common notion of "theopolitical risk" common to the anti-theocratic political theologies of the Iranian-Shia reformists and a stream of pre-WW2 German-Jewish thought capable of responding to the fusion of reason and revelation rampant today.

While copious tomes have been written regarding the exchange between Jewish and Islamic philosophy in the Middle Ages, along with Islamic appropriation of biblical and rabbinic material within its canon, there has been a distinct lack of material in the fields of Islamic and Jewish thought, bringing constructive modern Jewish and Islamic political-legal thinking under similar horizons.[6] This study will begin to address this deficiency.

2. Shia–Jewish Elective Affinities: Histories and Possibilities

In his 1995 work *Between Muslim and Jew: The Problem of Symbiosis Under Early Islam*, Steven Wasserstrom examines the shifting contours of discourses on interconfessional confluence and differentiation put forth by Muslim and Jewish clerical scholars in the formative period of Islam (632–700 AD). His goal was to understand "the ways in which one religion made the image of the other into an image of themselves, which image was then used to redefine and continuously legitimate themselves" (Wasserstrom 1995, pp. 167–205). By examining the treasure trove of interconfessional (Sunni-Shia) scholarly polemics from this period, where Muslim scholars could be said to be engaged in a proto-"Jewish Studies" (and vice versa), Wasserstrom attempts to lay the historical groundwork for rigorous theoretical reflection on the comparative study of religion in both pre-modern and modern contexts.

As part of this discussion, Wasserstrom provides a helpful overview of scholarly attempts to uncover what he terms an intellectual-religious "symbiosis" between various groups of Shias and Jews in the birth period of Islam (632–700 AD). He notes that a dominant stream of philological analysis rooted in the pre-World War II German tradition of Oriental philology largely ruled out such a symbiosis. A scholarly embrace of such a symbiosis was avoided due to a perceived lack of textual evidence for such a confluence, a documented history of intense discrimination suffered by Jews at the hands of early Shia communities, and the existence of rather strict and exclusionary Shia purity laws.[7] Wasserstrom, however, has argued precisely for such a symbiotic legacy, mostly prominently in the realm of early Ismaili–Jewish interactions.[8]

Wasserstrom undertakes the philological task of exploring Shia–Jewish appropriation in the establishment of a "priestly dynasty " from the descendants of the High Priest Aaron (d.1274 BC) and ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib (d.661 AD), the Davidic dynasty of communal leadership represented by the "Rosh Gola" (Head of the Babylonian Diaspora Jewish community often known in English as the Exilarch) and the imamate, and the delayed recitation of the evening prayer (*maʾariv, al-maghrib*) respective to the Sunni consensus on the issue.

Without engaging in a philological exercise to determine their veracity, he also explores the discursive contours and consequences of a widely dissimulated and Sunni polemic against the Shia, proclaiming the Shia to be "the Jews of our community", a polemical listing of religious similarity most fully presented by Ibn Taymīyyah (d.1328) in his *Manāhij al-Sunna*.

However, Wasserstrom's rather short, almost digressive, critical reflection on broad structural and philosophic similarities between the Jewish and Shia legal nomoi is particularly salient for our purposes. His pointed yet rather truncated reference to the theocratic-political consequences of an almost teleological process of religious authority's rationalization as it enters modernity is perhaps the most prescient anticipation of this current study. He starts off by noting broad similarities between Jewish and Shia law in areas such as clerical ordination and designation (*semikha/nass*), as well as diasporic exile and the occultation of the twelfth Shia Imam (*galut/gheyba*), which could provide fertile ground for future philological analysis in terms of the Jewish origins for Shia concepts.[9] However, he proceeds to remark on the obliviousness of his social science contemporaries towards these processes internal to Shia Islam and Judaism. He believes that they were inebriated on various versions of trendy secularization theses, noting that:

> "For in a temporal lag—which led previous generations of social scientists to count them out—imami and rabbinic legists all along were interiorizing rationalization, just one step removed from the pace of the social sphere at large. Their "return" is, then, not a relic of another time but a product of our own. The present Twelver reappropriation of Iranian society itself, an appropriation not for mere postmodern ends but for fully post-historical ends, toward the ultimately just rule of the Mahdi himself, reflects developments akin to those also occurring within Judaism. The extent to which these apparently parallel developments were determined by an original symbiosis remains a question for scholarship fully to investigate". (Wasserstrom 1995, p. 122)

Wasserstrom adopts this macro-view of Shia Islam and Judaism's "elective affinity" in the realm of law with the hope that more specific philological work be undertaken in the early-medieval period, particularly on certain concepts of legal authority and jurisprudence. He believes that philologically proving such a symbiosis would potentially reveal a fortuitous and preordained nature to the theocratic politics harnessed by religious leaders in both faiths to service a rationalized messianism. The power of this rationalized messianism can no longer be realized in a perpetual deferment of the assumption of power, a process he deems as bringing forth "apocalypse".

While deepening the philological understanding of a possible Jewish–Shia symbiosis in early Islam is a worthy endeavor, and one that would surely bring insight into the parallel religiopolitical tracks upon which these two nomoi have traveled, a more textured and textually based conceptual understanding of this rationalization process' in both nomoi cognizant of the interpretive traditions of political theology and the sociology of knowledge can also be pursued to explain these contemporary affinities. Instead of pairing classical methods of philology with social theory, as proposed by Wasserstrom, this study will engage in the parallel political hermeneutics of texts by seminal authors engaged in the process of deepening and transforming the conceptual apparatuses integral to the epistemological superstructure of their respective nomoi. Such projects were pursued in the service of harnessing or rejecting, molding, or unraveling theocratic attitudes and arguments. It will emphasize the self-conscious nature of the scholar's attempts to "rationalize" the tradition in the shadow of the epistemological challenges and opportunities offered by Western modernity, zeroing in on questions of cosmology, authority, and autonomy.

The Israeli medievalist Shlomo Pines substantively explored a conceptual exchange related to theopolitical authority between Shia Islam and canonical medieval Jewish philosophy through careful Arabic-language philological analysis. He examines the legacy of Ismaili missionaries from Egypt who penetrated the intellectual environment of medieval al-Andalus and profoundly influenced one of the most influential medieval Jewish thinkers, Judah Halevi (d.1141).[10] In his 1980 article "Shi'ite Terms and Conceptions in

Judah Halevy's *Kuzari*", he rejects Leo Strauss' oversimplified assertion that the *Kuzari* was torn between philosophy and revelation, though ultimately landing on the superiority of philosophy (an insight to be gleaned by esoteric hints dissimulated across the text) (Krinis 2014). Instead, Pines argues for a multiplicity of significant "ideological and conceptual focal points" and a shift in the analytic frame of reference onto a clash between esoteric and exoteric medieval forms of religion.

Pines' argument, masterly fleshed out philologically and conceptually by Ehud Krinis in *God's Chosen People: Judah Halevi's Kuzari and the Shī'ī Imām Doctrine*, focuses upon the distinction between:

> "The magical-astrological type [of religion] which rejects the feasibility of and need for divine revelation or contact between God and human beings, among other things, in the name of belief in the unity of the human species and the equality of individuals. Facing the Khazar King, who serves as a mouthpiece for the aforementioned stance, the author of the *Kuzari* situates the Jewish rabbi as a defender of revelatory religion and of the possibility of divine contact with the mundane. This position invokes a strict hierarchical premise that places the receivers of divine revelation on a separate and higher stratum in relation to the rest of humanity—a hierarchical difference analogous to that between human beings and animals".[11]

Krinis uncovers Halevi's conceptual borrowing from multiple sects within Twelver and Ismaili Islam.[12] He also highlights how Halevi grafts the exalted status accorded by Shia Islam to the hierarchically ordered and cosmologically resplendent recipients of divine revelation onto a notion of chosen Jewish peoplehood and the authority of exemplary rabbinic scholars as generational rejuvenators and defenders of the nomos through concepts such as the Perfect Man (*al-insān al-kāmil*), the Divine Order (*al-amr al-ilāhī*), and the prophetic "seal" (*khātim*) of their respective generations. This represents a broad conceptual constellation that eventually became central to the Hassidic tradition of the *tzaddikim*, rabbis considered the most exalted of their generations due to their ability to mediate divinity and temporality through their scholarly acuity and their prophetic piety.[13]

In Shia Islam, these principles have usually been ensconced within a broader conceptual apparatus termed "*Wilāya*", which roughly translates to the term "guardianship" in English.[14] Despite its multiplicity of meanings, the term *Wilāya* consists of a corollary dynamic between the divine and the learned, and the learned and "the people", both as collectives and as individuals.[15] As a principle that can be said to exist at the fulcrum of each religious sub-discipline (jurisprudence, theology, law, philosophy, exegesis, etc.), *Wilāya* possesses the potential to strain a largely accepted divide between the realms of "religion" and "coercive politics", as has been demonstrated by Khomeini's theocratic melding of this principle of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh/Vilāyat-i Faqīh* (Arabic/Persian), Guardianship of the Supreme Jurisconsult, with the apparatus of state in Iran. This is an ideational complex that fully synthesizes the *Wilāya* concepts within each discipline into an overarching political theology, with the charismatic personhood of the philosopher-mystic fully melded with religious-juridical authority and installed as the epistemic fulcrum of a theocratic polity.

Indeed, within the thought of authoritative clerics in the traditions of Twelver Shia Islam and Judaism, the study of philosophy has long been brought together and often infused in a dialectical fashion within conceptually systematic traditions of mystical thought.[16] This form of mystical speculative thought was formulated in intensive dialogue with the same "Greek" metaphysical apparatus engaged by the philosophers. Most often, scholarly articulated forms of mysticism, to be distinguished from mystical practices, appropriated select philosophical concepts in their entirety by translating them into the theological language of scripture (Torah and Koran) and the narrative dimensions of oral law (Talmud and Shariah). As the preeminent scholar of Jewish mysticism Karl Erich Groezinger has noted:

> "Whereas the attempted goal of the medieval Jewish philosophers was the presentation ofJewish Antiquity's theology, cosmology, and anthropology through

the devices of Greek–Arab philosophy, the Kabbalists attempted to pull off the opposite task. They tried to cloak the central ideas of philosophy in the garments of genuine Jewish tradition. It is here that philosophic positions not commensurate with Judaism force a new formulation of the central categories of Jewish thought."[17]

In recognition of this mutual intellectual debt of both mysticism and to classical metaphysics, it is understandable how the boundaries between philosophy and Kabbalah began to fall in both Judaism and Shia Islam in the transition from the medieval into the early-modern periods. This process, in which philosophy and mysticism seem to have merged at the most intricate conceptual and methodological levels in both traditions in the transition between the medieval and early-modern eras, led to the creation of a body of rationalistically inclined thought often termed by scholars of Islamic philosophy and mysticism as "theosophy".

In Shia Islam, that tradition is most closely identified with Mullah Sadra (1571–1641), who lived during the peak of the Safavid empire's power as it completed the transition from a heavily Sufi-infused Sunnism to a Twelver Shia Islam, whose theological apparatus was much more attuned and receptive to temporally relevant cosmologies of human perfectibility.[18] The Jewish equivalent is to be found most squarely in the mystical tradition of Hasidism emanating out of 17th and 18th century Eastern Europe following the Sabbatian Revolt.[19]

Indeed, in this revolt, led by the messianic mystic Shabbtai Zvi, the "sheer weight and thematic independence of the mythic superstructure of Lurianic Kabbalah eventually brought about the collapse of the base of *halakhic* normativity and praxis".[20] Revolutionaries such as Zvi along with the Iranians Shaykh Ahsai (1753–1826) and Ali-Mohammad Shirazi (1819–1850)—considered founding fathers of the Shaykhi and Babi/Bahai movements, respectively—propagated mysticism as part and parcel of exoteric antinomian and supersessionist movements in the history of both Judaism and Shia Islam. Mystically infused rhetoric buoyed by the revolutionary charisma of the upstart mystic would come to hold large popular sway, often taking a heretically antinomian and messianic character. Mysticism let loose would threaten utter rupture with the nomos and the mythic theological narrative often chiliastically undergirding entirely new nomoi.

It is thereby possible to see how the exoteric brazenness of both theosophic Judaism and Shiism to posit Greek-inspired metaphysics in rationalistically formulated scriptural garbs at the core of their esoterically "highest" forms of theological truth could lead to political and legal instability when exoterically presented beyond office-hours discussions between those exalted Jewish and Shia jurist-mystics and their star pupils. Most exemplary clerical authorities were intent on preserving the explicitly legal character of their respective nomoi.

Very broadly construed, the core features distinguishing theosophy from its "Illuminationist" predecessors is the transition away from both a "vertical" broadly Platonic mode of divine emanation towards (and sometimes penetration of) the temporal realm and the ascent of intellects connecting such emanation, and additionally, theosophy dispensed with the Aristotelian focus on substances as the basis for worldly reality. In Illuminationsim and Islamo-Judaic (Neo)Platonism's stead, a dynamic of divine intensity entwined with cosmological notions of continual godly creation and mutability were imbued via complex metaphysical processes into even the most "mundane" creatures within the temporal realms.[21] A poetic reorientation to questions of Being and Becoming that would "transcend the simple dichotomy between a discursive, ratiocinative mode of reasoning and knowing, and a more intuitive, poetic and non-propositional mode of knowledge", that nonetheless was recognized to conform with philosophic-logical rigor, would emerge (Rizvi 2021).

In both Hasidism and Sadra's theosophy, "spiritual exercises and a process of theosis, a pursuit of wisdom whose goal was to acquire wisdom and become a sage, and hence become godlike", were promulgated (Ibid.). In Hassidism, this process can be observed with the emergence of the *tzaddikim* (literally translated as "The pious ones"), communal

leaders widely seen by their followers to constitute, in both their exalted status as jurists and mystics, an epistemic conduit to appreciating the ontological intensity of divine presence in the world. Through their pious and learned example, the faith of the believer is transformed from the mere simple faith in the existence of God to an identarian form belief rooted in the individual recognition of the presence of the Divine in their own beings achieved via rigorous legal orthopraxy. Hassidic exegetical interpretation of Jewish law by its *tzaddikim* would ensconce the performance of legal dicta with the multifarious activities of the Godhead in its forms of earthly filtration and diffusion, linking its conception of the Jewish "*vita aktiva*" with the divine attribute of kindness (*gmilut hassadim*).[22]

While Hassidism united the performance and interpretation of the law with theosophy at its very inception, the exoteric union of orthopraxic Law with systematic theosophic interpretation was innovatively achieved only in the mid to late 20th century in the thought of Mohammad Hossein Tabātabāī, a scholar who pushed the theological red lines in the seminarian establishment. It is his union of law, exegesis, and theosophy which would inspire, as we shall see, many aspects of Khomeini's doctrine of the Guardianship of the Supreme Jurisconsult as the leader of an Islamic republic based on Shia law.[23] For the Shia, the linkage between theosophy and law had traditionally constituted a doctrinal red line since the linkage of cosmological and temporal authority in the spheres of politics and law was generally the preserve of the occulted Imam himself, and not his representatives in the pre-messianic clerical class.[24]

Hasidism, however, would have no such compunction in rendering their *tzaddik* into a prophetic Imam-like figure of religious and communal authority, especially with the possibility of a Jewish theocratic polity considered largely practically and ideologically impossible in the post-Second Temple, pre-messianic era.[25] The possibility of a politically theocratic Hasidism in the holy Land of Israel, however, was rendered possible in the revolutionary Religious Zionist thought of Rabbi Abraham Yitzchak Hacohen Kook, which synthetically and eclectically brought together philosophical, theological, and mystical streams previously viewed in conflict with one another.

The conceptual dialogue that we are conducting between modern Judaism and Shia Islam will also seek to harness this notion of "esoteric peoplehood" as it informs the modern theocratic argument. In our discussions of Rav Kook and Khomeini, we will analyze how central the revolutionary politicized notions of "chosen peoplehood" in Judaism, and the notion of religiopolitical guardianship in Shiism (*Wilāya*), are to mobilizing theocratic ideas. In the words of Jonathan Garb, such theocratic politicization arises in Jewish modernity out of a process in which the "chosen people" are mobilized into "herds" via scholarly masters engaged in unprecedented and self-empowering processes of exoteric revelation of esoteric material and a radical deepening of these masters' own perfected spiritual interiority (Garb 2009, pp. 21–51). Both Khomeini and Rav Kook aspired to consolidate the perfected scholar's political role, like Halevi's *Walī*, as "a defender of revelatory religion and of the possibility of divine contact with the mundane".[26] This study will observe that the core tension in Judaism and Shia Islam surrounding the question of theocratic theosophic politics stems from questions of assembling an ontological hierarchy spanning the communal masses and the Divine. At the epistemic fulcrum of this relationship is the religious scholar with his capacity to assess the Divine presence in his community of disciples, thereby legitimating his political judgement regarding how to best preserve and increase such a divine presence.

3. Khomeini and Kook: Revolutionary Theosophic Politics and the Authority of the Perfected Cleric

In 1970, Ayatollah Khomeini composed and published perhaps his most influential and widely read legal tract (*Vilāyat-i Faqīh*) (*The Guardianship of the Supreme Jurisconsult*) and began to give mystically infused sermons gathered together under the title *Al-Jihād al-akbar*. At that time, Khomeini was in exile in Iraq following a decade of agitation against the regime of the Shah of Iran, a figure he deemed to be in thrall to American and Israeli

interests while being responsible for the oppressive subjugation and moral degradation of the Iranian citizenry. His inspiration was crucial for the revolt against the Shah's rule in 1963, which led to Khomeini's forced exile from Iran. The ferocity of his criticism of the Shah's rule and the morally bankrupt Western colonial apparatus materially propping up his regime morphed from a powerful voice protesting a despotic monarch to a clarion calling explicitly for direct clerical rule of a Supreme Jurisconsult.[27]

The legal basis for the religious leadership of such a single clerical figure from amongst the clerical elite, a figure with sole authority to juridically and theologically legitimate the imperial sovereign, first emerged via a controversial thinker acknowledged as "wildly brilliant" but also revered for his successful resistance to a Shah's despotic power in the context of 19th century jurisprudence. This figure, Mullah Ahmad Narāqī, never himself attained the rank of ayatollah due to his inability (or unwillingness) to perform pastoral functions. However, the fact that his most prominent pupil, the revered "quietist" Murtadā al-Ansārī, was considered the greatest ayatollah of the 19th century and the first "Source of Emulation" (*Marja'a at-taqlīd*), gives one an appreciation to the power of both his personhood and intellectual oeuvre.[28]

By the time of *Vilāyat-i Faqīh's* publication in 1970, Khomeini had pushed his brand of Islamic political activism to the mainstream of both religious and political consciousness, despite opposition from the leading quietist clerical leadership who resisted the notion of direct clerical rule in the absence of the occulted 12th Imam. However, as the 1970s progressed, they remained largely publicly silent on the tumultuous political issues of the day, effectively ceding control over the sovereignty of the Shia nomos to an upstart politically active clerical rival they had always viewed with suspicion at best, and dread and contempt at worst. Such sovereignty was enacted through polemic pronouncement by Khomeini railing against the Shah and his arbitrarily cruel, religiously hostile, and illegitimate apparatus of monarchial rule delivered from a far-off exile, first in Iraq and Turkey, and then, just prior to the Revolution, in Paris.

In his classic work *Theology of Discontent*, Hamid Dabashi has brilliantly recounted the chronological and thematic arc of these polemical pronouncements, often delivered as sermons, in which Khomeini melded moral commentary on the major political events of the day with the religious calendar of the Shia. He delivered sermons in which the history of repression and resistance by the Shia as a persecuted minority within the first centuries of Islam could transport quotidian resistance onto a meta-historical plane, where the streets and parks of Tehran were marched into as though they were the battlefields of seventh century Karbala. In those battles, the Shia Imam lost to the wicked Sunni caliph Yazid, thereby stripping the figure of the Imam, and all subsequent Imams, of his capacity for direct imperial rule, fashioning Shiism's identity as a persecuted minority within the realm of Islam.[29] Should Khomeini have found himself martyred by the Shah, his status in Shia collective memory would have undoubtedly neared that of Imam Hossein. Should he succeed, he could potentially regain the mantle of legislative power buttressed through a cosmological connection with the Divine even in the absence of the Twelfth Imam, the Mahdi.

The construction of such a prophetic charisma, however, required careful formulation within his scholarship in order not to fully violate theological "red lines". Formally, in the absence of the 12th Imam, a cleric could not openly claim to possess the capacity to legitimate practical legislative and political authority with recourse to the post-prophetic cosmological conduit to the divine possessed by the Imams. Khomeini's polemical activity against this was complimented across the entire arc of his career by copious amounts of serious and innovative scholarship in all the Islamic sciences, spanning law and exegesis, to philosophy and mysticism. However, an issue seems to nag at Khomeini's interpreters (and critics). How might one describe the relationship, if there is one at all, between three strands in Khomeini's oeuvre? (a) Khomeini's mystical writings, in which eclectically formulated models of individually cultivated and divinely inspired perfection are woven together from multiple theosophical schools and made unprecedently supplicant to Shia legal-

theological building blocks. (b) His legal writings, which progressively reduce both the role of clerical consensus (*ijmāʿa*) within the "religious" sphere while nonetheless conditioning the legislative-executive function of the monarch on the legitimating power of politically engaged clerics. This is a historical arc which ends not just with the monarch's right to rule stripped from his personhood. It also ends with one cleric assuming an executive and legislative role in matters of public law (*'urf*), hitherto not under the realm of clerical purview via popular revolutionary proclamation, rather than any procedural consultative form of investiture. (c) The ontological grounding and epistemological horizons of the State onto which Khomeini grafts his monistic theocratic vision for the Shia nomos.[30] In short, did Khomeini really intend all along for the Islamic Republic to become a "theosophically-esoteric theocratically exteriorizing regime of guardianship?"[31] If he did intend for this result—and such a theocratic state-based nomos has indeed, on one level or another, come into effect—then why is that significant for the articulation of the future of Iranian Shia political thought in its coercive epistemic shadow?

To provide a hypothesis in response to these fraught questions in Modern Shia Religious Thought, I would like to take a short foray into the thought of the theosophic founding father of Israeli Religious Zionism, Rabbi Yitzchak Hacohen Kook. Approximately seventy years before Khomeini's trouble making in Iraq and Iran, a young rabbinic scholar of similarly extraordinary scholarly talent, creative moxy, and charisma disembarked from a ship that took him from the core of the Eastern European Jewish cities and hinterlands to the newly established project of Jewish settlement in Ottoman Palestine. With an intellectual oeuvre spanning and synthesizing biblical exegesis, legal commentary and judgments, philosophy, and mysticism, Rav Abraham Yitzchak Hacohen Kook encountered the emerging Jewish body politic in Palestine (the *Yeshuv*) in 1907 with a sense of fascination and promise. Fascinated with Feuerbach and Hegel's philosophies of history and spirit, Kook also saw ways to meld such thought within the horizons of both the Hassidic-Kabbalistic and the classic Orthodox traditions.[32] Through this unique prism, Kook saw the dialectical potential for harnessing the largely profanely secular and temporally ethno-nationalist Zionist movement in the service of a theocratic and messianic religious vision.

This vision is articulated in his theological writings, that included programmatic elements such as reestablishing the Jerusalem *Beit Hamikdash* (the Holy Temple) and the *Sanhedrin* (the Jewish judicial tribunal, often referred to in English as "The Great Synode"), as described in the Hebrew Bible and Talmud.[33] Most importantly, he saw the resurrection of the prophetic idea in terms of the perfected clerical figure functioning as the personified sovereign fulcrum of the Jewish religiopolitical community in Palestine. In the *Mishnat Harav*, Kook noted that:

> "From the inspiration of the Torah, prophecy, and God's spirit, the wise men of Israel have always known the secret of the Divine's unity with the profane and were deeply versed in their intertwined nature. This understanding is derived through profound scholastic achievement, and a natural spiritual state arising from a deep well of piously innocent integrity that had always been buried in their souls. On this basis, their teachings branch out into eternity, and all that one suckles from them is full of permanent sweetness."[34]

Rav Kook, in this passage, echoes the imperative for the contemporary cleric to make public his own unique role in facilitating the connection between temporality and the Divine Law, a role that the "wise men of Israel" have dispensed in an uninterrupted chain of tradition. Rav Kook makes sure that his followers within the nomos are both aware of, and gain their life force by, a permanent divine "unity" with a profane temporal sphere. In this short passage, one can observe the theosophical-ontological structure in which the divine is intertwined with temporality and "revealed" to the masses by perfected clerics. Though in his personal diaries he believed himself to be the most exalted prophetic figure of his age, he was careful in his public textual oeuvre not to declare such singularity, lest

he inflame the ire of those already suspicious of both his charisma and jurisprudence and thereby risk his growing popular stature.[35]

Indeed, the Rabbinical establishment at the beginning of Rav Kook's career in Palestine were opposed to his ontological schematic for the integration of mystical ontology and Jewish law in the context of the emerging Jewish political entity. They were appalled by Kook's relative leniency in legal rulings justified partly in terms of both the "spirit of the law" as well as specific notions of historical exigency (Mirsky 2019, pp. 43–91). However, Kook ultimately remained within the "red lines" and was not stripped of his clerical authority. As we noted in the previous section, his "radical" political-theological vision was built upon an already deeply established intellectual tradition within the sphere of theosophic Eastern European Hassidic-Kabbalistic thought, linking a divine ontology to the law.

In Rav Kook's outlook, a theocratic revolutionary revolt against the secularist Zionist sinners leading the Jewish community in Palestine was not necessary, as they were unwittingly doing God's work upon a fecund soil of saturated divinity in the Holy Land of Israel. As Tamar Ross has noted:

> "The secular Zionist "rebellion against *Halakha* (practice of Jewish Law) is merely the flip side of a contemporary yearning for the breadth of prophetic vision. Viewed from the vantage point of eternity, such a generation is *kulo zakai* (fully worthy), reflecting an intuitive desire to extend their spiritual horizons beyond concern for personal reward and punishment and narrow observance of mitzvot (commandments) to collective expression in all facets of life. Rav Kook was convinced that responding to this desire would inevitably lead to a more satisfactory formulation of what faith in God really means, a knowledge previously held by rare individuals, but now demanded by the Jewish masses and eventually by the nations of the world at large. Once the leaders of the professedly religious camp would face the challenge of secularism and reformulate their expression of faith in less narrowly clerical terms, the antireligious trappings of Jewish nationalism would fall away, revealing its redemptive message to all". (Ross 2020, p. 186)

As a result of this religiopolitical prowess, dexterity, and charisma imbuing both his writings and public conduct, Rav Kook ultimately emerged as the dominant jurist and clerical intellectual of the Palestinian Jewish community, the *Yishuv*. In the latter part of his life, he served as the chief rabbi of the Jewish legal system in the context of the British colonial mandate in Palestine. With the establishment of the State of Israel, and its subsequent occupation and settlement of the Jewish "biblical heartland" of Judea and Samaria (commonly known as the West Bank) in 1967, his ideas intensified, and at times transmogrified, the messianic power unleashed by these events. The theocratic idea emanating from "perfected" personhood was posthumously translated into an executable theocratic programmatic by his followers, in which the operation of the State and the decisions of its leaders became themselves imbued with sacrality, rather than functioning as the vehicle with which sacrality unfolds and builds towards a messianic crescendo.[36]

This political theology of mystical presence advanced by Rav Kook, melding as it does philosophic categories of universals and particulars previously considered dichotomous, and saturating temporality with fluctuating valences of divine intensity, is the epistemological nexus through which one can comparatively examine Khomeini and Kook. The self-reflexive capacity of the spiritual master or guardian within modernity to exteriorize and polemicize a conception of his own perfection—inheritor as he is of the tradition's esoteric wisdom, supreme arbiter as he is of the Divine Law's intensity within time-based temporality, and cognizant as he is of the epistemo-political challenges (and opportunities) facing the nomos—is key for thinkers such as Kook and Khomeini.[37] It allows their writings and attendant charismatic personhoods to generate and regulate an existence-based ontology ensconced within a particular relationship to the Divine Law. This ontology is also capable of producing the sovereign epistemological framework for Divine Law's normative capacity for orienting, undergirding, and sublimating temporal law. It lies at the core of the

clerical "guardian's" imperative and potential to mold the theocratic attitudes regarding the sovereignty of religion for the epistemic and ontological regulation of both the metaphysical and temporal realms latent within Judaism and Shia Islam into an argument germane to their moment in historical time.

With this background in mind, we can now observe selections from Khomeini's writings from the early 1970s, namely *Al-Jihād al-akbar* (The Great Jihad) and *Vilāyat-i Faqīh*. In these contemporaneous and highly polemical texts, one ascribed by scholars and acolytes squarely to Khomeini's mystical oeuvre and the other to his juridical texts, we can observe the juridical and theosophic web in which he politically binds himself to his followers. All the while, he avoids the perils of crossing those red lines in his scholarship and sermons which would cost him his theopolitical legitimacy.

Khomeini's *Al-Jihād al-akbar* constitutes a collection of public lectures delivered over the course of nearly a decade in the 1970s during his forced exile in Najaf, Iraq. In these lectures, he polemically melds concepts from Islamic mysticism into a tool for mobilizing his followers into a political plan of action in the here and now. We can observe Khomeini's employment of the term *awlīyā* (guardians) in order to project the cosmological "deficiency" of ordinary human beings and their need for a proper guide on their path to perfection in matters both temporal and spiritual.[38] Concepts derived from the oeuvre of the medieval mystic Ibn al-'Arabī cohabitate with the theosophic delights of Mullah Sadra's theosophy and the cosmologies of other strands of Shiism (Knysh 1992). As Khomeini postulates:

> "Impeccability [*ismāt*] is nothing but perfect faith. The meaning of the impeccability of the prophets and the Friends of God [*awlīyā*] is not that, for instance, Gabriel took them by the hand. Of course, if Gabriel had taken the hand of Shimr, he would never have committed a sin. However, impeccability is the offspring of faith. If a man had faith in God, the Exalted, and if he saw God Almighty with the eyes of his heart as one sees the sun, it would not be possible for him to commit a sin, just as if he were standing before an armed power, he would find some impeccability."[39]

While not claiming any infallible legal or political authority associated with the imams in this text through his introduction of the concept of *'ismā* (impeccability/infallibility), he does imply here that this theologically amorphous category of *walī/awlīyā* would represent at least "some impeccability".[40]

It is also useful to observe once again the ways in which the *walī* can set himself up as the epistemic manager and mobilizer of his *muqallid's* (follower's) autonomy in the political-legal realm, even in this ostensibly non-legal text/set of sermons. The *muqallidūn* are invited in the context of listening to the sermon (or reading its words) to begin the process of mystical ascent to the heights of impeccability without needing one-on-one spiritual and intellectual initiation from a flesh and blood *walī*. However, in the new mystic regime, the process begins with the act of simple faith, an act as "simple" as perhaps going to battle and standing in front of an "armed power", such as a despotic and illegitimate figure like a Shah intent on usurping divine sovereignty. Ultimately, every Shia child (boy) can thereby, at least theoretically, have the chance to fulfill his God-given potential and become a Supreme Jurisconsult, a *walī al-faqīh*, himself one day. There is no need for royal lineage or birth-based descent from the first Shia Imam, Mohammed's son-in-law Ali.

Khomeini juxtaposes the Shah against God in this context to fashion the contours of the theocratic empire of Divine Law that he hopes to build on the ashes of the Shah's Peacock Throne. He thereby creates modes of collective peoplehood which bind *muqallidūn* together, both as individuals embarking on similar yet separate paths towards spiritual perfection conceived via existential frameworks of divine intensity, and as citizens within the refashioned sovereign borders of the Shia nomos. In this fashion, the Shia nomos subsumes the realm of temporal politics into its sovereign epistemic jurisdiction as a pedagogical instrument for the cultivation of the mind, spirit, and body politic.

In Khomeini's explicitly legal text *Vilāyat-I Faqīh* of the same period, in which he makes radical claims for the political scope of a jurist's legislative *wilāya* in functional

terms, he nevertheless places the source of the clerics' functional authority to govern in a relationship that extends back to both the Twelve Imams and prophets such as Mohammed. He demonstrates that the jurists as a class were considered "trusted partners" (*amānā*) of the Prophet. However, not merely keen to receive a legislative/political imprimatur from Mohammed and the Imams, he uses a tradition quoted by Ahmad Narāqī (*Awā'id al-ayām*) from the *Fiqh-i razāvi* to find another group of *amānā* within the theological horizons of the Shia nomos. Khomeini writes:

> "Narāqi quotes this tradition from "the rank of the *faqīh* in the current age is like that of the prophets of the Children of Israel". Naturally, we may not be able to claim that the Fiqh-i Razāvi was composed by Imām Ridā ('a), but it is permissible to quote it in further support for our thesis. It must be understood that "the prophets of the Children of Israel" refers to the prophets and not *fuqāhā* (jurists) who lived in the time of Moses and may or may not have been called prophets for one reason or other. The *fuqāhā* living at the time of Moses were all supplicant to his authority and performed their functions in obedience to him. It may be the case that when he dispatched them somewhere to convey a message, he would also appoint them as "bearers of authority" (*ulu-l-amr*), naturally, we are not precisely informed about these matters—but it is obvious that Moses himself was one of the prophets of the Children of Israel, and that all of the functions that existed for the Most Noble Messenger (s) also existed for Moses, with a difference, of course, in rank, station, and degree. We can therefore deduce from the general semantic range of the word "rank" in this tradition, therefore, that the identical function of rulership and governance that Moses performed is also applicable for *fuqāhā*."[41]

A simultaneous dynamic is at play in the text above. On one level, Khomeini seems keen to embrace such a lengthy historical arc merely to demonstrate the obviousness of his position regarding the scope of the jurist's political authority. However, on another, and perhaps more subtle level, he is adding heavy-duty cosmological padding to buttress and perhaps conceal the theological audaciousness of the political claims at play. He is also providing a bridge to another set of other more overtly cosmological and less "technically legal" discourses in other works.

Despite the "functional" authority which is being claimed throughout the *Vilāyat-i faqīh* text, other forms of legitimating authority are taking shape here—the correlative mediational authority of association between the *fuqāhā*, their *muqallidūn* (followers), and those individuals possessing either a cosmological conduit for the authority of Divine Law, or the most impeccable memory thereof. The fact that clerical political authority is being granted the status of an eternal necessity should not be seen as merely an argument for its legitimate rote temporal operability. It must be understood as embedded within the concomitant strains of mystical ideas coursing through the veins of the nomos. The legal theological toolboxes of these strains concern themselves with the cleaving of cosmological meaning onto all hierarchal relationships of mere functionality within temporality.

Thus, beyond the mere "functional" temporal authority transposed across the generations for this theocratically executive enforcement of the Divine legislative agenda, it seems clear that the efficacy of such functionality lies in the mediated relationships of *wilāya* established between individuals at different hierarchical stations of prophetic inspiration. Sheer "intellectual" presence, via our presentation of the text, is an insufficient rubric for the legal-theological effort at play here, especially given our understanding of the multivalent mystical contexts informing Khomeini's work, and the imperative of mediating corollary relationships of *wilāya* emanating from them. The legal-theological building blocks introduced in the text are connected to the ways *awlīyā* mediate the relationship between concepts of individual clerical perfection, the nation, a political sphere framed against an oppressive empire, and the role of "the Esoteric".

In Rav Kook's case, he has set the epistemic and political boundaries within which the ostensibly inimical secular sinners would ultimately unwittingly achieve the erecting of

the Kingdom of God on the holy land of Israel given their political and military zealotry on behalf of an ethnocentrically Jewish ideology of secular progress. He has acceded power temporarily to secularist "false prophets" such as David Ben-Gurion for the posthumous public emergence and coronation of theosophically inclined clerics melded within his own epistemic horizons. These are the secular prophets described as "*awlīyā*", guardians, by Jalal al-Ahmad, an Iranian Islamic intellectual who traveled to Israel in the 1960s and wrote a famous travelogue: *A Journey to the Guardian of Israel (Safar bi vilāyat-i Isrāil.*

> "Now although one does not compare Israel's leaders with Abraham, David, Solomon, or Moses—peace be upon them ... in any case, today's politicians can be called, if not prophets, then, certainly guardians, and can be likened to the other one-hundred and twenty four thousand prophets of Israel ... these new guardians, each one with his own prophecies or—at least—a clear vision, built a guardianship state in the land of Palestine and called all the Children of Israel to it. We cannot but consider Israel a guardianship state, and its leaders guardians (*awlīyā*): those who march onward in the name of something loftier than human rights declarations. You could say the spirit of Yahweh is upon them and those prophecies ... for it was not until Moses had murdered and fled into the wilderness that he had the brand of prophecy on his breast."[42]

Indeed, both Khomeini and Kook have set up the *fuqāhā* as *awlīyā*, world-facing mystics possessing "piously innocent integrity that had always been buried in their souls" (recall Rav Kook earlier). They are initially innocently withdrawn from but are subsequently pulled into the political sphere by their followers due to exigent need and the opportunities afforded by history, imbuing their followers with a zeal that renders revolutionary political activity into both a legal and theosophic edict. In Khomeini's schematic presented in *Al-Jihād al-akbar*, once the oppositional political sphere has been both neutered and sublimated, the *muqallidūn* can be let into the private sphere of the ascetic *fuqāhā* to bathe in their esoteric radiance. The *muqallidūn* can then lead the *fuqāhā* out into a public sphere sufficiently pure enough to accommodate their ascetically cultivated holiness, a blank slate upon which to erect an Islamic polity that includes the implementation of Islamic law and the consolidation of a thoroughly Islamic society.

This dynamic pertaining to Khomeini coheres with an observation on the relationship of exoteric politics and esoteric mystical doctrine in Rav Kook's mystical thinking and its political ramifications by a leading scholar of Jewish mysticism, Elliot Wolfsohn:

> "Prima Facie, it seems untenable for the esoteric to serve as the basis for a sociopolitical movement, insofar as the latter calls for divulging and transparency and the former for obfuscation and opacity. To speak candidly, one would not expect that the spreading of secrets could serve as the spiritual underpinning of an ideological movement such as Zionism (or Khomeinism). It is reasonable, therefore, for Kook (or Khomeini) to have shifted from an elitist and exclusionary esotericism to an ideal of mysticism that is more inclusive and embracive. Kook transformed the rhetoric of esotericism as his thought matured and the Zionist (Islamic revolutionary) component became more central to his vision. Kook's manner of disclosing seems not to be a revealing of the concealed by concealing the revealed, but rather the promulgation of a **theomonistic** belief that reality partakes of the light of the infinity ... Thus, nature evolves to the point that there is an ever-increasing appreciation of the underlying unity of the untold differentiated beings to the one true source of life. In that respect, immersion in the depth of mysteries and hidden secrets has the task of enhancing the sense of good in the world and thereby rendering existence in its entirety nobler." (Wolfsohn 2017, p. 142)

As we can observe in both Rav Kook and Khomeini's published oeuvre, both figures do not explicitly claim to fuse charismatic prophetic authority with their own personhoods. To do so at an inopportune moment would risk their juridical authority with charges of

heresy or delusional grandiosity and thereby blunt any potential political impact. Indeed, Khomeini achieved the status of sole "guardian" at the helm of a polity via an undemocratic form of consensual collective revolutionary proclamation at the founding of the Islamic Republic in 1979. While the Islamic state was ultimately founded by Khomeini to protect the Shia nomos (which in Shia theology is called the *beydat al-Islām*, or the "seed of Islam") within the boundaries of Iran, theologically buttressed constitutional reforms in the late 1980s transvaluated the state itself into a religious organism whose very existential preservation constituted the most supreme theological value.[43]

Kook did function as the chief rabbi of Palestine during the British mandate, an officially "non-political" position that nevertheless reflected the authority derived from a certain degree of Jewish clerical consensus and a temporal imperially (even if not divinely) sanctioned position of authority in the pre-state era. He neither strove for nor achieved Khomeini's political heights in the Zionist movement and its political leadership. His theosophy of history was guided by an intense yet ultimately gradualist messianism that he believed could unfold over generations while progressively accommodating, harnessing, and eclipsing (or according to his followers post-1948, transvaluating) secular political visions. This was an early Zionist leadership that professed a thoroughgoing ethnocratic secularism, which nevertheless embraced the Bible as an essential source of nationalistic myth.

Indeed, the contemporary Israeli political theorist Bernard Avishai has remarked on the contemporary transfer of prophetic authority across the generations in Israel from the vantage point of Al-e Ahmad's travelogue. He suggests that Al-e Ahmad's representation of Israel's secular political leaders in the founding era of the Jewish State as equivalent to Shia *awlīya* now applies to the increasing political power of those religious Zionist clerics and politicians inspired by Rav Kook:

> "After all, if Al-e Ahmad was right that Israel was a guardianship state, who would be its ideal guardians? Clearly, the Scripture-loving hawks committed to pure collectives and a command economy, to the martyr's version of Jewish history and authentic Jewish rights and law—activists carrying a forlorn hatred for the materialistic, corrupt, and treacherous West and promoting themselves as a vanguard for the Promised Land for World Jewry. In other words, the old Gush Emunim and other zealous West Bank settlers . . . So the Israeli forces Al-e Ahmad applauded found their culmination in fanatical rabbis who hate the ayatollahs and are hated in return—radically new Zionists, who as the novelist V S Naipaul once wrote of an Iranian cleric, slide down their theology to the confusion of their certainties. Al-e Ahmad's little chronicle is instructive. It is not instructive in the way intended." (Avishai 2017)

As Aviezer Ravitzky has aptly noted, Rav Kook was able to construct a theocratic epistemology that represented a totalizing intellectual synthesis which continues to shape the lives and minds of this relatively small yet increasingly powerful theopolitical block within an increasingly religious Jewish State. In an analysis that could equally apply to many followers of Khomeini in today's Islamic Republic, Ravitzki writes"

> "The heirs of Kook's {and Khomeini's} initial openness, his attempt to encompass all the competing viewpoints in a single harmonious whole, now run the risk of being closed in on themselves, imagining smugly that only they represent true integration. In the abstractness of a historiosophy there is room for a variety of stances, but concrete historical reality leaves room to choose only one, to the exclusion of all others. Avoiding this pitfall calls for a nobility of spirit, and a rare capacity to listen. But, as Eliezer Schweid has put it, "such brilliant intuition is not one of those things that can be passed on."" (Ravitzky 1993, p. 96)

In the coming section of this study, I will examine theosophic yet anti-theocratic thinkers determined to allow the epistemic space for possible new divinely inspired tempo-

rally relevant syntheses to emerge. They posit the possibility of such an epistemic space at the core of human autonomy vis-à-vis the State and the master-theosopher.

4. Human Autonomy, the State, and Theosophic "Risk": Rosenzweig and the Iranian Reformists in Dialogue

"Belief in the essential inferiority of the multitude (their being existentially—that is, really and not metaphorically—quadrupeds), along with the philosopher's preoccupation with the movements of existence and unification with the higher world of intelligibles, does not expose much care for the everyday individual ... such a philosopher is not haunted by the specter of the everyday individual's call for being seen, respected and attended to—by the everyday individual's call for having a noble private and political life ... [a] Derrida[ean] hauntology" " ... in a different but no less vigorous manner, Sadra's {theosophy} would be political philosophy [that] could ground the equality of citizens' political rights as a condition of possibility of the existential perfection of man's intellects." (Shomali 2019, pp. 158–59)

In exploring the rhetorical and conceptual apparatus of Khomeini and Rav Kook's theosophically theocratic epistemologies in tandem, we have observed what is quite obviously a core tension with post-Enlightenment conceptions of democratic autonomy. Inherent in the creation of an ontologically based systematic superstructure for human existence, knowledge and action is the existence of a simultaneous co-dependence and struggle between the notion of the everyday co-religionist's individual autonomy and the paternalistic "guardianship" of the system-elucidating theosopher. While this is a tension that has of course preoccupied political philosophy since Plato (and which Shomali terms "the disparity dictum"), the turn to ontology and a synthesis of philosophy and mysticism recasts and exacerbates traditional modes of reconciling the autonomy of human reason vis-à-vis the superior capacities and privileged access granted to the theosopher. The modern theosopher, as we have observed, claims he is responsible for tending the ontological groundwork upon which the fusion of reason and revelation within discrete theopolitical time can occur, with the aim to intensify that fusion via an apparatus of a theocratic state and popular adherence to its laws.

In this section, we will sketch out how this dilemma has been addressed in the thought of Abdolkarim Soroush (b.1945) and Reza Hajatpour (b. 1958), two Iranian-Shia religious intellectuals fluent in theosophy opposing Khomeni's revolutionary synthesis of existence-based ontology and law through the state-based politicization of the *wilāya* principle. In their emphasis on maximizing human autonomy, and not just the autonomy of the exalted theosopher, Soroush and Hajatpour deprive the rhetorical deployment of "the Esoteric" of political power by imbuing *wilāya* with the necessity of "theopolitical" risk. We will also demonstrate how the prominent German-Jewish "existence philosopher" Franz Rosenzweig anticipates their critique, thereby offering new horizons for both Shia and Jewish intellectuals seeking to counter theosophic theocracy.

Indeed, Abdolkarim Soroush, a philosopher heavily indebted to Kant and Popper and considered to be one of the foremost religious intellectuals of the post-revolutionary period, has sought to undermine the discursive power of "the Esoteric" and its capacity to unite philosophy and law through *wilāya* of the supreme jurisconsult against the autonomy of human reason rooted in the reasoning individual.[44] Soroush insists on "the Esoteric's" rootedness in narrative form and interpretation, positing, for instance, the boundary between apparent (*muḥkam*/*ẓāhir*) and esoteric (*mutashābih*/*bāṭin*) meaning of Quranic verses in textual interpretation as one of epistemology and hermeneutics. This allows for the mutability and autonomy of interpretation across generations that is released from restrictive clerical authority, depriving "the Esoteric" of its discursive role in the consolidation of theocratic power over a nomos (Mavani 2013, pp. 73–74).

Despite an admission that many scholars of theosophy are to be viewed as paragons of virtue, the theosophic tradition for Soroush is connected to neither ethics nor law, as

it is fully rooted in the autonomous hermeneutic activity regarding the Divine's names and attributes. As Soroush writes in his essay, "*Vilāyat-i bāṭinī ve vilāyat-i sīyāsī*" ("Esoteric Guardianship and Political Guardianship"):

> "The problem of *vilāyat* also includes at its fulcrum a theoretical component connected to the appearance and manifestation of God. Masters of *Irfān* [trans. theosophy] possess theoretical interpretations regarding such divine appearance and manifestation. They are not, however, supposed to derive ethical norms *sui generis* from it. These masters might be honorable and pious and capable of discerning evil, but their mastery of mystical material does not allow them to generate the basis for the evaluation of ethical values. They are capable of interpreting the world through God's names and attributes, and this is the basis for their theoretical exercise of *irfānī vilāyat* [theosophic *vilāyat*] as *valīs*. For God manifests himself into the world through these names and attributes."[45]

Following the establishment of this division between the practical and theoretical realms with the attendant circumscribing of the interpretive authority of the learned master, Soroush repeatedly turns to the tradition of Persian literature as a parallel source for the creation of religious subjectivity and autonomy. He taps into the dual-presence of Arabic and Persian as languages connected alternately to worldly revelation and the transcendent afterlife, law, and love, intended to undermine the absolute claims of one script, or one mode of religion, against the other. Prophecy is reconceived as moving away from the exclusive purview of the prophet-law-giver (Mohammed), with prophetic power granted to the poet whose verse reveals and interprets esoteric content on aesthetic and substantive levels, thereby undermining the notion of the "open secret" of a theocracy based on clerical possession of esoteric knowledge that has nonetheless been completely textualized. Ascribing master-lyricists such as Rūmī (d.1273) and Ḥāfiẓ (d.1390) (along with the Persian language with which they write) with the power of translating divine prophecy out of the Arabic and away from Muhammad, thereby expanding prophetic experience through a theosophic aesthetics of love, is a claim that many traditional Iranian clerics have declared as heresy.

The Iranian-German philosopher Reza Hajatpour, building on the work of his mentor in Iran Mehdi Ha'iri Yazdi (1923–1999), has focused on the notions of creaturliness, substantive motion, and perfection in Shia theosophy. He attempts to buttress theosophy's long-standing status in the Shia world as "non-Political" prior to the Islamic Revolution with notions of "accepting the risk" of the non-political and the boundaries of intellectual perfection. Given the role of notions of perfection in the underpinning of the theocratic architecture of the Islamic Republic, as well as his role as a philosopher and public intellectual in a contemporary German context indebted to the Kantian and Habermassian legacies, he is particularly keen on developing robust Islamic conceptions of human autonomy. Hajatpour writes that:

> "Alongside the primacy of existence, substantive motion (*al-ḥaraka aj-jawharīya*) plays a key role in Sadra's philosophy. Substantial motion also has a transcendental purpose. It connects the other-worldly with the world. It propels material towards the intellect, multiplicity towards singularity, appearance towards reality, the deficient towards perfection, all the while combining permanent renewal with eternal life inside of its unstable nature. It is the conduit whereby God brings forth new creation and anchors it in nature. Yet in Sadra's existence philosophy, substantive motion along with permanent creation does not only have a narrow eschatological meaning, it also implies the relationship between the imperfect and the volatile on the one hand, and the absolute perfect essence. The deficient essence captured by the non-Being can hope for an eternal life through continual renewal and autonomy." (Hajatpour 2021, p. 54)

Shia *wilāya*, according to Hajatpour, must always "risk" failure and powerlessness given that the imperative of *wilāya* will always put the clerical heirs of the Imams in

judgement of the Political. However, as the refrain goes, the hardest job sometimes is to do nothing at all. To step back before crossing the line, and to leave a system in place with the knowledge that human reason is self-generative in a creaturely ontological sense and cultivatable in a revelatory one. Hence, there is no need for the coercive intervention of a clerical director to wrestle control of the theopolitical play at work.

Hajatpour posits the permanent dilemma of whether the ontological freedom of the "act of being" as well as the freedom of the soul implies a religious and ethical freedom. That is, whether the actual "Man" (as opposed to the concept of man) in Shia theosophy can determine and fashion the extent and degree of his faith and ethical life—or whether an ontological conception of such freedom implies a boundary being set between itself and the ability of an individual to freely determine his position on the path towards cultivated perfection (Hajatpour 2013).

Franz Rosenzweig, like Hajatpour, also expounds upon a notion of the "deficient essence" and the boundaries of systematic ontology and the longing for continual renewal on an individual, communal, and even national basis. Admittedly, it is somewhat ironic to bring Rosenzweig into dialogue with Islam on theological questions of autonomy, creation, and revelation.[46] Islam plays a minor, albeit striking role, in Franz Rosenzweig's 1921 magnum opus, *The Star of Redemption*. In his polemical depiction of Islamic revelation as historically static, existentially stultifying, and incapable of dialogic resonance due to its bifurcated existence as either fundamentalist literalism or "magic", Rosenzweig displays remarkable ignorance, if not deliberate neglect, of much of the scholarly literature on Islam available in the German academy of his time that was largely written by German-Jews.[47]

Rosenzweig builds on German philosophers such as Schelling who viewed the concept of "transcendent immanence" as originally emerging from the creation of the world. He postulated that the world was created through God contracting onto himself in a manner similar to the Kabbalistic doctrine of *tzimtzum*, with God withdrawing from a remnant of his own being. This remnant—a remnant plagued by deficiency—is the very world we live in.[48] Thus, divinity is infused into the world, even though God's essence remains outside of it. God reenters the world through the miracle of Revelation, an act which mimics Creation in that it insists on both the violent creation of an entirely new normative order based on God's will, and the capacity of man as a religious being to philosophically recognize that such a normative rupture is indeed possible. That is why Rosenzweig refers to the miracle of divine revelation in the original German as a "Vergeweltigung Gottes", literally translated as "God making himself world". One cannot help but notice that this German neologism is one vowel away from the German word for "rape" (Vergewaltigung). Thus, the revelatory miracle is to be considered a violent penetration of worldly ontology by a transcendent God to properly orient the individual in a concrete existence already replete with divine intensity.

Rosenzweig posits such a violent penetration of normativity as a challenge to the traditions of philosophic idealism and realism.[49] The Western post-Enlightenment philosophic tradition, according to Rosenzweig, is profoundly afraid of the miracle because it presents the challenge of an entirely new metaphysical normativity as mandated by divinity. It is the promise of a system that deliberately never achieves a systematic synthesis of all particulars, and thus, is open to renewal from a transcendent God and the autonomous action of individuals who feel commanded to obey. Therefore, in Rosenzweig's eyes, "the whole search for a pre-reflective reality can only be understood retroactively", and not based on, for example, an a priori theosophic synthesis (Moses 1992, p. 45).

Rosenzweig pivoted away from the academic philosophic enterprise and toward a Jewish community and its religious learning and law. He was to be the *walī* of the individual Jew and his spiritual, and in this sense, intellectual cultivation. However, this community was meant to be built from the ground-up, a nomos constructed from individual autonomous Jews bound in conversation with the God who had once provided both a commanding act of Revelation, and the commandment of particular laws, rather

than an overarching concept of law. He insists on a porous form of particularity, whether of religions or states.

According to Rosenzweig, for a philosopher to become a guardian "does not mean forbidding any type of ingathering", but rather "interrupt[ing} in gathering by the *syn* of the synthesis or of the system, notably in the form of the State" (Derrida 1991, p. 44). The Western nation State had an epistemological power that, if improperly harnessed, would undermine the autonomy of the non-philosopher who would be unable to ascertain and critique the epistemic horizons which would bind his or her critique of the laws promulgated by the State in their own particular era. As Rosenzweig noted in a famous passage in Book 3 of the Star:

> "Coercion provides life with legal redress against law. By being coercive itself, the State remains hard on the heels of life. The point of all coercion is to institute new law. It is not the denial of law as one might think under the spell of cataclysmic behavior; on the contrary, it lays the basis for law. But a paradox lurks in the idea of a new law. Law is essentially old law. In the coercive act, the law constantly becomes new law. And the State is thus equally both lawful and coercive, refuge of the old law and the source of the new . . . At every moment the state is forcibly deciding the contradiction between conservation and renovation, between old law and new. It thus constantly resolves the contradiction, while the course of the people's life only delays the solution through the onward flow of time. The State attacks the problem; indeed, the State is itself nothing but the constant resolution of this contradiction". (Rosenzweig 1985, p. 333)

Thus, in the Star of Redemption, a modern coercive State is, in its non-critically deconstructed form, not merely a passive vehicle for inaugurating this revolutionary upheaval in the epistemological underpinnings of the law. It operates, rather, as an ideal conduit for facilitating the relationship between these esoteric Platonic Philosopher kings and the proletariat masses they must protect from sin and whose path to truly autonomous felicity they must keep open, between an old law not fully dependent on either "reason" or "existence" or "the State", and a new law that melds all three via a personalistic gnostic conduit and an attendant decisionistic system of positive law.

A form of popular dialogic autonomy is ensured and enabled by the philosophic endeavor, with the philosopher charged with the continual reconstruction and renewal of the sovereign boundaries of the State and theologically-legally based nomoi. This process is based on his ability to depict the perfect synthesis revealed openly within language and shorn of any political claims to Esoteric knowledge—a type of poetic negotiation between a concept of the Absolute and historical circumstance that could very well find favor with Soroush.

Indeed, Rosenzweig had a metaphysical notion of the interaction between a Jewish nomos conceived as eternal, and a Christianity remained tethered to a permanently unredeemed temporality rooted in the coterminous yet non-symbiotic relationship between "Church and State". He rooted his political critique of current events from that vantage point. The performance of a law rooted in the commandment of Revelation was not, in Rosenzweig's schematic, to be rooted in the otherwise robust ontology of his existence-based systematic thinking. Instead, revelation was to be conceived as rooted in an individual encounter, and subsequently communicated dialogically with fellow Jews, both in concrete time and across history. This schematic, however, was dependent on the Jewish nomos existing on a plane removed from historical time, ceding a part of "the saeculum" to both the Church and the State operating alongside and in dialogue with this "eternal" yet ultimately incomplete Jewish nomos.[50] Rosenzweig therefore insists that Judaism exists outside of historical time, rejecting the secular and religious Zionist notions that modernity offers an entry into history on Jewish terms through totalizing philosophical and theological syntheses offered by the legal apparatus of a State.[51]

Through his own act of translation as a Jew between Judaism and the German saeculum in which he was a citizen-subject, Rosenzweig reaffirms his dialogic existence-based

philosophy of speech. He homes in on the necessity for a persistent acknowledgement that all communication across time and between people constitutes acts of self-negating translation. Translation is conceived by Rosenzweig in terms of interactions between discrete agents cognizant of their own relationship to divine liminality. They are incapable of accessing a primordial common language of divine origin beyond the experience of mere traces through the dialogic encounter, thereby always remaining open to a rejuvenating transformation—whether these agents be prophetic clerics, sovereign political entities in an international system, or law-abiding believers and citizens.

> "In Rozensweig's new thinking, openness and boundedness as features at the same time means openness *only* through the concepts of creation, revelation, and redemption. To these categories the personal experience of the individual *is* subject. Immanence and transcendence to each "other" are characterized as alternating events. The event of revelation each time, at Sinai, Golgotha, or in a personal meeting, is itself a relationship between the easily violable boundaries of God and man. But divine revelation commands that there be relationships across the boundaries of the three elements. If relationships can never involve fewer than two, boundaries must remain. If two cannot reduce further, these two must co-relate in order to know anything important of the other". (Galli 2002, p. 292)

To harken back to Reza Hajatpour, "the deficient essence captured by the non-Being can hope for an eternal life through continual renewal *and autonomy*". The clerical guardian in Rosenzweig's schematic is bound by a corollary dialogic responsibility to both the autonomous capacity of his followers to exercise "theosophic" reasoning and attunement to the possibility of a transcendently imminent Divine breaking through any theosophic synthesis of ideas.

5. Conclusions

According to Leo Strauss, mystical metaphysics expressed exoterically in a manner unregulated by clerical consensus or the philosophers can unleash political danger. Such dangers are foreseen by Strauss in his defense of philosophy and political philosophy over and against a mysticism capable of producing dangerous biblically legitimated mythologies when exoterically popularized. In his correspondence with the venerable scholar of Jewish mysticism Gershom Scholem, Strauss noted that:

> "The consequential confrontation of the Divine Spheres with the operative attributes of the Divine is a proof that the Kabbala is closer to the Bible than Jewish philosophy, especially that of Maimonides. That this philosophy is considered more worthy of respect than the Kabbalah is only right in the sense that philosophy is in and of itself a response to the anxiety that is released by myth. Kabbala is more venerable than philosophy in that it does not even care about the problematique posed by the notion of the creation of the world."[52]

Thus, by virtue of its intimate connection with Biblical narrative myth and its belief in the "content" of revelation (however "metaphysically philosophic" it may seem), Strauss considers the Kabbalistic corpus fundamentally incapable of producing the kind of nomoi powerful enough to prevent the destruction of the contemplative endeavor inaugurated by philosophy. Kabbalah is incapable of precisely managing temporal law because it insists on a biblically sacralized temporality in contradistinction to philosophy, thereby rendering it incapable of the philosophical-normative power for a secularized modernity. Mysticism is thoroughly the province of Jerusalem.

Strauss never considered alternative religious and political formations rooted in the imperatives emerging from a theosophic synthesis of Athens and Jerusalem rather than the two traditions existing as opposites to be negotiated exoterically by the philosopher qua. law giver. The synthetic schematics of Athens' fusion with Jerusalem have emerged within Islamic and Jewish history under the conditions and challenges posed by imperial kingship underwritten by clerical legitimacy and, later, the modern era in theosophic negotiation

of the esoteric and the exoteric via politics and a legal system. Strauss' unwillingness to conceive of philosophy as capable of becoming thoroughly intertwined with revelation, along with his ignorance of the historical continuity of medieval philosophy within the theosophic political horizons of Judaism and Islam as reflected by Hasidism and Shiism, has rendered him incapable of granting this corpus and its intellectual-religious guardians (both theocratic and anti-theocratic in their orientations) the capacity for political philosophy. In rendering theosophy to the sphere of "myth" he denies the theosopher's ability to develop political philosophies and attendant legal theologies rooted in the negotiation between esoteric metaphysical doctrine and exoteric prophetic revelation. Such theosophers pursue this path in order to maintain the political stability of a nomos attuned to revelation and the freedom for philosophic contemplation.

The emergence of theosophic theocracy within the horizons of the West should also give pause to contemporary Western scholars of Religious Studies and Political Philosophy keen on using medieval Judeo-Islamic philosophy as a philologically demonstrable exoteric bridge between Judaism and Islam in useful models of interreligious "co-production" for the present age.[53] They should be wary of viewing this corpus in terms of a rationalist body of proto-Protestant Enlightenment philosophic thought pregnant with possibility to arm Western liberalism's fight with both religious extremism and fundamentalism (often seen as emerging from Islam), on one end, and Weberian rationalized, disenchanted, and desacralized iron cages on the other end.[54] In the liberal "fundamentalist" impulse to retrieve the theopolitically robust rationalist Judeo-Islamic legacy, they may not achieve their mission of enhancing the charismatic power of liberal, democratic Enlightenment in the present-day Western public sphere with the philosophic legacy of traditions currently in political conflict. Hopefully, this study has highlighted an alternative approach to both Strauss' "esoteric" and contemporary liberal thinkers' "exoteric" retrieval of medieval Judeo-Islamic political and legal theology.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Notes

[1] (Schaefer 2017). Translation from the German is my own.

[2] The two main texts which advance this argument are Strauss's early 1933 (Strauss 1995) and his later 1952 collection of essays in (Strauss 1988). For a comprehensive compilation of Strauss' writings in this genre, see (Strauss 2013). For seminal studies on the potentially fecund meeting of "medievals and moderns" for the sake of Western civilization in Strauss' thought, see Georges Tamer (2011) and Kenneth Hart Green (1993).

[3] See (Meier 2017) for a contemporary Straussian-inspired argument for the necessity of polemic political theology to defend the Western philosophic tradition against various religious fundamentalisms of our contemporary age. Georges Tamer along with other historically sensitive and critical scholars of Strauss will point out that many of the philosophers whom Strauss associated with contexts of religious persecution, such as Alfarabi and Maimonides (in the latter half of his career), were in fact free to philosophize "dangerously" in quite favorable conditions of aristocratic patronage and robust public debate against clerical opponents. See (Tamer 2011, pp. 27–34).

[4] Such a view pushes back not just against Strauss' position regarding medieval political philosophy but what are perhaps the most rigorous contemporary academic studies on medieval political thought in both traditions. See, for example, Menachem Lorberbaum's treatment of Maimonides in (Lorberbaum 2002) or Alireza Shomali's treatment of Alfarabi in (Shomali 2019, pp. 249–332).

[5] For seminal academic biographies of both figures sensitive to their ideas, see (Mirsky 2019; Moin 2009; Amirpur 2021).

[6] For excellent historically contextualized overviews of the various conceptual matrices at work, the canonical texts involved, and carefully marshalled bibliographies, see (Harvey 2013; Stroumsa 2009).

[7] See the discussion on the *najasat* issue in reference to Shia–Jewish relations in (Amir-Moezzi 2013b, pp. 816–23).

[8] (Wasserstrom 1995, pp. 93–135). Also see Amir-Moezzi (2013a) "Ismail'ism and Medieval Jewish Thought in Islamic Territories", in (Ibid., pp. 824–27).

[9] For more on the parallels between Jewish notions of *galut* and Twelver Shia notions of *gheyba*, see (Krinis 2013).

[10] The exposure to Fatimid-era Ismaili missionaries and the texts they brought to medieval Andalusia led to the eclectic adoption of concepts not only from Ismaili Shiism, but to other streams within Shiism, such as the Imami-Twelvers.

[11] (Krinis 2014, p. 6).

[12] For a comprehensive bibliographical review on this history of intellectual exchange between Jewish and Shia thinkers in the medieval era, see (Krinis 2019). Krinis includes summaries of various academic oeuvres and works extending from the "founder" of "Shia–Jewish Studies" Israel Friedlander (1867–1920), who wrote on the impact of Shiism on Jewish heretical messianic movements to Wilferd Madelung who explores the Twelver Shia impact on the Karaite movement. Other contemporary prominent scholars exploring medieval Shia–Jewish theological connections include Meier Bar-Asher, Sabine Schmidtke, and Dennis Halft. Of course, the most robust period of Shia–Jewish exchange beyond the theological level occurred in the Fatimid era, as has been revealed in the copious scholarship on the Cairo Geniza.

[13] For a thorough reception history of the *Kuzari* through the 19th century, see (Shear 2008).

[14] Most recently, Ezra Tzfadya has systematically demonstrated how these Shia concepts constitutive to *wilāya* are ensconced within Halevi's deployment of the term *walī* (or guardian). Halevi uses the term in connection with his conception of "the prophetic", a status he ascribes to the rabbis of the Second Temple Era and the theopolitical aspirations of one of the text's core protagonists, the Khazar emperor. Previous philologists such as Diana Lobel attributed the deployment of this term to the Sufi concept of sainthood considering the frequency of the term's appearance in those texts of that era. See (Tzfadya 2022; Lobel 2000). Tzfadya's arguments flesh out a line of thought briefly sketched in (Lorberbaum 2011).

[15] Indeed, any Persian language source engaging in an overview of *Wilāya* will offer 30 or so different definitions and Persian translations for the word, including master, owner, friend, and sign. All imply some type of "correlative" dimension. See, for example, the introduction to Mohsen Kadivar's seminal (Kadivar 1998).

[16] For a synthetic overview of the medieval Islamic philosophic tradition's conceptual apparatus vis-à-vis and often melding into mysticism in the works of what is often termed the "Illuminationist" tradition, represented most famously by the great thinkers Ibn Arabi and Suhrawardi, see (Walbridge 1988). Excellent representative medieval parallels in the Jewish tradition would be the figures of Nahmanides and Ibn Ezra, both of whom are famous for integrating this form of intellectualized mysticism in their "esoteric" biblical commentaries. For an excellent and hitherto canonical contemporary study on Nahmanides intellectual context, see (Halbertal 2020). For an excellent conceptually synthetic overview of Ibn Ezra's ideas, see (Langermann 2021). Shia Islam contains numerous denominations and sects. This study's treatment of early-modern through contemporary Shiism will focus on the denomination of Shiism known as Twelver Shiism, which dominates contemporary Lebanon, Iraq, and Iran and is the official form of Shiism in the Islamic Republic. Briefly put, Twelver Shiism is distinguished from other denominations within Shia Islam due to its theory of an "occulted" twelfth Imam referred to as the Mahdi who will return to augur in the messianic age. All subsequent references to "Shiism" or the "Shia" in this study refer to the Twelver denomination. For an excellent introduction to Shiism that covers the emergence of denominations (i.e., Twelver, Ismaili, Zaydi), see (Haider 2014).

[17] (Groezinger 2005). Translation is my own.

[18] For an excellent historical and conceptual contextualization of this process of mystical "theosophication" from the Safavid era, see (Anzali 2017). For an introduction to the roots and consequences of the Shia conceptual preoccupation with cosmology due to its theory of the Imamate, see (Amir-Moezzi 1994).

[19] There are too many excellent introductions to Hassidism to list here. For an excellent and innovative recent overview of the state of scholarship on Hassidism, see (Biale et al. 2017), in conjunction with a series of essays critiquing nearly every chapter within the volume by (Heschel and Magid 2020). For an excellent introduction to Mullah Sadra's thought, see (Kalin 2015) in their "Makers of Islamic Civilization" book series.

[20] (Lorberbaum 2017, p. 234). For the seminal history of the Sabbatian revolt, see (Scholem 2016).

[21] For an excellent collection of articles detailing the "flattening out" of philosophical and mystical processes in the transition from Islamic Illuminationism and (Neo)Platonism to Sadra's theosophy, see (Hajatpour 2021).

[22] For an excellent description of the Hassidic "*vita aktiva*" and the relationship between the *tzaddik* and his followers, see (Magid 2014, pp. 51–80). Also see Lorberbaum, "Rethinking Halakha in Modern Eastern Europe: Mysticism, Antinomianism, Positivism", for a comprehensive account of the revolutionary concepts of orthopraxic Jewish legal theology rooted in the esoteric-exoteric dynamics negotiated by via the figure of the Hassidic Tzadik, and the parallel processes of emphatic disassociation between esoteric mysticism and exoteric law advocated by the movement of "Mitnagdism".

[23] See the excellent conceptually synthetic account of Tabatabai's oeuvre and his significance in laying the intellectual basis for the Islamic Revolution in (Dabashi 2017, pp. 273–323). It must be noted that while Tabatabai supported both the removal of the Shah and a strong clerical influence on national politics, he publicly did not subscribe to Khomeini's theory of the political rule of a singular jurist (*Wilāyat al-Faqīh*). This complex theological-political stance has made him a canonical thinker both within and outside pro-regime clerical circles in Iran.

[24] For more on doctrinal conceptions of Shia occultation and its relationship to claims on religious and political authority in the post-occultation era, see (Mavani 2013, pp. 135–77).

25   It is beyond the scope of this introductory note to provide a sociological-historical explanation for, or hermeneutical reflection upon, the genealogy of this phenomenon in the respective traditions.

26   (Krinis 2014, p. 6).

27   For an excellent description of the evolution of Khomeini's religious and political thought alongside his personal biography and polemical revolutionary leadership, see (Dabashi 2017, pp. 409–84).

28   For a discussion on Naraqi's juridical construction of religious authority in conjunction with a historically sensitive hermeneutics of the sole surviving hagiography on his life, see (Tzfadya 2022). For more on al-Ansārī's quietist consolidation of religious authority in the figure of the *Marj'a at-Taqlid* and his status as the sole *Marj'a* of his generation, see (Sachedina 1988). Khomeini and his successor Ali Khamenei have attempted, with little success, to make the Supreme Leader of Iran the sole legitimate *Marj'a* of the Shia worldwide.

29   For a more theoretically sophisticated analysis on the resonance of Karbala on the contemporary Shia theopolitical imagination, see (Dabashi 2014, pp. 73–102).

30   To answer questions of this sort, scholars and laypeople will often look to hints within Khomeini's mystical corpus to ascertain whether Khomeini himself believed he completed the four theosophic journeys Mullah Sadra that lead towards human perfection (described in the treatise *al-Asfār al-Arb'a*, trans. *The Four Journeys*) or other modes of ultimate mystical and prophetic ascent suggested by the medieval Illuminationist philosophers. See (Moin 2009, pp. 39–52). Alternatively, they will ponder over the nature of Khomeini's refusal to overtly contradict those who would address him with the honorific of "Imam" or clerical opposition to his reading of mystical poetry on state TV in the early years of the Islamic Republic to argue against that position. See (Rigeon 2014). In the case of Reza Hajatpour, his incredibly thorough accounting of Khomeini's political and legal thought leads him to posit the legal innovation of Khomeini made with the *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* idea in terms of a religiously anarchic/autarchic sovereign decision connected to a thoroughgoing politicization of Shia Islam and the cheapening mythologization of its collective spiritual memory. He does not see Khomeini in terms of any kind of fealty to theological imperatives emanating from either the Shia Islamic legal tradition or the Islamic mystical corpus. See (Hajatpour 2002, p. 212). "With the politicization of Islam, Khomeini achieved its thoroughgoing temporalization. He contributed to the fact that the clerics would, from thereon out, be considered as political instantiations rather than pastoral or moral leaders (which had formerly been central to their roles)" (Translation from German is my own). Hamid Enayat posits Khomeini's support for the erecting of an Islamic Republic in purely juridical terms: "keeping well within the bounds set by the great masters of the past", despite Khomeini's mystical scholarship. See (Enayat 1983, p. 160).

31   See George Sieg's illuminating study for the most rigorous argument so far "in favor", an approach I hope to affirm, complement, and complicate. G. J Sieg. (Sieg 2021). Also see Alexander Nachman's treatment of the legacy of Khomeini's personalized model of "esotericist perfection" affecting specific legal matters within the Islamic Republic even after his death in (Nachman 2019).

32   For an excellent discussion of Rav Kook's conceptual engagement with 19th century continental philosophy, see (Fischer 2007; Ross 2020, pp. 197–200). For a masterful comprehensive discussion of Rav Kook's early thought before he assumed an institutional imprimatur in the Zionist community, see (Mirsky 2021).

33   For more on Rav Kook's institutionalist visions, see (Ravitzky 1993).

34   (Kook 1980, p. 92). Translation from Hebrew is my own.

35   For more on the potentially heretical elements of Rav Kook's diaries, which were long kept hidden, see (Mirsky 2019, pp. 92–120).

36   This conceptual transvaluation achieved by Rav Kook's son Zvi Yehuda and his followers is best explicated in (Ravitzky 1993, pp. 131–44).

37   For an excellent discussion on Rav Kook's cosmology of perfection and perfectibility, see (Ross 2020, pp. 193–97).

38   (Dabashi 2017, p. 466).

39   Khomeini. *Al-Jihād al-akbar*, pp. 46–47.

40   For more on the doctrine of *'ismā*, see (Mavani 2013, pp. 89–92), and on the parameters of possible dissent included within the doctrine, pp. 127–29. Mavani notes that it is not theologically axiomatic across the historical and geographical breadth of Twelver Shia tradition that the Imams were infallible in an absolute sense.

41   Khomeini, *Vilāyat-i Faqīh*. p. 77

42   (Al-e Ahmad and Daneshvar 2017, pp. 54–55). For a seminal, comprehensive historical and conceptually synthetic discussion of al-e Ahmad's "Islamist ideology", see (Dabashi 2017, pp. 39–101). For an accessible yet thoroughly contextualized treatment of the Al-e Ahmad travelogue, see (Sadeghi-Boroujerdi and Yadgar 2021).

43   Such "normalized sacralization" was achieved via seemingly de-sanctifying principles of legal expediency (*Maṣlaḥa*) and "elastic law" (*Fiq-i pūyā*) on behalf of a theopolitical principle of "regime preservation" (*Ḥefẓ-i nizām*) in the theological visions used to buttress Iranian constitutional reforms in the late 1980s. The *Vilayat-i Faqīh* (Guardianship of Supreme Jurisconsult) doctrine, in this constellation, transforms into a doctrine of the Absolute Guardianship of the Supreme Jurisconsult. For more on these theological-political transformations in Khomeini's later thought, see (Mavani 2013, pp. 180–84).

44   For more discussions of Soroush's legal epistemology and rigorous syntheses of his works, see (Dahlen 2003, pp. 187–333). Heydar (2018) demonstrates the epistemological contours of Soroush's negotiation of historicism and a concept of an "Absolute"

within an overarching theory of religion. For an excellent situating of Soroush's ideas and person in historical context, see (Ghamari Tabrizi 2008; Amirpur 2003).

45   (Soroush 1999). Translation from Persian is my own.

46   It is clear, as Gil Anidjar has most expertly demonstrated in *Jew and Arab: A History of the Enemy*, that Rosenzweig's positing of the Muslim as an enemy of the Christian and Jew is an inversion of the long-standing European-Christian positing of the Arab qua. Muslim as the political enemy and the Jew as the theological-racial enemy. (Anidjar 2003). For a collection of Rosenzweig's texts on Islam alongside a critical introduction, see (Rosenzweig 2003).

47   For more on the sources which informed Rosenzweig's theologically narrow view of Islam, see (Roozen 2022). As Roozen notes, even Rosenzweig's reference to "Imams" (*Imamlehre*) derived from an examination of Goldzieher's *Vorlesungen uber den Islam* does not make the distinction between Sunni and Shia Islamic notions of the doctrine presented in that text.

48   For more on the role of tzimtzum in Rosenzweig's thought, a concept he derives from both Lurianic Kabbalah and Friedrich Schelling, see (Pollock 2021; Horwitz 2006).

49   For more on Rosenzweig's relationship to German Idealism, see (Pollock 2009).

50   For a philosophically fecund discussion of Rosenzweig's ethical-metaphysical dialogism, see (Gibbs 1994).

51   For more on the potential within Rosenzweig's thought to unlock a political critique, see (Batnitzky 1997; Honig 2011), and Eric Santner in (Santner 2001; Vatter 2021).

52   (Scholem and Strauss 2006, p. 23). Translation from French is my own.

53   The term "co-production" is a relatively recent and helpful term used by scholars Katharina Hayden and David Nirenberg to describe the reflexive simultaneous reconstitution and preservation of religious nomoi based on polemic encounter. Both see the medieval Judeo-Islamic tradition as a helpful example for their historiographical construct. See (Hayden 2022; Nirenberg 2016). For a reflection and critique of how modern Jewish philosophers deeply steeped in both the medieval Jewish tradition transformed the polemic refutative literary element essential to the Judeo-Islamic medieval tradition into one rooted in dialogic subjectivity that has perhaps led to romanticized perspectives on that era of exchange, see (Hughes 2012). For a helpful overview of the current historiographical debates related to the medieval Islamic–Jewish "convivencia", see (Cohen 2014).

54   For a representative, comprehensive, and conceptually synthetic work with the normative bent explicated above, see (Fraenkel 2014). This work has fed into his reflective account of using the medieval tradition as a bridge between Muslims and Jews in the context of the Palestinian–Israeli conflict in (Fraenkel and Walzer 2015).

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