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During these four chapters I have attempted to explain the main elements of Imami Shi'a political doctrine and, where necessary, reconstruct some arguments that provide the reader an opportunity for better understanding the various dimensions of this political theory. However, it should be noted that there are still many things that must be discussed. Surely this political theory like any other theory is based on some philosophical foundations that have not been examined here in detail. One of these foundations, for instance, is the theory of self or the concept of human nature that underlies this political ideology. Obviously, each political ideology presupposes a specific concept of human nature because it tries to offer a desirable form of social–political life and naturally each form of life carries with it its own picture of human nature. As Hollis says:

All political and social theorists, I venture to claim, depend on some model of man in explaining what moves people and accounts for institutions. Such models are sometimes hidden but never absent. There is no more central or pervasive topic in the study of politics 1.

The other significant moral-philosophical discussion pertains to the relationship between right and good and which one has priority over the other. Liberalism insists on rights and maintains that no definition of good life, human's ends and virtues, or ideal way of life can impose limits on individuals and what they select as their path in life.

Therefore, liberalism instead of basing a conception of politics upon a specific concept of human nature and good life, concerns itself with rules that secure human rights, particularly rules that secure each individual the greatest amount of freedom to follow his own interpretation of what is good. Accordingly, political action including legislation, decision making, policy making and other governmental functions must be done independent of any concept of good and moral philosophy. Indeed neutrality and moral pluralism is a central value of modern Liberalism.

Joseph Raz writes:

Liberalism is committed to moral pluralism, that is to the view that there are many worthwhile and valuable relationships, commitments and plans of life which are mutually incompatible 2.

Explicitly, Shi'a political thought contrasts the doctrine of Liberalism basing itself on underlying moral values drawn by Islamic jurisprudence and ethics. As a result, human rights and duties must be defined according to these fundamental Islamic rules and values instead of being neutral. There is no doubt that a comprehensive assessment of Shi'a political doctrine requires a profound comparative discussion about these moral philosophical issues that are absent in the present book.

The content of the book is concerned mostly with the clarification of what is the desirable political regime among Imami jurists. This type of discussion belongs to Islamic political jurisprudence (al-fiqh al-siyasi), but it is correct to keep in mind the fact that al-fiqh al-siyasi does not confine itself to the question of 'what is the desirable model of state- political regime- among Muslim thinkers?' The mutual rights of the governed and governors, the method of controlling political power at the various levels, and the rights of minorities are just some significant examples of political fiqhi debates that should be considered in an exhaustive assessment of Shi'a political thought. In any case it is hoped that this book has succeeded in explaining some of the major elements of current Imami political theory.

- 1. Martin Hollis, Models of Man, Cambridge University Press, 1977.
- 2. Joseph Raz, Liberalism Autonomy and the Politics of Neutral Concern, Midwest Studies in Philosophy, 1982, p. 7.

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