



A Reappraisal of Tusi's Civil Science: Toward a Stratified and Three-Dimensional Comprehension of the Social Phenomenon

Nematollah Karamollahi 

1. Associated Professor of Sociology, Baqir-ul-Uloom University, Qom, Iran. (Corresponding Author) Email: Karamollahi@bou.ac.ir

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ABSTRACT

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This article undertakes a critical rereading of Nasir al-Din Tusi's conception of civil science, seeking to advance a layered and multidimensional understanding of "the social" through a descriptive-analytical approach. The study reveals that, within Tusi's philosophical framework, civil science - categorized under practical wisdom - concerns itself with conscious and voluntary human actions. Depending on the ontological origins of these actions, three distinct modalities of civil science may be identified. When human actions arise from the innate essence and nature of humanity, the resultant epistemological framework constitutes wise civil science, characterized by permanence, a reliance on demonstrative reasoning (burhan), and the production of the foundational stratum of social knowledge. When actions are grounded in the normative authority of prophets and Imams, religious civil science emerges, whose epistemic methodology is based on ijtihad. Alternatively, when human actions are shaped by social conditions and contractual arrangements, the resulting field of inquiry aligns with empirical civil science, which entails a pragmatic engagement with historical realities, the pursuit of collective interests, and the mitigation of harm. According to Tusi's scientific-cognitive model, "the social" exhibits a dual-layered structure—comprising fixed and mutable dimensions—and social knowledge itself is conceived as a dynamic and processual movement across these layers.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Statement of the Problem:

Nasir al-Din Muhammad ibn Muhammad Tusi (597-672 AH) is a prominent thinker in the Islamic world and a multi-dimensional scholar, whose contributions to explaining and systematizing various sciences, including "civil science," occupy a significant position. By utilizing the intellectual heritage of thinkers such as Plato, Aristotle, Al-Farabi, Ibn Maskuyyah, and Avicenna, he introduced valuable and unprecedented innovations in this field. His numerous works in practical wisdom, including *Nasiri's Ethics* and *Risala al-Imamah*, reflect his profound understanding of social and civil issues.

The central problem of this research is to comprehend the nature and typology of civil science within Tusi's thought. As a branch of practical wisdom, Tusi's civil science analyzes human voluntary actions that are grounded in "nature," "law," and "social contracts." Through the exploration of the concept of the "independent body of society," Tusi emphasizes the two-layered and three-dimensional nature of the social realm, positioning society as an entity beyond the mere algebraic sum of individuals, capable of being an independent subject of scientific knowledge. This perspective, initially articulated in the practical wisdom of Khawaja Tusi and especially in *Nasseri's Ethics*, forms the foundation of his civil science (Tusi, 1992: 213-214).

The aim of this research is to revisit these ideas and reinterpret them in light of contemporary needs, as the fundamental concepts proposed by Tusi can serve as a model for the study and analysis of the social domain. The innovative aspect of this article lies in the explanation of the three branches of civil science—jurisprudential, religious, and orthographic—from Tusi's perspective, each examining a different dimension of the social based on its own principles. These three levels complement each other and provide the foundation for a comprehensive study of human actions.

The research question is as follows: How can we reinterpret Tusi's civil science framework in a manner that accounts for the various dimensions of the social?

To answer this question, this research employs a descriptive-analytical method and draws upon Tusi's works to outline the philosophical foundations of civil science and analyze its three types within the social thought of al-Khajeh. The study, while acknowledging Tusi's civil science, aims to design a systematic model for understanding the dimensions of the social and to offer a foundation for future research in this field.

1.2. Research Background

The background of this research indicates that numerous works have been written on Tusi's thought in general, and his social thought in particular. These works can be categorized into the following four broad types:

- a) Traditional commentaries on Nasseri's Ethics
- b) General works on the state and thought of al-Khajeh Nasir al-Din
- c) Works on the political thought and philosophy of al-Khajeh Nasir al-Din
- d) Works on the social thought and theory of al-Khajeh Nasir al-Din

2. Methodology

The conceptual framework of this article revolves around defining the concepts of wisdom, practical wisdom, civil science, and "the social."

In the intellectual heritage of the Islamic world, wisdom is considered theoretical knowledge that leads to certainty about things through a demonstrative method. Declarative propositions are classified into two categories: theoretical wisdom and practical wisdom, depending on the subject under study. The subject of

theoretical wisdom pertains to impossible or involuntary phenomena, while practical wisdom, or human science (Al-Farabi, 1993: 141), refers to the study of human voluntary actions in general through a demonstrative method.

Practical wisdom is concerned with voluntary phenomena and beings—i.e., those whose existence depends on human will and action.

In the thought of Muslim philosophers, civil science refers to the knowledge of regulating social relations and examining the laws and behaviors of humans within society. As a branch of practical wisdom, its goal is to establish order, justice, and peaceful coexistence in society based on reason, ethics, and Sharia. Influenced by Islamic teachings and Greek philosophy, Muslim thinkers have developed the foundations of civil science to analyze social structures and guide society toward individual and collective happiness. In the theoretical literature of sociology, various categories are used to distinguish between social entities and individual existence. Among these, terms such as "society," "social world," "social system," and "the social" are prevalent. Of these, the term "the social" holds a broader semantic scope, encompassing other social categories. In its primary sense, "the social" refers to the totality of social interactions, structures, and meanings that shape human experiences and relationships.

In response to the research question, this study, employing a descriptive-analytical approach and relying on Tusi's works, aims to present a concise overview of the philosophical foundations of civil science and analyze its three types within al-Khajeh's social thought.

3.Findings

Tusi's civil science is grounded in specific principles and axioms. His philosophical system is based on the wisdom of *Masha'i* and certain innovations from *Ishraqi* wisdom. Accordingly, his civil science is founded upon principles such as the finality of creation, the hierarchy of existence, the hierarchy of reality, causality between phenomena, the proof of the human rational soul, the individuality of the rational soul, the unity of human species, and the rational and agent powers of humans, as well as the explanation of perfection, happiness, goodness, virtue, free will, and purposeful human actions.

A central principle in Tusi's civil science is the concept of "proving the independent form of society"—society, while composed of individuals, possesses a unique rule and form distinct from the characteristics of any individual within it.

In defining the typology of practical wisdom, Tusi emphasizes "good deeds and beautiful human actions." These actions, which shape a system of thought about human affairs, either originate from the essence of humanity or arise from situational and conventional states. If these conventional states result from group consensus, they are termed "customs and traditions." However, if they arise from the beliefs of influential figures such as prophets and Imams, they are referred to as "divine decrees."

Tusi categorizes human actions into three types based on their origins, thereby forming three levels of civil science:

- *Judgmental Civil Science* examines voluntary human actions rooted in nature and human creation, adhering to the method of proof to establish general laws aimed at human perfection and the public good.
- *Jurisprudential Civil Science* addresses actions based on contracts and societal agreements, focusing on the legal and conditional aspects of human actions.
- *Cultural Civil Science* refers to the study of customs, traditions, and cultural practices that shape social behavior.

Tusi's civil science, thus, operates across these three levels, each distinct in its identity, sources, and methods, and collectively contributing to a comprehensive understanding of social phenomena.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

Nasir al-Din Tusi offers a multi-dimensional and comprehensive model for understanding social actions and civil phenomena, which encompasses various dimensions of the social. The primary hypothesis of this research is that Tusi's civil science, with its three-fold structure, can serve as a framework for analyzing and reconstructing social sciences in the contemporary world.

The findings indicate that Tusi, with his jurisprudential and social perspective, organized civil science in a way that addresses both practical and cultural aspects, in addition to analyzing theoretical foundations. The first layer, examined by jurisprudential civil science, seeks to discover the general laws governing social actions. This layer serves as the fixed, unchanging dimension of civic life, addressing the fundamental aspects of the social.

The second layer, explored through Shariah civil science, focuses on social issues from the perspective of human happiness and welfare, both in this world and the hereafter.

The third layer, or civil discourse science, examines the customs, traditions, and specific social actions, considering the historical and cultural contexts of different societies. This layer adopts a realistic and critical approach to social developments, focusing on interests, benefits, and the prevention of harm. Thus, civil discourse science can be used as a tool for communication and cultural analysis, providing insights into societal values while maintaining the eternal validity of truth and Sharia. Tusi's framework is capable of accommodating pluralism and diversity, allowing for comparative studies of different societies while upholding universal principles.

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