

An Examination of Cryptography and Mysticism in the Perilous Pursuit of True Politics: Model of Leo Strauss and Najm al-Din Razi

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Abstract

Mystics employ a particular language, referred to as "mystical language," to articulate mystical discussions, instruct their audiences, and express their states and attributes. Naturally, understanding mystical concepts and related discussions necessitates familiarity with the various dimensions of mystical expression. Noteworthy similarities exist between this style of mystical expression, extensively utilized by Najm al-Din Razi in *Merṣād al-'Ibād*, and what Leo Strauss describes as the "art of writing" in his book *Persecution and the Art of Writing*. These similarities suggest that one could discuss the mystical expression and art of writing among mystics in the same manner that Strauss speaks of philosophers. This study employs a comparative approach to demonstrate the application of the art of writing and expression, as highlighted by Strauss regarding philosophers, and its usage by Najm al-Din Razi in *Merṣād al-'Ibād*, to protect mystics from persecution.

Keywords: Leo Strauss, Najm al-Din Razi, Cryptography and Mysticism, Mysticism, Politics.

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Introduction

Persecution and the Art of Writing is the most challenging work of Strauss, where its central idea suggests that the inherent harmony between thought and society, or between intellectual progress and social progress, is not assumed. Indeed, this work is written to negate this harmony and to revive an alternative understanding of the relationship between thought and society, or philosophy and the city. This alternative views the articulation of truth in the city or society, or the agreement between truth and society, not as a goal, ideal, or duty, but as a problem. This book is both difficult and slow to comprehend, meaning that it seeks, given its objective or subject matter—namely, the seemingly impossible goal of positively explaining the art of writing, an art that simultaneously involves a form of revealing and concealing the truth—to disclose as little as possible and to conceal as much as possible. (Strauss, 1402 [2023]: 8). This work assumes a reader who can understand on their own, or more precisely, a reader who occupies a position somewhere between an extraordinary and wise minority and a mediocre and foolish majority. A reader who, by understanding Strauss's art of writing, that is, by comprehending *Persecution and the Art of Writing* itself as a superficial work on the art of writing or political philosophy, precisely understands what should not or cannot be said to the city or society, why it should not be said, and how it should not be said. (ibid.: 10). Similar issues to those discussed by Strauss in *Persecution and the Art of Writing* have also been raised and debated in mystical texts and among mystics. As has been noted in studies on the relationship between mysticism, society, and politics, most mystical sources and texts exhibit a strong aspect of elitism and aversion to the masses (Dalir, Bahram, 1389 [2010]: 57), which, at first glance, gives mysticism and the mystical thought of mystics an appearance of being anti-social and misanthropic. However, in reality, from another perspective, it can be argued that if the main characteristic of mystical thought and texts is speaking of a truth beyond the apparent and material order (Fadaei Mehrabani, 1393 [2014]: 24), which refers to an inner and true or real order, then it becomes understandable why concealment and cryptic writing, as Strauss discusses in relation to philosophy and philosophers, can also be a topic of discussion in mystical currents.

In mystical texts and within the views of mystics and sometimes Sufis, there are elements of thought and social and political positions that can be considered one of the sources of Islamic thought. In the history of Islam and even Iran, there have been periods where political movements and specific social tendencies emerged from mystics or Sufis, as seen in the establishment of the Safavid state. What transpired in the khanqah of Sheikh Safi al-Din Ardabili over two hundred years until the time of Shah Ismail Safavi has been described

as "two centuries of patient preparation." A mystic like Sheikh Najm al-Din Razi, known as Dāya, was, in both action and thought, a civic mystic and politically engaged. His writings do not lack political thought, and in practice, he held a political stance. Therefore, considering the writings of mystics like Razi, one can say that a current of Iranian mysticism has been able to offer a political interpretation of the ideal Iranian kingship (Tabatabai, Seyyed Javad: 1393 [2014]: 231). The essential characteristic of mystical texts that address political and social issues is that they speak of a true and real order, understanding, and ultimately implementing which in human society leads to happiness in both this world and the hereafter. Therefore, features such as the multilayered nature of thought, complexity, and the use of symbols and metaphors are characteristics of mystical texts that make understanding them more difficult compared to other texts. In fact, mystics who have presented their discussions publicly and addressed society might be exceptions to the rule of mystical currents and their central characteristic, which is aversion to appearance and elitism. To address society while simultaneously avoiding the dangers and harms of this endeavor—given the majority's apparentism (lack of inward focus) and commonness (lack of elitism)—they have used cryptic writing and concealment similar to what Strauss enumerated for philosophers and philosophy concerning society and politics.

Introduction to Najm al-Din Razi and Leo Strauss

One of the most contentious aspects of Strauss's thought is his belief in the existence of hidden meanings in the works of ancient writers. Strauss argues that many great writers of the past concealed their true beliefs within their works for various reasons, and to uncover their primary convictions, one must discover these hidden aspects of their texts. One method of uncovering these hidden meanings is "numerology." For instance, in his book *Thoughts on Machiavelli*, Strauss dedicates extensive sections to examining the number of chapters in Machiavelli's *The Prince*, the number of words, and the relationships between these numbers. He concludes that to understand many chapters of Machiavelli's works, one must study the corresponding chapters in his other books; for example, Chapter 11 of *The Prince*, which discusses "ecclesiastical principalities," should be understood in light of Chapter 11 of *Discourses*, which deals with "Roman religion." Using this method, Strauss concludes that Machiavelli was a deeply "anti-Christian" thinker, seeing the source of all the evils and disorders of his time in Christian teachings. For example, in Chapter 13 of *The Prince*, Machiavelli recounts the story of Goliath and David but does so incorrectly, placing a knife in David's hand that is not mentioned in the biblical account.

Another method Strauss employs to discern hidden meanings in the works of

philosophers is by paying attention to the obvious errors made by great writers. It is sometimes observed that an author cites a quotation from a famous work that does not exist in that work, attributes a quotation to someone else, or narrates a story incorrectly. Strauss believes that great writers used these deliberate mistakes to convey their messages.

It should not be assumed that the existence of hidden aspects in ancient texts is Strauss's discovery. This was well known in earlier times, and Strauss merely brought attention to it and recognized its significance. For example, al-Farabi states: "The sage Plato was reluctant to reveal the secrets of knowledge to both the elite and the general public. Therefore, he sought to protect philosophy from outsiders and the unworthy by resorting to allegory, metaphor, and obscure language to prevent it from being misunderstood or falling into the hands of those who do not appreciate its value or misuse it." Ibn Maymun (Maimonides) also writes in the introduction to his book *The Guide for the Perplexed* that his book deliberately contains hidden contradictions because when discussing ambiguous matters, it is necessary to conceal some issues and reveal others.

But why did so many ancient writers use such a strange method of writing? According to Strauss, the most important and obvious reason was the fear of persecution and the danger posed by society and the government toward philosophy. Philosophers needed to protect themselves in the closed societies and tyrannical regimes of their time. However, another less apparent danger is the threat philosophy posed to society. Philosophy challenges societal beliefs, and philosophers, due to their responsibility to society, must respect the public's opinions and beliefs.

Najm al-Din Razi, whose full name is Abu Bakr Abdullah ibn Muhammad ibn Shahwar ibn Anushirwan al-Razi, also known as Najm al-Din Dāya or Najm Razi, is one of the influential and prominent figures in the history of Sufism in Iran and the Islamic world.

The most significant book by Najm Razi is *Merṣād al-'Ibād*, edited by Dr. Mohammad Amin Riahi. Despite the numerous works of Najm Razi, *Merṣād al-'Ibād* is undoubtedly his masterpiece. In terms of prose, it is one of the most beautiful and inspiring mystical writings, composed during the first half of the 7th century AH (13th century AD) amidst the Mongol invasion. This work is so profound and far-reaching that the foremost mystics after Najm Razi, including Rumi and Hafez, were all influenced by it in some way. Najm al-Din Razi was killed during the Mongol wars.

Other works by Najm Razi include *Treatise on Love and Reason (Mi'yar al-Ṣidq fī Miṣḍāq al-'Ishq)*, edited by Dr. Taqi Tafazzoli and *Marmūzāt-e Asadi dar Marmūzāt-e Davūdī* (edited by Dr. Shafi'i Kadkani). Najm Razi also authored several other works, including *The Arabic Exegesis of Najm Razi* titled

Baḥr al-Ḥaqā'iq wa al-Ma'ānī fī Tafsīr Sab' al-Mathānī, Manārāt al-Sā'irīn ilā Allāh wa Maqāmāt al-Ṭā'irīn bi-Allāh (in Arabic), *Risālat al-Ṭuyūr* (edited by Dr. Mohammad Amin Riahi), *Sirāj al-Qulūb, Ḥasrat al-Mulūk, and Tuḥfat al-Ḥabīb*. Najm al-Din Razi's ideas can be examined within the framework of the mystical and intuitive approach. He is considered one of the theorists of illuminationist philosophy and ascetic Sufism, and he discusses his political views in detail within this framework. Thus, Najm al-Din Razi is a politically engaged mystic, addressing political issues in his works. His understanding of political philosophy is grounded in idealism and traces back to ancient Iranian political thought. Within this framework, amidst political tensions and changes in the balance and alignment of political forces, he returns to the political thought of Iran's ancient kingship with a focus on political realism. Overall, he is not a political theorist; rather, he draws on the raw materials of political and historical discussions from his predecessors in politics and interprets them through the lens of his mystical thought.

Statement of the Problem

The fundamental issue addressed in this research is whether the concept of persecution and the art of writing, as discussed by Strauss in relation to philosophers, can also be applied to mystics. What Strauss elaborates on regarding the reasons for concealment and esoteric writing by philosophers is encapsulated in the title of his well-known book, *Persecution and the Art of Writing*. This implies that the primary reason for employing the art of writing, concealment, and esoteric writing is linked to persecution and suppression by governments and non-virtuous societies. Thus, the core of Strauss's argument revolves around the idea that philosophers spoke of knowledge and order that, for various reasons, were not understood or approved by the governments and societies of their time (Rezvani, Mohsen, 2014: 27).

Now, considering that the central characteristic of mystical texts is their discussion of a true and genuine order that is not accessible to the public and that the path to the salvation and prosperity of societies is dependent on this true knowledge, can we accept the proposition that esoteric writing and concealment, as Strauss described under the concept of the art of writing, can also be applied to mystics and mystical intellectual movements? The hypothesis of the present research is that the art of writing and the art of expression can indeed be discussed concerning mystical texts as well. This is because mystics have also engaged in esoteric writing and concealment for reasons similar to those Strauss attributed to philosophers. In this study, by enumerating the reasons for and the methods of the art of writing from Strauss's perspective among philosophers, and by demonstrating its equivalents in the thought and discourse of Najm

al-Din Razi, a prominent representative of the mystical tradition in Iran and Islam, this idea is proposed: that Strauss's method and framework can also be applied to mystics.

Strauss succinctly captures the essence of the doctrine of esoteric writing as follows:

"The doctrine of esoteric writing was necessary to protect philosophy; this doctrine was a shield within which philosophy could emerge; the practice of this doctrine was necessary for political reasons; esoteric writing was the form in which philosophy revealed itself to the political community; esoteric writing was the political aspect of philosophy; esoteric writing was political philosophy itself." (Ibid. 35. 36)

There are also two other significant reasons for esoteric writing that are of greater importance: one is the "political duty," and the other is "philosophical education." In fulfilling their political duty, philosophers refrain from explicitly stating philosophical truths to avoid causing doubt and confusion among the public. If philosophers were to reveal their reasons, the established and powerful beliefs and traditions, which are in some way necessary for public life, would undoubtedly be seriously destabilized. In philosophical education, philosophers seek to elevate the level of philosophizing for their future scholars and researchers. They want their future students and researchers to discover the truths of matters through their own thinking and reasoning. Essentially, philosophical education is the only response to the essential and perennial questions. Political philosophers primarily wrote their works not for actual philosophers but for potential philosophers. When future philosophers discover philosophical truth or engage in serious contemplation about it, they can clearly understand that past philosophers wrote their works for them. The past philosophers wrote such works to facilitate the highest level of education and instruction for future philosophers. Thus, according to Strauss, "fear" and "love" were the two main reasons for esoteric writing.

Al-Farabi, in his treatise *Takhlīs al-Nawāmis*, outlines three reasons for Plato's esoteric writing: Plato concealed knowledge because 1) he did not want knowledge to fall into the hands of the unworthy and be distorted; 2) he did not want knowledge to fall into the hands of those who would not value it; and 3) he did not want knowledge to be misapplied in the wrong context (Rezvani, 2010: 142).

In a similar vein, it seems that one can also speak of concealment (taqiyya) in mystical texts. Interestingly, in these texts, emphasis is placed on speaking in a language of symbols, allusions, and metaphors to prevent disorder and turmoil in the minds and hearts of believers (Mir Baqeri Fard, 2013: 84). Rāzī, too, consistently emphasizes this point throughout *Mirṣād al-'Ibad*, particularly in

discussions concerning the relationships between the *murīd* (disciple) and the *murshid* (spiritual guide). In the tenth and eleventh chapters of *Mirṣād al-‘Ibad*, Rāzī addresses the attributes of the *murshid* and the *murīd*, listing twenty characteristics for each. Through careful examination of these attributes, we gain insight into the reasons for the necessity of concealment and speaking in a language of symbols, allusions, and metaphors.

Among the twenty attributes of the *murshid*, bravery (fifth attribute), compassion (eighth attribute), forbearance (ninth attribute), submission (fifteenth attribute), and tranquility (eighteenth attribute) are directly related to the reasons and methods of concealment. Similarly, among the attributes of the *murīd*, the sixth (patience), eighth (bravery), fourteenth (cleverness), fifteenth (blame), nineteenth (submission), and twentieth (delegation) are connected to the practice of concealment. Rāzī considers all these twenty attributes for both the *murshid* and the *murīd*, especially those emphasized in the previous lines, as necessary and indispensable due to his epistemological perspective.

If we consider that Rāzī likens the world to a great *khanqah* (Sufi lodge), his emphasis on speaking in a language of symbols and allusions becomes even more significant. This mode of communication through symbols and allusions is used in certain sections of *Mirṣād al-‘Ibad* to describe the correct and righteous order. For instance, after outlining the true and correct social and political relations in the *Naṣīhatnāma* of *Mirṣād al-‘Ibad*, Rāzī critiques the existing situation and thereby articulates his perspective on the nature of political, social, and economic relations.

For example, in discussing the conduct of kings and rulers, he presents a discourse under the title "Worldly Kings and Religious Kings." If we attempt to understand this subject as Rāzī intended, by referring to his intellectual foundations, it becomes clear that he considers true kingship to be a rule that aligns with the righteous and divine order. According to Rāzī's intellectual framework, the only individual who can be aware of this righteous and divine order is the one who has attained knowledge of God (the purpose of creation and the definition of happiness in Rāzī's intellectual system), and such a person, based on Rāzī's philosophical principles, can only be a *‘arif* (gnostic). Thus, it can be said that in Rāzī's thought, the philosopher-king of Al-Farabi gives way to the *‘arif*-king.

However, without paying attention to Rāzī's epistemology and anthropology, it is impossible to understand the reasons and methods of concealment. Rāzī views humans as beings composed of both a physical and a spiritual dimension, with the fate of both individuals and human societies determined by the dominance of one of these dimensions over the other. Accordingly, Rāzī divides humans into three categories: those dominated by animalistic traits, referred to

as *aṣḥāb al-mashīma*; those endowed solely with the light of reason, who, based on their rational growth, can perceive and act upon moral virtues and vices, known as *aṣḥāb al-maymana*; and finally, a third group who have nurtured their reason with the light of *sharī'a*, referred to as *al-sābiqūn al-sābiqūn* (the foremost in faith). Based on these elements, in Rāzī's thought, divine kingship is introduced as the connecting link between mysticism (love) and politics (reason).

Divine kingship, in fact, refers to the rule of an individual in whom the higher faculties dominate the lower faculties (Haqiqi, Yusef, 2017: 10) and who has attained true and intuitive (heartfelt) knowledge of the inner realities of this world and the Hereafter. Naturally, considering the classification that Rāzī outlines for human beings based on the type of knowledge they have acquired and their share of divine knowledge (the purpose of creation), one can increasingly comprehend the reasons and methods for concealment and esoteric speech in the intellectual system of Najm al-Dīn Rāzī. Among the other reasons Strauss provides for concealment and esoteric speech are fear and love. Fear (in a broader sense than Strauss's interpretation) is explicitly addressed in Najm al-Dīn Rāzī's discussions on philosophers and literalists.

Rāzī's views on philosophers are summarized by their reliance on reason alone, neglecting the *Sharī'a* (reason cultivated without the light of *Sharī'a*) and other forms of knowledge (including intuitive and heartfelt knowledge, which is the highest form of knowledge in Rāzī's thought). As a result, it is impossible to discuss mystical topics (which are based on intuitive and heartfelt knowledge) with this group. Similarly, the considerations mentioned above regarding philosophers also apply to literalists (those who suffice with transmitted knowledge of religion) and are emphasized by Najm al-Dīn Rāzī. Here, the nature and dimensions of the fear envisioned by Rāzī differ from those described by Strauss. Strauss's fear is primarily directed at despotism, suppression, and the preservation of philosophy and philosophers (true knowledge). However, Najm al-Dīn Rāzī's fear is more concerned with different groups of people (including philosophers and literalists) and boils down to the belief that revealing mystical knowledge to those unprepared to receive it can have negative and inappropriate consequences.

This altruism is particularly evident in Rāzī's discussions on the *murīd*, where the *murshid* must gradually prepare the *murīd* to receive true knowledge over the years. As Rāzī himself puts it, the *murshid* should reveal the truths to the *murīd* gradually, step by step, to avoid frightening or causing the *murīd* to reject them due to unpreparedness to receive mystical knowledge. In his discussions on kingship, Rāzī's fear closely resembles the fear in Strauss's view, described as fear of oppression, persecution, and harassment. It is here that Rāzī openly

advocates speaking concisely and allusively, adopting Strauss's approach of concealment and esoteric speech.

The nature of Najm al-Dīn Rāzī's relationships with rulers and princes who were either not followers of the Sunni faith or, at the very least, not zealously attached to it, is another reason for Rāzī's caution and restraint in expressing his true beliefs (in the words of Najm al-Dīn Rāzī). A man who found no sign of safety and security in his homeland ultimately became disillusioned with Khwarazm, his second home. Khwarazm was the seat of a kingdom whose ruler had no attachment to the Sunni faith. He harbored animosity toward the Abbasid caliph, obtained several fatwas from the scholars of his land declaring that the Abbasids were not entitled to the caliphate, and subsequently deposed the caliph, removing his name from the coinage and the Friday prayer sermons, and appointed one of the Sayyids of Termez as caliph instead. He was fond of the Mu'tazilites and, influenced by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, was inclined toward philosophy and wisdom, but had little regard for Sufis. He was the one who threw Majd al-Dīn Baghdādī, the *murshid* of Najm al-Dīn Dāya, into the Jeyhun River, prompting Bahā' al-Dīn Walad, the father of Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, to leave Balkh and move to Anatolia. It is evident that Najm al-Dīn Rāzī, a devout Sunni Sufi, could not find solace in such an environment. Amid these circumstances, the news of the Mongol invasion further solidified his resolve to leave Khwarazm (Selected *Mirṣād al-'Ibad*, Introduction by Mohammad Amin Riyahi, p. 12).

Thus, the power structure that surrounded Najm al-Dīn Rāzī was multilayered and complex. On one hand, as a devout Sunni, he had no sense of security or peace of mind under the rulers and governors of the Khwarazmian dynasty. On the other hand, the remnants of the Seljuk rulers (who also lacked zealous attachment to the Sunni faith) could not be trusted by Najm al-Dīn Rāzī either. Moreover, the remnants of the once-glorious Abbasid Caliphate, which had been reduced to Baghdad and its surroundings, did not have a particularly warm relationship with the Sufi orders in general. Adding to this, Najm al-Dīn Rāzī's views on true kingship, which he described as *Mulūk al-Akhirah* (kings of the Hereafter) in contrast to *Mulūk al-Dunyā* (kings of this world) or *Mulūk al-Bāṭin* (kings of the inner reality) in contrast to *Mulūk al-Zāhir* (kings of the external appearance), further complicated matters.

However, the important point about Najm al-Dīn Rāzī and his thought is that he tried to present his ideas in a system that examined the beginning, livelihood, and end of human life from a mystical perspective. Therefore, as previously mentioned, he attempted to create a system that, through practical wisdom (individual ethics, household management, and political governance) and by establishing a relationship between the divisions of the book (beginning,

livelihood, and end) and the topics of practical wisdom, would encompass the various aspects of individual and social life. For this reason, Rāzī's social, political, and economic discussions encompass the entirety of society. In other words, Rāzī's discussions extend beyond the individual (prophet, king, philosopher, and *'arif*) to address the entire society.

Therefore, in his intellectual system, Rāzī dedicates the fifth section to explaining the conduct of various groups and, in a way, directly engages with the society of his time. This engagement had significant implications for Rāzī, as on the one hand, he needed to convey mystical knowledge (the true, esoteric, and otherworldly order) to the general public, while on the other hand, given the varying capacities for understanding among individuals (depending on the type of knowledge they possessed), he logically could not openly express his views and ideas about different groups. Interestingly, the fifth section of the book (where Rāzī addresses the general public) is more rhetorical and narrative-based, with fewer subtle and intricate mystical discussions (which are clearly visible in the previous chapters). In this chapter, Rāzī, drawing on the aforementioned discussions (his intellectual horizon) and his intellectual foundations (anthropology, ontology, epistemology, and theology), depicts an ideal order. Throughout this chapter, depending on the context, he warns and admonishes his general audience (in the manner of a prophet) and enumerates the harms caused by neglecting the true knowledge and order (which leads to happiness). In this chapter, the reader witnesses Rāzī simultaneously praising the ideal order, highlighting the deficiencies of the existing order, and consequently, criticizing and condemning the actual social reality, while trying to convey the knowledge of the true order to the general public.

Historical Context

Strauss, in his discussions on the art of writing and esotericism, introduces a concept known as the sociology of knowledge, which essentially reflects his attention to the historical context of the thinkers' lives when discussing their ideas. This focus on historical context gives a concrete dimension to Strauss's discourse on the art of writing. Similarly, in the case of Najm al-Din Razi, one can clearly speak of the geometry of power that dominated Razi's era (as reflected in his works) and the impact it had on his expression and writing.

The political atmosphere during Najm al-Din Razi's time was one of the most complex and crisis-ridden periods in the history of Iran and the Islamic world. The western part of the Islamic world, bordering Christendom, had been embroiled in the Crusades since the Seljuk era. This prolonged and exhausting conflict posed both military and political challenges to the Islamic states and the Abbasid Caliphate. In this tumultuous period, sometimes the Muslims emerged

victorious, and at other times, the Christians prevailed. The cities and villages caught in this strife frequently changed hands, and instability, chaos, and the dire consequences of war cast a shadow over those regions. To this unrest, one must add the conflict between the Abbasid Caliphate and the Fatimids, which persisted until the mid-6th century, specifically until 567 AH, when the Fatimids were defeated by Salah al-Din Ayyubi. Furthermore, the long-standing conflict between the Ismailis, the Abbasid Caliphate, and the Turkish rulers, which dated back to the time of Mahmud of Ghazni and even earlier, exacerbated the situation. Due to the Ismailis' scattered presence in fortresses and mountainous areas, the sieges of their strongholds often dragged on for months. Additionally, the fragmentation of the Seljuk Empire following the death of Sanjar, the formation of local governments by Seljuk princes and their appointed governors (Atabegs), who had been dispatched to various regions years earlier, and the continuous clashes among Seljuk descendants and other Turkish tribes for control of territories further worsened the situation. Moreover, the Khwarazmshahs, who had long been vassals of the Seljuks, especially Sanjar, established an independent government in the second half of the 6th century. They began in Khorasan and Khwarazm, expanding their conquests eastward and westward, overthrowing local rulers, until they finally bordered the Mongols with the defeat of small local governments like the Qara Khitai in the east, coinciding with the Mongol invasion. The details of these events are extensively covered in the second volume of the "Tarikh-i Jahangushay" by Juwayni, and there is no need to repeat them here. Nonetheless, the number of individuals who ruled the east, west, and center of Iran between the years 550 and 617 (the beginning of the Mongol invasion), the frequent changes in leadership, and the formation and collapse of unstable governments all indicate the extreme turbulence in Iranian society and the broader Islamic world. Furthermore, religious conflicts, particularly in regions like Rayy (Razi's birthplace), exacerbated the turmoil across various areas (Najaf Jokar, *Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, Shiraz University, Volume 26, Issue 2, Summer 1386).

Najm al-Din compared the conditions before the Mongol invasion to the violence and plundering of the Mongols, stating: "While this weak one was sometimes traveling and sometimes residing in the lands of Iraq and Khorasan, I could not find the time or peace to complete the task (the book 'Miršād al-'Ibād') due to the constant emergence of new conflicts, which scattered the heart and mind. It was as if unrest had taken residence in that land... Despite this, we were not content with those tribulations, did not submit to the decrees of heaven, did not come forward with patience and surrender, nor did we give thanks for the blessings of faith and Islam. We were ungrateful for the blessings

of being Muslims, so inevitably, the scourge of the sinful and the tyranny of the oppressors brought ruin to that land and its people. In the month of Rajab, in the year 617, the cursed army of the infidel Tatars overran that land" (Razi, 1399, 16). Razi himself was caught in the tumultuous events of his time throughout his life, as he directly referenced in his works, from the Mongol invasion to the hardships arising from sectarian and religious conflicts. It was due to these religious conflicts that he initially emigrated from Khwarazm, as the Khwarazmshahs, owing to their political differences with the Abbasid Caliphate in Baghdad, had obtained a fatwa from the scholars of Khwarazm to depose the Abbasid Caliph, and they had appointed one of the Sadat-i Termizi in his place as the rightful Caliph (Iqbal Ashtiani, Abbas, 1389, 12). Attention to the historical context in which Razi lived and wrote inherently supports Razi's thoughts and ideas concerning esotericism and secrecy in his writings.

Given the fundamental elements of Razi's thought, as discussed in the above lines to clarify his intellectual horizon, and in consideration of the concept of esotericism in Strauss's methodology, one can attempt to understand Razi's "Mirṣād al-'Ibād." However, it must first be noted that Razi, throughout "Mirṣād al-'Ibād," frequently speaks of concealing true knowledge and refraining from revealing it for various reasons, which go far beyond the reasons Strauss provides for why one might engage in esotericism. Thus, it becomes evident that Razi sought to depict a set of coordinates and characteristics that, if implemented in individual and social domains, would establish an order on earth (the exterior) that aligns with the celestial order (the interior).

Conclusion

As discussed in this research, Strauss identified the main reasons for philosophers' use of the art of writing under categories such as fear of persecution, suppression, love of philosophy, and ultimately, duty. This study demonstrated that the art of writing, as well as the "art of expression" (as discussed by mystics), is a phenomenon that has also been significant and utilized within Islamic and Iranian mysticism. The critical point is that the art of writing among mystics has been employed more extensively than what Strauss described regarding philosophers and for reasons beyond those used by philosophers for esoteric writing. In addition to esoteric writing, one can also speak of another phenomenon among mystics known as "esoteric speech," the characteristics and features of which have been highlighted in this research.

It appears that the findings of the present study could contribute to the development of an Iranian and Islamic model of progress, particularly in the context of a transition from the paradigm of secular politics to the paradigm of *al-siyāsah al-mutāliyyah* (transcendent politics). The relationship between

mysticism and politics in the thought of Najm al-Din Razi is pivotal, and understanding this relationship is crucial to determining Razi's role in laying the foundations for the paradigm of transcendent politics as an alternative to secular politics and secular political science.

As the research indicates, the relationship between politics and mysticism in Razi's thought is a positive one, suggesting that it is possible to develop a form of theoretical and practical politics based on Razi's principles that is distinct from the paradigm of secular politics. The main features of Najm al-Din Razi's prescriptive politics include an emphasis on the Hereafter rather than the worldly life, God-centeredness rather than human-centeredness, and love-centeredness rather than rational, calculative reasoning. This intellectual framework is based on Razi's anthropological, epistemological, and ontological perspectives. By understanding these foundational principles, one can also apply their insights to the fields of anthropology, ontology, and epistemology.

In the domain of anthropology, Razi's vision of transcendent politics aims to protect humanity from the plight described by Herbert Marcuse as the "one-dimensional man," a condition where modern humans are reduced to merely material, economic, and rational dimensions. According to this research, the root cause of this issue lies in the type of anthropology and epistemology prevalent in secular politics. Secular political epistemology is characterized by positivism and neo-positivism, which centralize the notion that only what can be subjected to empirical scrutiny can exist and be studied.

In contrast, Razi's anthropology acknowledges not only the body and intellect but also the soul and the heart, with primacy given to the heart. Razi views the heart as the "king" of the human existence, with the intellect serving as the "vizier." Therefore, from an epistemological standpoint, the perceptions of the heart and inner spiritual experiences can also be considered sources of knowledge, alongside rational thought. Ontologically, Razi refers to realms beyond the tangible material world, emphasizing that understanding these realms is possible and valid through the epistemology he advocates. These elements, combined with Razi's mystical theology, provide the necessary foundations for constructing the paradigm of transcendent politics.

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