Interdisciplinary Reflections on the Epistemic Value of Poetry in the Commentary, Philosophical and Mystical Approach of ‘Allameh Tabataba’i

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Abstract

This research, in order to explain the place of poetry in ‘Allameh Tabataba’i’s epistemological system, studies his commentary (Tafsir), philosophical and mystical works. This qualitative research was conducted by analytical-descriptive method. ‘Allameh's epistemological approach in various sciences is completely relative. In the philosophical approach, poetry is a rhythmic imagination-based expression and is of the type of innovative sciences and is one of the five types of analogy that have no argumentative authority or epistemic value. In the commentary approach, poetry is based on imagination and is not compatible with the truth of revelation and the status of divine mission, and ‘Allameh used poetry only to confirm the use of the literal meaning. In accordance with religious ahadith and traditions, the criteria of reprehensible poetry are those useless poems or *lahv al-hadith*, and false poems with delusive content and untrue fantasies. In the mystical approach, the ability of cryptography and ambiguity to hide some heavy meanings, imaginary imitations of rational meanings to facilitate education, verbal attraction to attract the maximum audience, are other reasons for ‘Allameh’s and others’ interest in poetry.

Keywords: *Allameh Tabataba’I; Poetry; Knowledge; Interpretation*

Introduction

Before entering into the discussion, the definition of the poem and its components will be useful for this discussion. According to ‘Allameh, "Poetry is a rhythmic speech." (Tabataba’i, 2006, vol. 1: 65) This indicates that an essential component of poetry is to be rhythmic; But in ‘Allameh's opinion, the imaginativeness and melody of the words are the two main elements of poetry:

" ʿArud (Prose) is the knowledge on which we present [in Arabic ‘Arde kardan, the same root with the word ʿArud] poetry so that the rhythmic and melodic speech can be recognized from the disturbed and non-melodious utterances. However, rhyme is not observed in modern poetry, the word is still melodic. One of the main pillars of poetry is imagination and metaphors, simile and allegory.” (Tabataba’i, 1995, vol. 8: 64)

For the first time among the sages, F̱arabi has introduced poetry as a stimulant of imagination and emotion: "Poetic words create such an imagination in us that it is just like the state we feel when we look at foe example saddening objects." (F̱arabi, 2002: 67)

Ibn Sina, like F̱arabi, considers the imaginative aspect of poetry be the basis of poetry. "Imaginations, whether true (according to reality) or false, are used in poetry and metre promotes and spread poetry." (Ave Sina 2002: 166-165) Tusi wrote in the description of Ibn Sina's remark that Logic scholars have not included meter in the definition of poetry and have been sufficed to imaginativeness and the hadith scholars have considered metre as valid in the definition of poetry and the majority has not validated metre and rhyme in the definition of poetry, and these are the types of argument in terms of the matter of the poem. (Tusi, 1982, vol. 1: 290)

According to 'Allameh, although rhyme is not an essential part of poetry; But the tone of the words is a requirement of poetry, which distinguishes it from fiction and rhetoric, and the imaginativeness is also a requirement of poetry, which manifests itself in the form of stylistic device such as allegory, simile, and metaphor.

Problem Statement

Among contemporary aesthetic thinkers, aesthetic cognitivism considers art to be epistemological, and proponents of aesthetic anti-cognitivism oppose the epistemological value of art. Which group does 'Allameh belong to? Does he consider poetry to have an epistemological meaning? Or does he consider the position of poetry to be merely an imaginary and symbolic expression (imitations) or a romantic and emotional aspect of feelings?

To answer these questions, we need to refer to all the works of Allameh with the focus on the subject of poetry and receive patterns and examples of the development of Allameh's intellectual system such as verses and hadiths, the principles of transcendent wisdom and mystical principles.

1. The Epistemological Position of Poetry in Philosophy

Poetry is a kind of art. Arts and crafts are innovative sciences and along with theoretical sciences and applied sciences, they form different types of science:

"Poetry, rhetoric and polemic are innovative sciences." (Tabaṭaba'i, 2005: 76)

In terms of material and content, poetry is one of the five types of analogy, namely argument, polemic, rhetoric, rhetoric and poetry. (Tabaṭaba'i, 2008: 341)

The difference between poetry and other analogies is that dogma acknowledgment (definite) [Taṣdiq Jazmi] and truth (according to fact) is argument. False Dogma acknowledgment is a fallacy. The Non-dogma prevailing acknowledgment is rhetoric. Imagination without acknowledgment is poetry (Tusi, 1982, vol. 1: 290). In these five types of analogy, only argument has definite authority and can be used in reasoning. For this reason, 'Allameh in the commentary, just to confirm the usage of word in the verse, cites the poem as a witness. (Usi, Ali Ramedan, 2002: 164) This view is in accordance with the opinion of Imam Khomeini that the poetic remark is against the definite authority. (Imam Khomeini, 2006: 70) And Stylistic device and ironies in poetry are not characterized by truth or falsehood and are only written statement in praise or condemnation (Imam Khomeini, 2009, vol. 1: 317) Therefore, poetry has no affirmative function in the philosophical approach and has no relation with knowledge.

2. The Epistemological Position of Poetry in 'Allameh's Commentary Approach

'Allameh sometimes has a critical view in commentary works concerning poetry, and this view is influenced by a verse which states: وَالشُّعَرَاءُ يَتَّبِعُهُمُ الْغَاوُونَ "***Only the erring people follow the poets***." (26: 224) This verse is in response to the accusation that the polytheists used to bring against the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and called him a poet. It is that the polytheists beat the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and called him a poet (Tabataba'i, 1995, vol. 15: 469). In his commentary on Al-Mizan, Tabataba'i wrote narrations based on the condemnation of poetry:

The Messenger of God (pbuh) said: "If the belly of one of you is full of pus, it is better than it is full of poetry." (Siyuti, Jalaluddin, 1983, vol. 5: 101 and Tabataba'i, 1995, vol. 15: 478)

'Allameh, meanwhile, in his commentary, included the hadiths in the praise of the poetry and has referred to them:

Ibn Abi Shaybah narrated from Ibn Mas'ud from the Messenger of God (PBUH) who said:

"Some poems are wisdom and some others are magic." (Tabataba'i, 1995, vol. 15: 478)

It has been narrated from the Messenger of God (p.b.u.h.) that he said:

"Some poems are wisdom and the desirable poem is the poem in which the truth is supported and such a poem is not meant by the verse" (Siyuti, Jalaluddin, 1983, vol.5, 101; Tabataba'i, 1995, vol. 15: 478)

In some cases, the Infallible has composed poetry and gave the glad tidings of the help of the Holy Spirit in composing the poetry:

The Messenger of God (p.b.u.h.) said to Hassan ibn Thabit (his own poet): اهجهم or هاجهم و روح القدس معك which mean "to mock the infidels, that the Holy Spirit is with you and helps you" this narration has been included in Sahih by Bukhari and Sahih by Muslim.(Tabarsi, 1993,vol. 7: 327 and Tabataba'i, 1995, vol. 15: 479)

The question is proper to ask in 'Allameh 's views what the criteria are for criticizing poetry - which are mentioned in verses and hadiths?

'Allameh in the topic of poetry evaluation - which can only be seen in his commentary works - pays more attention to the material and content of poetry than its form; For this reason, a poem that is rich in metaphors and allegories in terms of form but devoid of epistemic content is a disgrace:

"The stigma of the experts in this field [is] they embellish the meanings with words and decorate the meanings with poetic imaginations, which are usually the false imagination, which the more accurate the lie, the more refined and pleasing its poetry. And they also make their words rhythmic according to the melodies of music in order to please the ears, and such a deed does not deserve the position of the Messenger of God (p.b.u.h.). "(Tabataba'i, 1995, vol. 17: 161)

One of the examples of reprehensible poetry is a poem whose essence and content is mere amusement (Lahv) and deviates from the truth. Mere amusement means whatever deviates men from the more important one and distracting talk (Lahv al-Hadith) is the word which deviates men from God and engage them with itself, such as superstitious anecdotes, and stories that lead a person to corruption and immorality, or such as entertainment in poetry, music, psalms, and other instruments, all of which are examples of distracting talk. (Tabataba'i, 1995, vol. 16: 313)

There is no content of the call to truth and growth in mere amusement or as it is named recently in "law art." (Cohen, Ted, 1993: 151), and it is purely entertainment. Storytellers are one example of such poets.

"It is stated in Saduq's beliefs that a person asked Imam Sadiq (AS) about the verse" "وَ الشُّعَراءُ" "يَتَّبِعُهُمُ الْغاوُونَ" ", and the Imam replied:" here Poets means the storytellers "(Ibn Babviyeh, 1993: 109-110, Tabataba'i, 1995:vol.15: 478)

Sometimes poetry is not only empty of the content of truth but also it contains false concepts and false fantasies. The characteristic of such a poet is its deviation from truth and only the misguided praise it:

"A misguided person is one who goes the wrong way and deviates from the right path, and this deviation is one of the characteristics of the poetry styles, which is based on the imagination and picturing the untrue and the unreal in the form of truth and reality." And for this reason, the one strives for poetry who is misguided and is happy with imaginary ornaments and imaginary images, and is happy that people deviate from the right to the wrong and return to the wrong from growth, and these poets are liked and followed by those who are misguided themselves. ”(Tabataba'i, 1995, vol. 15: 469)

3. The Epistemological Position of Poetry in 'Allameh's Mystical Approach

In 'Allameh's mystical approach, contrary to his commentary view, special attention is paid to poetry and poets such as Ibn Farid and Hafiz:

"Ibn Farid is unique in Arabic mysticism and poetry; As Hafiz Shirazi does not have equivalent in Persian mysticism and poetry. ”(Huseini Tehrani, 2005: 263)

For this reason, he has dedicated a series of private meetings to the elaboration of Hafiz's poems, and a few years later it was made available to the public by his student Ayatullah Sa'adat-parvar in ten volumes entitled "The Beauty of the Sun and the Sun of Every eye."

According to the narration of Imam Sadiq (AS), reading poetry on the night before Friday and Friday is not proper:

"It is disliked or offensive act to recite poetry on Friday and the night before." (Feyd Kashani, 1985, vol.11: 221)

In the meetings that coincided with Friday, 'Allameh sometimes adorned his words with Hafiz poems and in response to a question of one of his student about the falseness of reading poetry on Fridays, explained that the only example of disliked or offensive poems on Fridays is useless poems and according to their master, Ayatullah Ghadi, he referred to the tradition and manners of the infallibles (the Holy Prophet (pbuh) and Imam Ali) and said:

"It is disliked or an offensive act (Makruh) to recite a poem which is useless in the mosque, a night before Friday and during the month of Ramadan; Otherwise, in the mosque of the Messenger of God (PBUH) and in the presence of his majesty, a person recited an ode and he listened. Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali (AS) also sometimes asserted his sermons in the mosque of Kufa by reciting poetry. ”(Sa'adat-parvar, 'Ali, 2018: 120)

'Allameh was not only a lover and commentator of Hafiz poems, but he was also a powerful poet whose reluctance to publish his poems caused him to destroy all his poems at the end of his life, leaving only a few poems that reached his close followers and students. These poems express 'Allameh's divine love.

But are the poems of the mystics merely a description of divine love and affection and devoid of epistemic content?

Certainly mystical poems do not purely have a romantic function and are a vehicle for expressing mystical truths. Here are some of the most important reasons why poetry is suitable for expressing mystical experiences and mystical principles:

First: Ṣadr ad-Dīn considers the most justified language of wisdom to be the language of allegory and allusion, which is useful to express the effects and means of existence; Although allegory sometimes makes the mind closer to meaning and sometimes makes farther (, 1989, vol. 2, 329-328), this is because it is impossible for people to express rational things without imaginary imitations. "Lexical signs and verbal expressions of purely rational matters are not possible except with imaginary imitations. (Ṣadr ad-Dīn, 1989, vol. 9: 127)

The expression of intellectual and theological knowledge has two problems, the first is the problem of the audience and the second is the problem of language.

As for the addressee, according to the Transcendent theosophy, the people of the world are the "Sibyan al-'Uqul" (صبيان العقول); That is, their intellectual development is at the level of a child and they are deprived of receiving rational truths and are reluctant to rational discussions (Ṣadr ad-Dīn, 1989, vol.9: 136). And so they are deprived of understanding intellectual pleasures and seeking imaginary pleasures:

"Most people in the Hereafter do not enjoy a degree of intellect and have imaginary and animal pleasures and excitement, and imagined happiness is their Utopia, and this is because they have no interest in rationality and do not have a share of the supreme kingdom." (Ṣadr ad-Dīn, 1989, vol. 9: 25)

This statement of Ṣadra is similar to Farabi's statement that for most people, the power to reason and imagination of the essence of things is not possible naturally or habitually. About this group of human beings, the principles of beings and their levels should be pictured in the power of their imagination. (Farabi, 2002, 252-253)

This is where the function of poetry as a tool of imaginary imitation to convey wisdom and mysticism is highlighted.

But in the case of the problem of language, the laws of language are laid down to explain earthly experiences, and when language is used to explain the affairs of other worlds, it twists and turns into confusion and irrationality, and this is not the sin of language and this is us who use it in its non-position. (Stace, 2005: 281)

Thus, Mulla Ṣadra and the followers of transcendent theosophy, including 'Allameh Tabatabai, are proponents of the theory of the figurative nature of the language of mysticism and believe that theological issues can be expressed only in figurative form. One of the forms of figurative language is the language of poetry, which uses the Stylistic device of metaphors and allegories to decorate speech and imaginary imitations of mystical topics, and makes poetry a valid language for mysticism.

The second reason: One of the reasons of mystics to use the language of allegory and hints is the concealment of some heavy meanings for *Non-Mahram*[1] (نامحرم) and strangers who do not understand the meanings. (Hashemi-nejad, 2013: 121) *Non-Mahram* or, in Stacey's words, "*spiritual blind*" in recognizing the condition of mystics is like congenital blind in recognizing colors. (Stace, 2005: 295) According to the Imam Khomeini, the language of allegories and hints is the language of *taqiyyah* so that the contents fall into the hands of its people only (Ardabili, 2006 vol. 3: 414) the language of allegories

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[1] Here it means those whose mind set and desired goals are totally different and far from mystics.

and hints is including the language of concealment and disclosure."(Qunavi, 2002: 13) [It is] concealment of facts from non-Mahrams and disclosure by clues for the followers of the path. This concealment is due to the fact that not understanding the issues leads to denial and "this denial is the source of all misery and cruelty." (Imam Khomeini, 1999: 168)

On the other hand, poetry has a great capacity for ambiguity due to using stylistic devices such as allegory, and metaphor, and also ambiguity and the ability to give multiple interpretations for poetry are the best container for hiding the destination from strangers:

Because I did not see anyone *Mahram* in the world, I said enough to my poetry

('At̲t̲ar, 1986: 252)

Third reason: Ave Sina considers the rhythm and the meter of the poem to make the word famous. (Ave Sina 2002: 166-165) The beauty of the word, arouses the listener's praising interest and attracts the audience. Most people hate discussion on Ah̲kams; But the same group is fascinated when poetry is used. This is where the poet uses the romantic and emotional function for social purposes:

"And sometimes poetry is composed to arouse surprise and admiration, and sometimes for social purposes" (Ibn Sina, 1405: 25)

According to the Imam Khomeini, poetry should be in line with social goals, and one who enjoys this taste and does not use it for awareness is incapable. (Imam Khomeini, n.d., vol. 17: 310) Due to the social function of poetry, sometimes the content of 'Allameh's poems like Sa'adi's has the color of sermons and advice:

Do not grieve for your future… for the future is like a dream

Deceived not by the world, be aware… at the foot of this flower hides thorns

Drink cups one after the other and have fun… take it easy, if some take it serious

(Hosseini Tehrani, 2005: 436)

Give up the skirt of false thought, give up the pollution of the heart

Work in this dark soil in such a way that you do not torn the innocent apart

Either do not think about beloved one… or do not speak of your safty

Do not speak of the treasure, or do not forget the suffering

(Hosseini Tehrani, 2005: 87)

Result

Poetry, in the philosophical approach is rhythmic and imaginative speech, and is of the type of innovative sciences, one of the five types of analogy that have no argumentative authority. In the commentary approach, the poetry is based on imagination, allegory and metaphor, which is not compatible with the reality and truth of revelation and the status of mission, and at the same time, 'Allameh in interpretations uses poems only lexical-wise. In the narrations, there are both aspects of condemnation and praise of poetry. According to 'Allameh, the criteria of reprehensible poetry that is condemned in the narrations are: useless poems or Lahv and false poems with delusive content.

Poetry is a double-edged sword that can be composed to help the right or help the wrong. In the theological and mystical approach, mystical sonnets are the expression of the mystic's love in his state of selflessness. On one hand, due to the attractiveness of the rhythmic words, attracting more audiences, simplifying the heavy intellectual knowledge to the level of understanding the common people and the mysterious character of poetries for non-mahrams, poetry is the best language for expressing secrets and knowledge and that is why 'Allameh in the sessions of teaching Mysticism and in private classes showed a great deal of interest in Hafiz's wise poems and describe Hafiz's poems. 'Allameh himself is a powerful poet who is reluctant to publish them and the few poems collected by his students show his Subtlety.

This difference between Allameh's approaches to poetry in the sciences of philosophy, interpretation, and mysticism is due to the fact that as Ibn 'Attar puts it, "every science has its expression, and every expression has its language, and every language has its terms, and every terms has its way, and every way has its special people." ('Attar Neyshabouri 1386: 427) And as the philosopher of language analysis Wittgenstein said, the claims of one language are not measurable by the standards of another language and every language is rooted in an idea. (Wittgenstein, Ludwig, 2004: 4) In other words, poetry is not used in the language of argument and the Qur'an; But in the realm of mysticism and intuition, provided it conforms to revelation, poetry is the eloquent language and even the best language. "Philosophers have their special language, they have their own specific terms, the language of mystics is specific to them, they have their own terms. The jurists also have their own terms. Poets also have a special poetic language; and the language of the Infallibles (peace be upon them) is the way we should see which language of the mentioned groups is closer to the language of them, and which language is closer to the language of revelation. "(Imam Khomeini, 2002:174)

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