ON THE INTEGRATION OF SCIENCE AND RELIGION: BETWEEN SACRED SCIENCE AND WILĀYAT AL FAQĪH

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ABSTRACT

This paper deals with the Integration of Science and religion based upon the Wilāyat Al Faqīh. It will critique the attempt by Nasr called “Sacred Science” as incomplete, as it is based merely on esoteric principles. Then it will proceed to show to what extent Wilāyat Al Faqīh can accomplish the ideal of Science Integration through the analysis of four aspects: the religious, the metaphysical, the epistemological and the ethical. To do this it will draw from the transcendental epistemological approach of Jawadi Amuli.

Introduction

This paper was inspired by an intriguing statement by Nasr: “Islam is a primordial religion (fithrah) as well as civilization, and a social order.” General questions then surfaced in the form: what kind of social order of Islamic civilization can maintain this fithrah, and who has the right to decide the best system to ensure that Islamic civilization is not disconnected from...
God, as is the case of Western civilization and modern science? Among Muslims, a common response seems to have been a discourse on the integration of science and religion through what is called “Sacred Science” (*science sacrée*). Nasr and the supporters of this approach aspired to create a relation of science and religion, using the Islamic world-view, harmonizing reason and revelation, to make science more committed to justice.

But the question remains concerning how can these ideals be realized, and through what social system, so that they can be more concretely accommodated? This essay discusses the potential of the concept of the *Wilāyat Al Faqīh* system to accomplish the ideals of Integration of science. It attempts to examine how *Wilāyat Al Faqīh*, together with Sacred Science, can accomplish the ideals of integration of Science and Religion.

**Understanding Concepts**

**Integration of Science: Sacred Science**

The integration of science has four characteristics;

1. Science which has a common spectrum (Islam).
2. Science which recognizes knowledge as *ma’rifat* occupying the highest level.
3. Science that seeks to revive or re-integrate science and religion, as in the golden age of Islam.
4. Science which can question the legitimacy of modern science (scientism) and lead to an Islamic science.

This essay will discuss these four features. But it considers the second characteristic, namely the recognition of the knowledge as gnosis (*ma’rifah*), as most fundamental. This is because according to Nasr and Gholshani that the integration of science and religion should be rooted in an Islamic metaphysics. This Islamic Metaphysics is derived from the core source of Islamic teachings, namely *tawhīd*. 
Wilāyat Al Faqīh

Wilāyah in Persian means government, authority and power. In Arabic, the word is derived from Wala, means something that follows without pause. Therefore, the word is rich in meaning. It can suggest friendship, help, assistance, participation, compliance, protection, authority and leadership. All of these meanings are interconnected.

But in the Quran, the emphasis is on protection (QS: Al-Maidah: 55).¹

“Only Allah is Vali and His Messenger and those who believe, those who keep up prayers and pay the poor-rate while they bow”.²

Therefore, Wilāyah in the context of Wilāyat Al Faqīh means power (authority) of a scholar (faqīh).

A. Aspects of Religion

For Nasr, the starting point of the construction of Sacred Science is derived from religion, particularly perennial philosophy and Islamic philosophy. Both of these approaches see religion in its esoteric aspects. As revealed by Nasr, religion is the fastest way to merge science with sanctity. The interpretative method used is esotericism (ta‘wil) in the sense of the doctrine of wahdatul al-wujūd, of Ibn al-Arabi. In this doctrine, the concept of Al-Insān Al-Kāmil by Nūr Muhammad sees the relationships of creation in terms of modes, so that the relationships of man, nature and God are based on an ontological framework (at-takwini) and manifestations (tajallī). The approach of esotericism can be seen all products of Islamic civilization: science, philosophy, art, science, building mosques and calligraphy.

Wilāyat Al Faqīh on the other hand supplies a more concrete approach concerning the perfection of religion (Islam) brought by Muhammad, the last prophet. The perfect religion encompasses all aspects of eksoterisme, namely belief, morality and law in various fields: political, legal, social
and religious rituals, and the aspects of esotericism (wilāyah) through the implementation of Islamic law. Wilāyat Al Faqīh also defines the authority of the Wali Faqīh with ijtihad, namely science and charity, in order to steer the entire potential of civilization in accordance with Islamic values.

In comparing the two approaches, Nasr relies only on the esoteric aspects of religion in the typical sense, wahdatul al-wujūd, without involving eksoterisme aspects of religion. That is how the value of esoteric and religious sanctity can be manifested in scientific civilization.

Concerning the Wilāyat Al Faqīh, building a civilization which integrates knowledge and science in accordance with Islam, means realizing the esoteric aspects, while enabling the exoteric aspects, specifically sharia law in various fields. Religious law ensures that the power and authority of religion, even during the absence of definitive authority as in the era of ghaibah, will allow the integration of science and religion to run smoothly in practice.

That is, science as knowledge is a sacred light that comes from God. On this basis, science is a manifestation of God’s name. As knowledge will not stand without a subject, God is manifested in human beings as a “locus” so that he represents that name. Because of the identity of manifestation and the locus, God, knowledge and the subject are united completely, so that religion can guide us through the plurality of meanings manifested in different subjects.

So even though science is a manifestation of the name of God, its manifestation in particular subjects opens another dimension, which hints towards darkness and apostasy. But when science is placed within the framework of Wilāyat Al Faqīh and absolute authority (al-wilayāh al-muthlaqah), there is a connection between the esoteric and exoteric. This is the case even when knowledge is produced by scientists who do not follow Wilāyat Al Faqīh.
B. Aspects of Metaphysics

The relations between Wilāyat Al Faqīh and Integration of Science in metaphysical framework can be observed in some of the following themes:

God

Both sacred science by Nasr and Wilāyat Al Faqīh, view God as absolute and infinite. However, Nasr took the absoluteness of God’s attributes as a source of knowledge (intellect) with intermediate Al-Insān Al-Kāmil (ontological dimension / at-takwini). The absoluteness of God is also confirmed in the Wilāyat Al Faqīh as his seat of power. However, in the absence of Al-Insān Al-Kāmil, this is delegated to the ‘adalah Faqih (al-wīlāyah at-Tasyri’ iyyah). This is in line with the doctrine of God’s absoluteness emits tajallī where his name through the medium of science Al-Insān Al-Kāmil and al-wilayāh al-muthlaqah that holds two areas: wīlāyah: at-takwiniyyah and at-tasyri’iyyah (Prophet and the Imams).

The retrieval of the knowledge of God is through this ontological dimension of tajallī, Al-Insān Al-Kāmil which is an intermediary emanation of God (al-wāsithah fī al-Fayd al-iLāhī). So, through the mediation of his appointed guardian, a certain kind of knowledge is revealed. Taking the source of the knowledge of God yet being ignorant of the science or the law of God is tantamount to acknowledging at-Takwini – the knowledge of God – but lacking at-tasyri’iyyah.

It is crucial to remember that the presence of God as Al-Insān Al-Kāmil has the status of the truly esoteric and becomes unknowable, although nature is never completely empty of the Al-Insān Al-Kāmil. The absence of Al-Insān Al-Kāmil during certain ages of the world (the era of occultation) does not mean the absolute absence of Al-Insān Al-Kāmil; God remains in the form of an intermediary emanation in the world, although its presence is esoteric and confidential.

We ought to consider how Al-Insān Al-Kāmil at the level of manifest exoteric knowledge can reveal the esoteric laws of God, and how to explain
the presence of esoteric *Al-Insān Al-Kāmil* within exoteric power in the world. Nasr does not touch upon this issue. So we need to understand how the earlier sacred science refinement process leads to a more complete implementation of the *al-wīlāyah at-tasyri’īyyah* within *Wilāyat Al Faqīh*.

**Tawḥīd**

Nasr understands Islamic metaphysics by reference to the first *shahādah*, “I testify that there is no god except Allah”, precisely in the form of concept *wahdatul al-wujūd* as it was discussed by Ibn al-Arabi. That is, Nasr attempts to revive an Islamic metaphysics, as it was understood by the majority of Muslim scholars of medieval Islam. However, these ideals encounter obstacles when Muslim scientists also must commit to the second *shahādah*, “and I testify that Muhammad is the Messenger of God”. Muhammad here is *Al-Insān Al-Kāmil* as a foundation for understanding nature and man. The physical Muhammad (*eksoterisme*) exists in the dynamics of history. Notice that this is important for saving Nasr’s approach. The esoteric interpretation of *Tawḥīd* (*Al-Insān Al-Kāmil*) can only occur through Muhammad’s physical presence through a literal revelation (*Quran*). That is, without the physicality of the historical Muhammad, the doctrine of *wahdatul al-wujūd* would not achievable.3

Stages of *tawḥīd* realization not only take place in the individual (self improvement) as in Nasr’s sacred science, but also in the social sphere, namely through the implementation of justice by running the *al-Syarīāh*. *Tawḥīd* individual values can be actualized by scientists who *muwahhid* within the framework of *Wilāyat Al Faqīh*.

If many medieval Muslim scientists were able to achieve much during a period of despotic rule, then it is certainly possible for contemporary scientists to work optimally, because the law of *Wilāyat Al Faqīh* is ‘*adl* (fair) and pious.
The Essence of Science (‘ilm)

Nasr defines science as light (nonmaterial), knowledge of which is identical with being and consciousness. Science comes from experience, through hudhūrī, revelation and enlightened intellect (intellectual intuition). In short, it is knowledge (‘ilm) which is one with being (manifestation) and consciousness. In response to the question: who experiences the unity of knowledge with its manifestation, Nasr recognizes only the prophets and saints, but he did not explain clearly: how ordinary people can access it. Nasr merely refers to the verse, “Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth” (Al-Nur: 35).

Concerning the essence of science as light, Imam Khomeni, in book 40 of the Mystical Tradition (hadits), bases his explanation also in the al-Qur’ran, where the term “light” is interpreted as a science, as stated in the following history:

Abu-Fudhail ibn Yasar said, “I asked Abu ‘Abd Allah al-Saduq as to the meaning” God is the light of the heavens and the earth “. He replied, “That’s God almighty and the Sublime.” I asked him (about the meaning of the phrase) His parable light. He said, “That means Muhammad.” I asked him, “What is the meaning, ‘as niche’?” He replied, ‘Muhammad chest’ “I asked him, What is the meaning of” in which there is light “?” He replied, “In it there is a light of science, which is prophetic.” I asked him, “What is the meaning, ‘The lamp is in a glass’?” He replied, “Science Prophet Muhammad Ali radiating to the heart.”

Imam Khomeini explains that light can be understood in a sensory or scientific sense, but also in a figurative sense as divine knowledge. This light has various levels according to the level of one’s faith and science, “He is like a light radiating sensually according to the activity of the soul. This light will illuminate our path (ash-shirāth). If in this world we are on the straight path (ash-shirāth), prophetic and saintly (wilāyah), and do not deviate from the wilāyah Ali bin Talib, then we will not be afraid and easily pass through (ash-shirāth) on the Day of Judgment. Why is that? Because of the nature of “ ash-shirāth “ The Day of Judgment is the shape of the inner wilāyah.”
From the explanation of Imam Khomeini, it appears that the intensity of the light understood in the context of the prophetic and *wilāyah*, as *Wilāyat Al Faqīh* is a combination of these two divine positions. Thus, the science of light will continue to shine not only for particular individuals, but also for the general public.

Thus, in the attempt of sacred scientists to access the light of God, as in Nasr’s attempt to cope with modern science, science is raised to its dignity of its essence as light, particularly when it is in the framework of the dimensions of *Wilāyat Al Faqīh*.

**Creature and God**

In the concept of the sacred science by Nasr, God through His divine names becomes the source of knowledge. Consequently, the divine in man as caliph (*khalīfah*) is interpreted in connection with the understanding of earthly science.

But God has other properties, such as creator (*al-Khāliqiyyah*), owner (*al-Mālikiyyah*) and grace (*fayyadiyyah*). Beings are God’s creation, are in the possession and His mercy. Through grace (*fayyadhiyyah*) and the nature of the dependence of man as a *mumkin al-wujūd*, God has absolute power over all aspects of human existence. Humans require all the living facilities of the Lord, heart rate, breathing, air, food. “*O men, you are those who stand in need of Allah and Allah is He Who is the Self-sufficient the Praised One.*” God’s absolute, sense and *fitrah* realize *wujūd* owned is God. Thus in the Quran the power and absolute right of God is expressed in the statements, “There is no law except Allah” (Yusuf (12): 40 & 67), “God’s leaders and rulers” (Al-Shura (42): 9), and “Or have they taken guardians besides Him? But Allah is the guardian, and He gives life to the dead, and He has power over all things. (Al-Shura (42): 9)

Because of his status as a Creator, God imposes obligations. Nature and human action requires God to actualize its will. So human freedom is limited by the power of God through His law. Therefore, God provided a chosen (infallible) man in the form of the prophet Muhammad, then the authority of the Imams and, in their absence, the *faqīh*.
Because the authority of a faqīh in Wilāyat Al Faqīh is a form of delegation of the power of God, the concept of man as the inheritors of the earth who have no direct function in carrying out the knowledge of God can be realized in the Wilāyat Al Faqīh based systems.

Thus, in the opinion of the author, because of the position of man and God in the sacred science, Nasr was able to offer merely a metaphysical concept, and therefore it is difficult to find the connection between the metaphysical concept of God’s creation and the social concept of man (I’tibariyyah āqliyyah). Other problems arise in the relationship between revelation and reason, and between transcendent and immanent world, so that he is ultimately unable to explain the link between the nature of matter (the world) and an intangible (God). He is unable to connect science with the power of God in human life.

B. Aspects of Epistemology

Source of Knowledge

Both the Wilāyat Al Faqīh and the ideal of Integration both use the basic science of religion (Islam) as epistemological ground. Both discuss the entire faculty of knowledge (senses, reason, intuition, revelation). Nasr discusses the importance of revelation and reason as a source of sacred knowledge, yet he was unable to deal with the conflict of science and religion. Nasr is directly focused his analysis on the legitimacy of modern science, and the separation of the revelation from reason (ʻaql), and offers a sacred science as a solution. But to clarify this problem it is important to look at the position of God and the sanctity of human knowledge.

We need to understand the relationship between sacred knowledge (revelation) and impure knowledge (ʻaql), so that the connection of science and religion can be solved by religious epistemology.

According to Jawadi Amuli and his transcendental philosophical approach, the entire faculty of knowledge must be discussed in terms of the home religion. Religion (Islam) determines the direction of the faculty of knowledge. If there is a contradiction of science and religion, it is because of an error in comparing science and religion.⁷
According to this theory, reason (intellect) is divided into three aspects:

(a) Reason (intellect) not at the level of religion or revelation, but the level of the text. The relation between scientific theory and religious texts may be sometimes contradictory. Here reason is based upon experimentation and scientific procedures. According Amuli such knowledge cannot be total and final. On this point he is aligned with Nasr.

(b) Reason (‘aql) and religious texts correspond with one another. In this context, Nasr also asserted that revelation and reason should not be detached.

(c) The intellect (‘aql), ijtihad is authoritative and valid as a narrative. The intellect and text have one root. Text is what God revealed, and the intellect is the inspiration of God. The authority of the interpretation of religious texts (faqīh) should appeal to sacred knowledge possessed by the Prophet and the Imams. According to Jawadi Amuli, revelation or divine intellect has a commanding authority delegated by the authority of the Lord.

Following the approach of Amuli, the author has not found in Nasr’s exposition a respect for knowledge gained from interpretation of religious texts. Nasr does not consider religious authority important for evaluating the results of the discoveries of scientists who claim scientific insight through the inspiration of God.

Islam holds that knowledge cannot be separated from human authority. While scientists may have authority in their respective disciplines, theories which deal with issues revealed in religious texts must also appeal to religious authority. Just as medical doctors have to go through the certification of halal and haram by scholars (marja’), scientific theory, such as the theories of evolution, and astrophysics, should be discussed with the religious authorities.

Revelation is at the top of the hierarchy of knowledge as a source of Islamic law that must be obeyed by Wali Faqīh, scientists and the whole society. Religious texts (revelations) can act to guide the individual and society, through the implementation of Islamic law, to achieve perfection.
The Knowledge Function

What still needs to be explained is the difference between the function of the Wali Faqīh faculty of knowledge, and that of the scientists. The Wali Faqīh deals with knowledge of ijtihad, and is used to recognize Islamic law in the light of its sources (Al-Quran, Sunnah and reason). Science relies on reason, the senses, and intuition, as a means of discovering truth. In the view of Nasr, intellect and intuition (‘aql-intuition) are both involved, so that even the divine gnosis can be a goal of scientists. However, this raises a series of questions such as whether scientists do science per se (science for science); whether they produce scientific theories or scientific products, and whether these theories and products exist in some ideal space, independent of its use, and if so, who is authorized to assess these products of science.

Nasr recognizes the historical development of art and science as products of Islamic civilization. But he is unable to distinguish between the architectural art of a mosque, calligraphy, or painting from the contemporary “arts” of human cloning and nuclear weapons. Such criteria of distinction are lacking in Nasr, and this lack can only be closed with the concept of Wilāyat Al Faqīh.

Under the umbrella of Wilāyat Al Faqīh, the faculty of intuition is considered as a driver of scientific theory which of course must be justified by the scientific method (science) in general. Scientists use reason (‘aql) and experimentation to formulate theories. Intuition can also be used to aid in discovery. The intuition that produces Islamic art is also appreciated by Wilāyat Al Faqīh. Such an intuition guided by ijtihad, following Islamic law (revelation) may identify, for example, where art needs to be developed.

From the above explanation, it appears that the ideal of the Integration of science can be realized, when revelation, reason, sense, and Intuition are considered within the framework of Wilāyat Al Faqīh.

Knowledge Relations between the Sacred and the Non-sacred

In Nasr’s understanding of Sacred Science, ordinary people cannot achieve full sanctity, only prophets and saints (Imams). However, Nasr
does not use the sacred aspects of prophets and Imams as a measure of sanctity to construct ethical ideals. It is as if all Muslim scientists in the past embraced *Wahdatul al-wujūd* in its abstract meaning without involving the prophet. This is because the majority of references quoted Nasr come from Sufis and Ibn Arabi. This is evident from his book, *Science and Civilization in Islam*.

In the Shiite tradition, *Wilāyat Al Faqīh*, is a knowledge free from errors and exclusively owned by the prophets and the holy Imam. It is only possessed by caliphs mandated by God. The content of sanctity includes aspects of speech, action and inaction. Thus the *Wilāyat Al Faqīh* is a benchmark for the sanctity of the Prophet and the twelve Imams, so that the individual receives ultimate sanctity only by reflecting on God through them. Sanctity can indeed come from self (through individual effort), but at the highest level it comes from authority *Wali Faqīh* pious and fair (‘*adl*) which is subject to Islamic law and governance.

If we understand chastity only through the individual, without commitment to *shari’a* (*dhāhiryyah*) which can be seen by others, then everyone is entitled claim sacred knowledge. Therefore, the theory of sacred science Nasr should be refined to include the knowledge of the holy Prophet and the Imams.

God reveals himself to the prophets in the form of “*kalam*” (which is a root word in al-Quran). Therefore, sacred speech, action and inaction are the properties of the holy Prophet of the Qur’an. The Prophet and Imam are not only equipped with the sacred knowledge but, also *Wilāyah ash-Shari’ah* (*dhāhiryyah*), which involves governance. Thus sanctity must not be measured only individually but also through the general public under the umbrella of *Wilāyat Al Faqīh*.

Thus, the concept of *Wilāyat Al Faqīh* functions as a bridge at the operational level of sacred knowledge, which radiates from God, through the Prophet and Imams, and finally down to the community level. The distinction between holy and unholy depends on the intensity of the implementation of Islamic law. This is what Imam Khomeini means when he claims that *Faqīh* government has the benefit of an inner *wilāyah* -*Nubuwwah*, to achieve exoteric welfare (*dhāhiryyah*).
Thus God’s wisdom radiates through the sacredness of knowledge (the prophet and Imam) connects the world (material) and immaterial (hereafter). Although God does not require anyone beside Himself to legitimize His sacredness (absolute being), in the context of human knowledge, there is also a transcendental sacred knowledge possessed by the Prophet and the Imams.

This means that if we pursue the notion of Wilāyat Al Faqīh and the ideal of Integration of science, only through the human scientist and their access to the entire faculty of knowledge, there still remains a gap. But using the transcendental epistemological approach of Jawadi Amuli, the problem of sacred knowledge and profane is resolved. Because the ultimate source of sacred knowledge and authority is clear.

Here, the “holy” Prophet and Imam relate not only epistemologically but also ontologically. This is the meeting point both in knowledge and revelation.

C. Ethical Aspects

Teleological Aspects: Ma’rifatullah

Wilāyat Al Faqīh and the ideal of the Integration Science understands humans as beings as created by God, so that there is a relationship between man as servant and God as creator. As God’s creation, man has a responsibility to carry out his mission as caliph (khalīfah).

If the Wilāyat Al Faqīh, Caliph (khalīfah) practiced by state leaders (socio-political power) who possess divine authority (deputy of Imam Mahdi), then the ideal of Integration of Science, and the role of the Caliph (khalīfah) are placed as the duty of every human being to find useful knowledge (maslahah), this leads to a society where we do not destroy the balance of nature and instead, regard and study nature as a sacred thing.

However, Wilāyat Al Faqīh together with Integration of Science emphasizes science and power as an attribute for ma’rifatullah and so closer to Allah. Because science not only concerns the caliphate (khalīfah) as an individual task, but also involves scientific activities (cultural
science) which ultimately creates a community of scientists and science users. Thus, the ideal of the Integration Science is ethically impossible if not associated with governance.

For example, in the realization of ideals such as the use of science that is only useful for humans (*mashlahah*), arises the question of who has the authority to identify certain types of "*mashlahah science*” for the interests of the nation. In the concept of *Wilāyat Al Faqīh*, the task is in the hands of *Wali Faqīh*. Although scientists and holders of religious authority (*faqīh*) have an opinion, the final decision is in the hands of *Wali Faqīh*, for example, laws concerning the utilization of nuclear technology or the cloning of humans and animals. All legal inference is in the hands of *Wali Faqīh*, although the technical expertise is still provided by experts and scientists in various fields.

*The purpose of Justice*

The purpose of man as caliph (*khalīfah*) both in terms of the ideal of Integration and *Wilāyat Al Faqīh* equally envisioned the establishment of a fair society. Scientific activities must also involve a consideration of justice.

Justice as a companion of *tawhid*, is the criterion of *faqīh* and the measure of the welfare of the community. With justice, *Wilāyat Al Faqīh* can accommodate the various goals concerning the Integration of Science, involving the scientific community.

The general public must also bind *tawhid* and justice to guarantee the legal execution of divine justice through the hands of *Wali Faqīh*. It ensures that the rules which become established are equitable laws, because the same rules were used by the prophet to guide the execution of *Wali Faqīh*.

The Ideal of the Integration of Science and *Wilāyat Al Faqīh* uses science as a tool to improve the welfare of the people. But this is different from the ideology of progress in modern Western science and technology. Science under the *Wilāyat Al Faqīh*, as a tool can build a dynamic movement leading towards a perfect society. Science in the *Wilāyat Al Faqīh*
means an integration of the economic, cultural, artistic and national to create a society that is just and divine.

Thus, through the Wilāyat Al Faqīh ethical relationships and the ideal of the Integration of Science gain common ground and integrate with each other, for the goal of maʿrifatullah and justice (social, political, cultural and economic).

Sanctity (sacred science), which became the main goal in the Integration of Science (esotericism) meets with political sovereignty (God) in the exoteric dimension. Domains of science and politics (power) are brought together by a single source (God), and following this, an ethics of justice and maʿrifatullah.

END NOTES


2This is indication to Imam Ali’s leadership (wilāyah) the belief in and following of which are divinely incumbent on Muslims as regarded as one the principles of Islam. It also refers to famous incident showing the unparalleled character of Imam Ali. For more details, see all books of tafsir (Exegesis of the Holy Qur’an)-Holy Quran/translated by Muhammad S Shakir; Qum, Ansyarian 2006

3Sayyed Hosein Nasr, The Essential Seyyed Hosein Nasr, (Indiana: World Wisdom, 2007) hal. 51

4Imam Khomeini, 40 Hadis, translated by Musa Kazhim (Bandung: Mizan, 2004) hal. 505

5Imam Khomeini, 40 Hadis, hal. 505

6QS: (35):15

7Eshkevari, Fana’i, an Introduction to Contemporary Philosophy, (London: MIU Press 2012), hal. 187.
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