

“God as a supra-moral agent: Modern Traditionalism vs Traditional Modernism”

*Mirsaeid Mousavi Karimi**

DOI: 10.22096/hr.2025.2072264.1782

Received Date: 20/09/2025 - Accepted Date: 13/12/2025

Abstract

This article examines the methodology, implications, and requirements of two competing perspectives on the relationship between God and human morality and reason: the view of "God as a supra-moral/supra-rational agent," which the author defends and terms "Modern Traditionalism," and the view of "God as a moral/rational agent," referred to as "Traditional Modernism." The article demonstrates that, contrary to common belief, it is the second view that, by equating human rules and laws with divine commands, paves the way for fundamentalism and facilitates extremist, ISIS-like interpretations of religion. Furthermore, the article shows that the Traditional Modernism perspective aligns with pre-modern methodological approaches in at least two respects. Then, through three arguments, it is shown that a fundamentalist and ISIS-like approach to divine commands is the first consequence of this view; the generalization of the audience of divine commands and prohibitions - from the infallibles to all people at all times and places - is its second consequence; and the third consequence illustrates how Modern Traditionalism can resolve or dissolve the apparent contradictions between propositions expressing divine commands and those expressing human laws. The article concludes that the core tenet of Modern Traditionalism - namely, that the primary audience of revelation was the Prophet and the Infallibles (peace be upon them) - limits the potential for misuse of religion and offers a framework more consistent with modern rationality.

Keywords: Supra-moral; Supra-rational; Traditionalism; Modernism; Nafy-e Sabil (Denial of Domination); International Treaties; Implementation of Hudud.

* Professor, Department of Philosophy, Mofid University, Qom, Iran.
Email: msaeid_karimi@yahoo.com



Bibliography

- Al- Sayyid al-Murtaḍā, Abū al-Qāsim ‘Ali ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Mūsawi. *al-Shāfi fi al-Imāmah*. Vol. 1. Tehran: Mu’assasat Intishārāt al-Şādiq, 1892. [In Arabic]
- Al-Anşāri, Shaykh Murtaḍā. *Kitāb al-Makāsib*. Vol. 4. Qom: Majma‘ al-Fikr al-Islāmi, 2011. [In Arabic]
- Al-Fāḍil al-Lankarāni, al-Shaykh Muḥammad. *al-Qawā‘id al-Fiḥiyah*. Qom: Markaz Fiḥ al-A‘immah al-Aṭḥār, 2004. [In Arabic]
- Al-Ḥilli (al-‘Allāmah), Jamāl al-Din Ḥasan ibn Yūsuf. *Irshād al-Adhhān ilā Aḥkām al-Imān*. Vol. 1. Qom: Mu’assasat al-Nashr al-Islāmi, 1989. [In Arabic]
- Al-Ḥilli (al-‘Allāmah), Jamāl al-Din Ḥasan ibn Yūsuf. *Qawā‘id al-Aḥkām*. Vol. 1. Qom: Mu’assasat al-Nashr al-Islāmi, 1992. [In Arabic]
- Al-Ḥilli (al-Muḥaqqiq), Ja‘far ibn Ḥasan. *Sharā‘i‘ al-Islām fi Masā‘il al-Ḥalāl wa al-Ḥarām*. Vols. 1 and 4. Qom: Mu’assasat Ismā‘iliyān, 1987. [In Arabic]
- Al-Khwānsāri, al-Sayyid Aḥmad. *Jāmi‘ al-Madārik fi Sharḥ al-Mukhtaşar al-Nāfi‘*. Vol. 5. Tehran: Maktabat al-Şadūq, 1984. [In Arabic]
- Al-Kulayni al-Rāzi, Muḥammad ibn Ya‘qūb. *al-Kāfi*. Vol. 1. Edited and verified by ‘Ali Akbar Ghafāri and Muḥammad Ākhūndi. Tehran: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyah, 1986. [In Arabic]
- Al-Maghribi (al-Qāḍi), Abū Ḥanifah Nu‘mān ibn Muḥammad al-Tamimi. *Da‘ā‘im al-Islām*. Vol. 1. Qom: Mu’assasat Āl al-Bayt, 1965. [In Arabic]
- Al-Mousavi al-Bujnūrdi, al-Sayyid Ḥasan. *al-Qawā‘id al-Fiḥiyah*. Vol. 1. Edited and compiled by Muḥammad Ḥusayn Dirāyati and Mahdi Mahrizi. Qom: Nashr al-Hādī, 1998. [In Arabic]
- Al-Mousavi al-Khū‘i, al-Sayyid Abū al-Qāsim. *Mabāni Takmilat al-Minhāj*. Vol. 1. Qom: al-Maṭba‘ah al-‘Ilmiyah, 1976. [In Arabic]
- Al-Mufid, Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad. *al-Muqni‘ah*. Qom: Kongirah-yi Jahāni-yi Hazārah-yi Shaykh Mufid, 1992. [In Arabic]
- Al-Muḥaqqiq al-Thāni (al-Karaki), Nūr al-Din ‘Ali ibn Ḥusayn. *Jāmi‘ al-Maqāşid fi Sharḥ al-Qawā‘id*. Vol. 3. Qom: Mu’assasat Āl al-Bayt, 1993. [In Arabic]
- Al-Najafi al-Jawāhiri, al-Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥasan. *Jawāhir al-Kalām fi Sharḥ Sharā‘i‘ al-Islām*. Vol. 21. Beirut: Dār Iḥyā‘ al-Turāth al-‘Arabi, 1983. [In Arabic]

- Al-Rāwandī, Quṭb al-Dīn Sa‘īd ibn Hibat Allāh. *Fiqh al-Qur‘ān*. Vol. 2. Qom: Manshūrāt Maktabat Āyat Allāh al-‘Uzmā al-Mar‘ashi al-Najafī, 1984. [In Arabic]
- Al-Ṣadūq (Ibn Bābūyah), Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī. *Man Lā Yaḥḍuruhu al-Faqīh*. Vol. 4. Edited and verified by ‘Alī Akbar Ghafāri. Qom: Daftar Intishārāt Islāmi, 1992. [In Arabic]
- Al-Shahīd al-Awwal, Muḥammad ibn Makī. *al-Durūs al-Shar‘iyah fī Fiqh al-Imāmiyah*. Vol. 2. Qom: Mu‘assasat al-Nashr al-Islāmi, 2006. [In Arabic]
- Al-Shahīd al-Awwal, Muḥammad ibn Makī. *Ghāyat al-Murād fī Sharḥ Nukat al-Irshād*. Vol. 1. Qom: Intishārāt Daftar Tablighāt Islāmi, 1993. [In Arabic]
- Al-Shahīd al-Thāni, Zayn al-Dīn ibn ‘Alī. *Masālik al-Afhām ilā Tanqīḥ Sharā‘i‘ al-Islām*. Vol. 15. Qom: Mu‘assasat al-Ma‘ārif al-Islāmiyah, 1992. [In Arabic]
- Al-Ṭabrisī, Amin al-Islām Abū ‘Alī Faḍl ibn Ḥasan. *Majma‘ al-Bayān*. Vol. 7. Beirut: Mu‘assasat al-A‘lami lil-Maṭbū‘āt, 1994. [In Arabic]
- Al-Ṭūsī (al-Shaykh), Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan. *al-Tibyān fī Tafsīr al-Qur‘ān*. Vol. 7. Beirut: Dār Iḥyā‘ al-Turāth, 1992. [In Arabic]
- ‘Amīd Zanjāni, ‘Abbās ‘Alī. *Qawā‘id-i Fiqh* (vol. 3, section on public law). Tehran: SAMT, 2013. [In Arabic]
- Burch, Robert. “Charles Sanders Peirce.” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2024 Edition), Edited by Edward N. Zalta & Uri Nodelman. URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2024/entries/peirce/>>.
- Dante Alighieri. *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri*, Edited and Translated by Robert M. Durling. Oxford: OUP, 1996.
- Descartes, René. *Discourse on the Method of Rightly Conducting One's Reason and of Seeking Truth in the Sciences*. (1637). Available at: <https://archive.org/details/discourseonthem00descuoft/page/n3/mode/2up>
- Fanā‘ī, Abū al-Qāsim. *Ethics of Theology*. Tehran: Nigāh-i Mu‘āṣir, 2010. [In Persian]
- Fanā‘ī, Abū al-Qāsim. *Religion in the balance of morality*. Tehran: Intishārāt-i Širāt, 2005. [In Persian]
- Hansson, Sven Ove. “Science and Pseudo-Science.” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2025 Edition), Edited by Edward N. Zalta & Uri Nodelman. forthcoming URL =

<<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2025/entries/pseudo-science/>>.

Ibn Idris al-Ḥilli, Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Mansūr. *Kitāb al-Sarā'ir*. Vol. 2. Qom: Mu'assasat al-Nashr al-Islāmi, 1989. [In Arabic]

Ibn Zuhrah, al-Sayyid Ḥamzah ibn 'Alī ibn Zuhrah al-Ḥalabi. *Ghaniyat al-Nuzū' ilā 'Imay al-Uṣūl wa al-Furū'*. Qom: Mu'assasat al-Imām al-Ṣādiq, 1996. [In Arabic]

Kant, Immanuel. "Answering the Question: What Is Enlightenment?" (1784). available at: <https://archive.org/details/AnswerTheQuestionWhatIsEnlightenment/KantEnlightenmentDanielFidelFerrer2013/page/n1/mode/2up>

Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Pure Reason*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Kuhn, Thomas S. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1970.

Masterman, Margaret. "The Nature of a Paradigm." in *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge: Proceedings of the International Colloquium in the Philosophy of Science*, Edited by Imre Lakatos & Alan Musgrave, 59-91. London: Cambridge University Press, 1970.

Mirzā-yi Qummi, Abū al-Qāsim ibn Ḥasan. *Jāmi' al-Shatāt fi Ajwibat al-Su'ālāt*. Vol. 1. Tehran: Keyhān, 1992. [In Persian]

Mousavi Ardabili, 'Abd al-Karim. *Fiqh al-Hudūd wa al-Ta'zirāt*. Vol. 1. Qom: Mu'assasat al-Nashr li-Jāmi'at al-Mufid, 2006. [In Arabic]

Mousavi Karimi, Mirsaeed. "Aqlāniyyat, Ma'rifat-i 'Ilmi va Falsafah-yi 'Ilmi i Tāmas Kūhn." *Zehn* 3, no. 10 (Summer 2002): 57–88. [In Persian]

Mousavi Karimi, Mirsaeed. "God as a supra-moral agent: Why are divine actions, commands, and prohibitions not subject to human moral/rational rules and laws?" *Journal of Existence and Knowledge*, Vol. 10, no.1 (Spring & Summer 2023) 7- 44. <https://doi.org/10.22096/ek.2025.2070028.1598>. [In Persian]

Mousavi Karimi, Mirsaeed. "Life As a Divine Right Not a Human Right." *Criminal Law Research Journal* 14, no. 2 (University of Gilan, January 2024): 151–169. <https://doi.org/10.22124/jol.2023.23277.2345>. [In Persian]

Mousavi Karimi, Mirsaeed. "Right to Life, a Divine Right or a Human Right?" *Human Rights* 18, no. 1 (Spring–Summer 2023): 7–35. <https://doi.org/10.22096/hr.2023.1971570.1520>. [In Persian]

Muṭāhhari, Murtaḍā. *Dah Guftār*. Tehran: Sadra, 2003. [In Persian]

- Naṣr, Sayyid Ḥusayn, and Mahdi Muḥaqqiq. *Abū Rayḥān Birūnī va Ibn Sinā: al-As'ilah wa al-Ajwibah, bi-Inzimām-i Pāsukhhā-yi Dūbarah-yi Abū Rayḥān va Difā'-i Abū Sa'id Ma'šūmi az Ibn Sinā*. Tehran: University of Tehran Press, 1973. [In Persian]
- Pigliucci, Massimo. "Naturalistic Epistemology." *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2025). <https://iep.utm.edu/pseudoscience-demarcation/>
- Ṭabāṭabā'i, Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn. *al-Mizān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*. Vols. 1–2. Beirut: Mu'assasat al-A'lami lil-Maṭbū'āt, 1996. [In Arabic]
- Whitehead, Alfred North. *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*. New York: Free Press, 197