

Research Article

The Transcendental Philosophy: Political Theory¹

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Abstract

This article aims at presenting the viewpoint of the transcendental philosophy regarding the political theory. The article claims that, regarding the origin of the political theory, the transcendental theosophy has a paradigmatic view in relation to the common viewpoint of the philosophy of social sciences. To do so, we have used the documentary method and, by referring to the claims of the political transcendental philosophers, have sought to investigate our claim to show that the transcendental philosophy, unlike what Karl Popper maintains, regards the origin of the theory among the issues related to the philosophy of the social sciences, not a psychological issue. From the findings of this article, we can conclude that the transcendental philosophy does not restrict itself, in constructing the political theory, to just the creative role of the mind. Rather, it considers the role of creative inspirations as well. Accordingly, it considers both constructing the political theory and testing it as one of the methodological issues. Among the achievements of this point, we can refer to the relationship of the logical aspects and ontological aspects of the subjects in philosophy of the social sciences.

Keywords

transcendental philosophy, political theory, philosophy of social sciences, methodology, ontology.

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1. Introduction

Blaikie defines ‘theory’ from the common viewpoint as follows: “a cohesive collection of propositions that state the relationship between various concepts, and come out of the empirical test proud” (Blaikie, 1993, p. 302). When Blaikie speaks of common view, he means the positivism that considers ‘theory’ as a logical-syllogistic system of related definitions, propositions and laws. The role of this collection of logical speech is the analysis and explanation of a part of reality in the light of a social order. The rightness of the propositions of the theory is contingent upon observation and testing (Pezeshgi, not published). As Blaikie asserts, this definition of theory is based on one of the schools of the philosophy of humanities, and we may offer other definitions based on various schools. In the transcendental philosophy, however, in spite of the fact that there is no definition of the concept of ‘theory’, we may find a perception of it among the Muslim philosophers. For instance, Mahdi Ha’eri Yazdi maintains that for Muslims philosophes, the structure of an argumentation includes a collection of propositions formulated during the two syllogisms (one in the realm of the theoretical philosophy, and the other in the realm of practical philosophy) (Ha’eri Yazdi, 1361 SH, pp. 100-101). In this article, a sample of the structure of theory is shown as an example constructed by Ha’eri in the ‘argument of the truthful’ (*burhān ṣiddīqīn*).

The argument of the truthful through the mathematical logic

1. The being is the necessary being in essence **p** | (first premise)
2. The being is the possible being in essence **q** | (second
premise)
3. The being is either necessary or possible being in essence **p ∨ q**
4. If the being is essentially possible, it necessitates the essentially
necessary being **q → p**

5. Supposed proposition: we suppose that the being is essentially possible **q**
6. Repetition of the premise (4) **q → p**
7. Exceptional categorical proposition (5) that necessitates consequent categorical proposition **q**
8. Consequent categorical proposition **p**
9. Resultant categorical proposition **p**
10. Supposition contradicting the proposition (5) \square **q**
11. Repetition of premise (3) **p ∨ q**
12. Logical definition of proposition (11) \square **p → q**
13. Converse contradiction of proposition (12) \square **q → p**
14. Exceptional categorical proposition (10) that necessitates consequent categorical proposition \square **q**
15. Consequent categorical proposition (13) **p**
16. Resultant categorical proposition **p**

Formulation of the ‘argument of the truthful’/ Mahdi Ha’eri Yazdi

(Ha’eri Yazdi, 1385 SH, p. 9)

The argumentative structure of the ‘argument of the truthful’, while it is not in the realm of politics, shows a Muslim philosopher’s image of the structure of ‘theory’. Although the political theories are structurally formulated like the argument of the truthful, they are logically a kind of polemic syllogism or heard syllogism, different from the argumentative syllogism. The polemic syllogism is a syllogism whose examples (minor propositions) or rules (major propositions) are taken for granted, while this may not be the case. The polemic syllogism also includes a syllogism that works for others, although this may not be the case in reality (Soleymani Amiri, 1399 SH, pp. 471-472). Accordingly, we may consider the political theory as an argument composed of one or more polemic syllogisms whose instances, rules or results are structurally accepted by the scholars, thinkers and

writers of politics. Later in this article, we first define and investigate various types of political theory and, then, discuss the mechanism for its origination and, finally, we will speak of the test or construct of political theory.

2. Background

In principle, exploration about the ‘political theory’ based on the doctrines of the transcendental philosophy is a new idea about which few books or articles can be found. However, some parts of it can be found among the works published about the transcendental philosophy. As an example, the book entitled *Mulla Sadra’s Methodology: Inferring Rational Knowledge from Religious Texts* (Minagar, 1392 SH) deals with methodology of the transcendental philosophy in general; and from this perspective, it includes just some of the introductory discussions necessary for the subject of this article. On the other hand, as the subsidiary title of his book shows, Minagar has restricted himself to considering how to receive the rational knowledge from the religious texts, while here we do not focus just on religious texts. Thus, the subject matter in this article is more general than Minagar’s book. Apart from that book, we may refer to short references about the methodological issues in works of some contemporary theosophist philosophers. As an example, in his book entitled *Explorations of Practical Reason*, while explaining the theory of ‘pyramid of existence’, Mahdi Ha’eri Yazdi states that, “in traverse lines, if we compare a line with another line and investigate their relationship, these lines are in opposition to one another. This is because their specification is different from one another. These are accidents, and are not capable of establishing longitudinal and cause-effect relations with one another” (Ha’eri, 1361 SH, p. 210). As it is clear, this statement necessitates that according to this basis, the affirmative causal analyses are not, indeed, causal analysis. Thus, they may not enjoy

empirical objectivity. Here again, we may access just a discussion on explanatory argument. Similarly, in the works of other contemporary theosophist philosophers, we may find elements and components of a political methodology based on transcendental philosophy. However, as far as I know, there is no cohesive discussion written on the political theory. The present article attempts to deal with the mechanism of political theorization by using the existing related sources.

3. Definition and types of political theory

The paradigmatic result of knowing the meaning of the term ‘political’ is that we may seek to find its meaning based of the doctrines of the transcendental philosophy. Thus, to offer a proper definition for this type of philosophy, we must consider five claims: (1) ‘Politics’ is a discipline in the realm of ‘practical philosophy’ and, as Farabi introduces it, it is in the realm of ‘humanities’. Therefore, it is different from natural sciences and mathematics. (2) Muslims philosophers consider the man’s free coactions as the subject matter of humanities. Thus, they maintain that political phenomena are constructed. (3) According to Muslim philosophers’ perception, humanities are related to norms (Pezeshgi, 1398 SH, pp. 197-199). (4) Just like social theory, the political theory also is a kind of formulation of defined actions that explain the human truths and phenomena (Pezeshgi, 1401 SH, pp. 111-112). (5) Allamah Muhammad Hussein Tabataba’i claims that social justice is a meaning presumed inside the concept of ‘community’. This is because, as he explains, community is the product of an agreement between the members of the society for making use of the abilities of one another. But since, sometimes, such an agreement does not cover its natural path, it is necessary to observe some principles based on which the coaction of the members of society fulfills their needs, the principles that fall under the title of ‘social justice’ and preserve the binding of

the society (Motahhari, 1375 SH, pp. 434-436). And (6) He also maintains that the nature of this kind of coactions is 'hierarchical' and calls it 'ruling and subordination' (Motahhari, 1375 SH, pp. 448-449). Now, considering what was stated in the above six claims, we may consider 'political' as including a wide range of meanings settled in an area that are human, constructed, normative, institutional, justice-centered, and hierarchical; and one can summarize all these features into 'ruling' and 'subordination'. Considering these semantic features stated for 'political', we may define the 'political theory' as 'argumentative polemic formulation about ruling and subordination based on criteria of the social justice'.

After determining the meaning of political theory in transcendental philosophy, it is necessary to investigate its various types. For classification of types of political theory, we must say that Tabataba'i considers human 'needs' as the philosophy of creating social constructions, and claims that each of the pre- and post-social 'conventions' are constructed for fulfilling these natural needs and their functions (Motahhari, 1375 SH, p. 413). Of course, the writer believes that regarding the constructions pertaining to ruling and subordination, we need to speak of the more precise concept of 'interests' instead of 'needs'. Accordingly, the 'political' affairs include a range of constructions of ruling and subordination that justly fulfill the interests of the ruler and the subordinates. Evidently, we must classify the aforementioned constructions variously, and to do so, we can use the achievements of the science of politics. Thus, we may use Biswas's classification in general for classifying the political theories, and this is not contradictory to offering other classifications that become necessary in proportion to scientific needs. For example, Blaikie speaks of two types of theory: the theory of theoreticians and the theory of researchers. By the former, he means the theory that the writers and thinkers compile for offering a meaning of social life based on the fundamental concepts and thoughts, while the second

type theory is the one used by the researcher as a source for investigating the hypothesis under assessment or produced by him during the research (Blaikie, 1387 SH, p. 187). Thus, we can speak in general of four theories in politics: prescriptive, descriptive, historical, and strategic.

4. Origin of the political theory

After investigating the meaning and various types of political theory, it is necessary to deal with the question on where the political theory and its formative propositions come from. The author's claim is that 'the ruling and subordination constructs' are the origin of political theory. Explaining this claim requires the explanation of ruling constructs, because the subject of political theory is these very ruling and subordination constructs.

Therefore, we first highlight the ruling construct according to the teachings of Allamah Tabataba'i in the following proposition so that we use them in arguments used for proving the writer's claim regarding the origin of the political theory. (1) Not only the men but also any living thing put a series of constructed perceptions between themselves and their volitional actions (Motahhari, 1375 SH, p. 429). Thus, all actions of the man, including his political actions, are based on constructs formed about the ruling and subordination. (2) Existence of community is presupposition for existence of ruling, which is among the necessary constructs of human life. This is because the community's members, due to a variety of goals and wills, are always subject to conflicts, and any individual or group is always seeking to impose its own will upon others and employ them for its own purposes. Therefore, the human community is always subject to the risk of disorder and instability. (3) The result of the man's willingness to employ others is that – historically – no community is found that was administered by rulers who prevent disorder by spreading out

their power over the others' life and property, although the rulers have imposed their will and desires upon the members of the society. (4) In some cases, some members of the society have deposed the rulers due to their extreme despotism, and succeeded them. (5) During the human history, the transference of the political power from one individual or dynasty to another individual or dynasty has repeatedly occurred. This gradually caused the absolute ruling to turn into conditioned ruling, and the members of the society attempted to substitute the hereditary conditioned system of ruling for the former system of [absolute] ruling. (6) However, the human experience has shown that there is no way for controlling the king's power after his seizing the power. Thus, people have turned the fixed hereditary ruling into the republic ruling, changing the perpetual conditioned kingdom into the temporary conditioned kingdom. (7) Continuation of misusing the republic method of ruling may lead the human communities – in future – to a type of ruling that is unknown for us (al-Tabataba'i, 1417 AH, vol. 3, pp. 145-146). Accordingly, the need for community is a factor that makes need for ruling in human life necessary, and this is a perpetual need.

Now, after the human's perception of ruling is clarified, we may attribute the origin of constructing political theory to such a perception of the phenomenon of ruling. Earlier in this article, the political theory was defined as a polemical argumentation regarding ruling and subordination according to the criteria of social justice. According to the claim of this article, the polemical argumentations, formerly discussed, related to each of the seven propositions above speak of the needs and interests that cause the construction of each of the aforementioned propositions. The political theory can also investigate the content validity of each of the propositions and their rightness, just as it can offer new constructs regarding the ruling issue.

Considering what we stated so far, it is clarified that the political

theory originates from the ‘ruling’ construct; however, the arguments offered up to now have not been able to explain the origin of the ‘ruling’ construct. To explain this, it is necessary to note some points.

(1) One of the man’s general, fixed and pre-social constructs that he employs as a medium between himself and his own action so that he may fulfill his needs is the principle of ‘following knowledge’. According to this principle, the man always equals his knowledge with reality and considers his mental perception as reality. This is because according to the doctrines of the transcendental philosophy, the man is innately and naturally realist and cannot – according to the principle of innate emergency – ignore his knowledge. Thus, he always considers his mental perceptions as reality. Accordingly, the political theory considers its content as reality (Motahhari, 1375 SH, p. 438).

(2) The characteristics of the political phenomena, which are supposed and conventional constructs, are as follows: having no relationship with reality; having no use in philosophical, mathematical and natural argumentations; dependence on the man’s environmental and vital needs; being alterable and promotable as well as temporary and unnecessary. Thus, the political theory speaks about the conventional realities needed by man, alterable and dated.

(3) Political constructs, in spite of being conventional, are retrieved from the natural phenomena. The human’s mind cannot make an image of a reality unless it can find an existential connection to it. Other actions of human’s mind are indeed various manipulations such as abstraction and extension, analysis and synthesis, separation or judgment performed by the mind in regard with those images. Accordingly, the political theory, after existential connection to natural phenomena, manipulates their forms.

(4) Political constructs are modeled on real mental forms. None of those constructs is a new element against the true perceptions; rather, they have been constructed by following the model of natural laws and theories. Therefore, the political theory deals with constructing

their content starting from the mechanism of borrowing concepts, models, theories and laws. For instance, social Darwinism has been modeled on Darwin's theory of 'species diversity' (Motahhari, 1375 SH, pp. 297-298). Thus, considering the above four points, we may conclude that the origin of the political theory is the constructs related to the ruling, which are themselves originated from some of the man's needs; and the mechanism of the emergence of the recently mentioned constructs is like the mechanism of the emergence of an idea, proposition, theory or natural law.

According to what we stated up to now, we may return to the challenge between the logical nature of the mechanism of producing a theory (as inductivists believe) and its psychological nature (according to Popper) to inquire for the position of the transcendental philosophy in this regard. For this purpose, we may – for instance – refer to two theories offered by Muhammad Shirazi (known as Mulla Sadra) (al-Shirazi, 1989 AH, vol. 1, pp. 284-287; al-Shirazi, 1991 AH, vol. 3, p. 317). Khaleqi and Sheikh Sho'ā'i have summarized them in the following forms. (1) Regarding the cause of emergence of sensory perceptions in Shirazi's words, we may find two theories: the theory of the soul's creativity and the theory of sensory perceptions. (2) The theory of the soul's creativity claims that the soul itself, due to its creativity, causes the emergence of sensory and imaginary perceptions. Thus, the man's soul creates the concepts, assumptions, ideas and theories of humanities and politics. Of course, what we said pertains to the sensory and imaginary perceptions, but the story is different for the rational perceptions. Regarding the origin for emergence of rational perceptions, according to this interpretation, we must say that the soul is linked – with all its quiddity and essence – to the rational truths and phenomena and, consequently, it can perceive them. (3) Based on Shirazi's second theory, the sensory perceptions are placed in human's mind by the 'donor of perceptions' (or *wāhib al-ṣuwar*). According to this

interpretation, the donor of perceptions makes the sensory perceptions and then unites the man's soul with them. (4) A number of writers and thinkers have attempted to reconcile these two theories and claim that the two above theories are indeed parts of one theory. For example, they have claimed that the first theory is another form of the second one, and that the soul's creativity is – during its agency – donor of the perceptions. Some others have reduced the two aforementioned theories into one theory as follows: the second theory pertains to the time when the soul is in the imaginary order and is in a lower order than the rational order. In that order, the soul is related with the physical realities and sensory organs; thus, the donor of perceptions creates the minute sensory and imaginary perceptual forms in the soul one after another, and the soul is united with those forms through its 'essential motion' (*ḥaraka jowharī*). However, when the soul is placed in higher orders, the soul itself creates those forms directly or indirectly through mediums. (6) Khaleqi and Sho'ā'i prefer the theory of the soul's creativity to the theory of creative inspiration (Khaleqi and Sho'ā'i, 1400 SH, pp. 46-50). Considering the present formulation of Shirazi's theory, we may say that, in spite of offering two different theories that are reminiscent of challenges of the logic of science and the psychology of science between inductivists and abolitionists such as Popper, Shirazi links the emergence of political theory with the soul's existential status. Thus, this theory is different from the two formerly mentioned rival theories. Indeed, this issue is one of the subsidiaries of the existential interpretation of knowledge from the viewpoint of transcendental philosophy that we will investigate in the third chapter. However, with the interpretation of Shirazi's theory offered above, we may well say that the aforementioned challenge to the existential status of the theoretician and the ontological order of the political theory is resolved. Based on the reconciliation of the two theory, which is accepted by Khaleqi and Sheikh Sho'ā'i, we must say that in

constructing the political theory, the logic of science and psychology of science both refer to one scientific situation. This situation shows a higher share of inspiration in the lower orders of theorization and higher share of the soul's creativity in its higher orders.

5. Constructing or testing the political theory

After dealing with the definition of the theory and its various types as well as stating its origin, we must now answer the question of whether one can construct theories or they can just be tested. This question, indeed, is posed following the question regarding the origin of theory. Thus, if the origin of a theory is considered a logical and scientific one, then it is necessary to explain – while accepting the possibility of constructing the theory – the mechanism of constructing it. But if the origin of a theory is assumed a psychological or sociological issue, then the mechanism of testing it is highlighted instead of constructing it. We continue our discussion by investigating this issue from the viewpoint of the transcendental philosophy. Thus, we recall Master Motahhari's explanation of the way an expert of natural sciences work:

“To justify the natural events, a natural scientist makes a hypothesis in his mind using the power of conjecture. Then he tests its rightness by experimenting and empirical work. If it confirms to the existing experiences and can practically justify the natural phenomena, he turns his hypothesis into a scientific law, and it will remain in force until a more comprehensive and more perfect hypothesis – which conforms to more precise experiences and can justify the natural events and phenomena better – comes to scene. With the advent of a more complete hypothesis, this law gives its place to it, and in this way, any imperfect idea gives its place to a more perfect one, and the natural sciences cover their path of perfection in this way (Motahhari, 1375 SH, p. 169).

This idea is very similar to the idea offered by abolitionists like Popper in explaining the scientific activities of natural scientists. However, we must see whether Motahhari and the Muslims philosophers adhering to the transcendental philosophy commit to the same idea about social sciences or not.

In attempting to find an answer to the above question by referring to Motahhari's views, we see that he also – like his master, Allamah Tabataba'i – differentiates the natural sciences from the constructed sciences (including social sciences and politics). Considering what Motahhari has stated in this regard, this difference can be regarded in five spheres. (1) The subject of social sciences is not 'reality'; rather, it is the institutional constructs (Motahhari, 1375 SH, p. 372). Here, 'reality' means the essence of things (Motahhari, 1375 SH, p. 156). (2) Explanation in social sciences is not of the type of philosophical, mathematical and natural argumentations. Thus, we cannot use the logic of these three disciplines in social arguments. (3) The social constructs – unlike philosophical, mathematical, and natural affairs – are focused on human's needs and environment. Thus (4) they alter and promote with their change. And finally, (5) The social constructs are relative, temporary and unnecessary (Motahhari, 1375 SH, pp. 372-373).

As mentioned before, the philosophers adhering to the transcendental philosophy, like Tabataba'i and Motahhari, maintain that the origin of social theory is the institutional constructs constructed by social activists for fulfilling their needs. Now, we add that those constructs are built through the process of borrowing.

Here, to explain the mechanism of borrowing for creating political constructs, we use the example of Motahhari's explanations. According to Motahhari's interpretation, to construct an institution like 'the state', three models of animal life has been used: (1) The hierarchal structure of the state, borrowed from the willingness of most primary mammals for formation of hierarchies based on the status and position.

(2) The construct of legitimacy for the state modeled on the animals' willingness for accepting the leadership of other animals. (3) Granting the highest authority to the state in the society borrowed from the physical superiority of some animals over other animals. In this way, the state as an institution having a hierarchal structure with relative legitimacy and highest level of authority has been constructed through borrowing from animals' features.

Although Motahhari regards the mechanism of institutional constructs as 'borrowing', he emphasizes – for the rightness of such a process – that animals serving as models must enjoy three features: 'hierarchal life', 'accepting the leader' and its 'vested power'. In that case, the borrowing of that feature will be true for the state. Accordingly, it is clear that the action of 'borrowing' is not an arbitrary action, and a variety of motivational rational factors based on habit are involved in constructing social institutions, which finally return to the basic issues of 'need', 'environmental conditions' and 'collective agreement'. Regarding the collective intention, it must be noted that the social institutions are not the product of individual action; rather, the social actors must accept their creation and even relinquish their own personal interests (Pezeshgi, not published).

Considering what we said up to now, we may conclude that the philosophers adhering to transcendental philosophy believe that the social and political theories are constructed. They maintain that the mechanism of constructing a theory is borrowing and modeling on philosophical, mathematical and natural orders, which are performed in proportion to needs, environmental conditions and collective agreement.

Conclusion

The concept of politics is a paradigmatic concept and thus has its own specific meaning according to each scientific school. However, the

meaning of 'politics' is clarified in the following features. (1) The science of politics is among the branches of political humanities. (2) Political action is indeed a coercion about the institutional constructed phenomena. (3) The reality of politics is closely related to social norms. (4) Politics is subordinate to the general principle of social justice. And finally, (5) Political action is a hierarchal coercion. Thus, considering the features pointed out, the concept of 'politics' means 'ruling'. In that case, the 'political theory' is that part of institutional constructs created by the experts of politics regarding the 'ruling' and 'subordination'. The abovementioned theory does structurally consist of several inductive, allegorical, and deductive arguments; and as far as the content is concerned, it includes the descriptive, prescriptive, historical and strategic constructs.

This article returns the origin of political theory to the characteristic of the man that places construct between him and his volitional action to fulfill his interests. These constructs, created for preventing the contradictions and conflicts of interests among the members of society, attempt – under the general principle of social justice – to provide the social order and political stability in the society. This important affair is realized by granting political authority to a person as ruler. However, to fulfill the collective interests, the realm of the absolute authority of the ruler has come under the control of the members of society through laws and establishment of constitutional kingdom and then limiting the ruling power and turning the kingdom into republic regime. The political theory attempts to provide arguments about 'ruling', explaining and evaluating the political phenomena and processes in the society on the basis of those arguments. It also attempts to investigate the course of historical evolutions and offer necessary strategies for fulfilling the general interests of the society.

The concepts used for theorization are obtained through observing natural events such as the concepts of head and its importance for the

body, mental concepts inferred from the initial concepts such as fatherhood and other constructed concepts such as the concept of community. These concepts all play important role in constructing the concept of 'ruling' and other related concepts. By perceiving the status and importance of the head for the body, understanding the concepts of fatherhood and community, the science of politics constructs the concepts of 'ruling' and 'subordination'. Other political concepts are constructed in the same manner. In the continuation of the process of theorization, the political concepts are used for explaining the events, phenomena and processes of the ruling realm in the course of inductive, allegorical and deductive arguments. In this way, they create the political propositions, hypotheses, assumptions and theories.

Considering what we said about the mechanism of constructing political theory, we can find out that the political theory is constructed by the political science, created through the mechanism of borrowing from natural, mathematical, philosophical and other human constructs. The transcendental philosophy, however, is not satisfied just with the creative role of the mind in constructing political theory, and considers the role of creative inspirations as well. Accordingly, it considers both constructing the political theory and testing it among the methodological issues.

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