



Research Paper

An Evaluation of Allameh Majlesi's Epistemological and Methodological Critiques of Islamic Philosophy: An Examination of Four Fundamental Axes

Mohammad Mahdavi^{*1} , Mohammad Azimi² , Mahdi Monazah³ 

¹ Associate Professor, Department of Islamic Studies, University of Tabriz, Faculty of Theology and Islamic Sciences, Tabriz, Iran.

² Assistant Professor, Department of Islamic Studies, University of Tabriz, Faculty of Theology and Islamic Sciences, Tabriz, Iran.

³ Assistant Professor, Department of Islamic Studies, University of Tabriz, Faculty of Theology and Islamic Sciences, Tabriz, Iran.



[10.22080/jepr.2026.30942.1317](https://doi.org/10.22080/jepr.2026.30942.1317)

Received:

December 28, 2025

Accepted:

May 10, 2026

Available online:

May 29, 2026

Keywords:

Allameh Majlesi, Islamic philosophy, Philosophical interpretation (ta'wīl), Critique of philosophy, Comparative analysis

Abstract

This study aims to provide a critical analysis of Allameh Mohammad Baqer Majlesi's views on Islamic philosophy. The research data consist of primary sources such as *Bihār al-Anwār*, the treatises of Allameh Majlesi, and the philosophical texts of Muslim philosophers, including the works of Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna), Suhrawardī, and Mullā Ṣadrā, as well as secondary sources by contemporary scholars in Islamic philosophy, the history of science, and Shi'i theology. Data collection was based on a systematic review of texts and the extraction of Majlesi's critical axes, while data analysis was conducted through comparative analysis and critical reasoning. The findings indicate that the main axes of Majlesi's critique include the non-revelatory origins of philosophy, the claim of the independence of reason from revelation, the method of philosophical interpretation (ta'wīl), and the disagreements among philosophical schools. Comparative analysis shows that Islamic philosophers regarded reason not as opposed to revelation but as complementary to it, and employed philosophical interpretation within the framework of rational and textual principles in order to achieve a deeper understanding of religion. Examining Majlesi's views within the social and intellectual context of the Safavid era also reveals his effort to safeguard the authority of revelation and to prevent deviations in religious understanding. This study demonstrates that although Allameh Majlesi's critiques are not fully developed from the standpoint of philosophical methodology, they nevertheless play an important role in preserving the foundations of religious epistemology and in shaping the dialogue between reason and revelation within the Islamic tradition.

***Corresponding Author:** Mohammad Mahdavi

Address: University of Tabriz, Faculty of Theology and Islamic Sciences, Tabriz, Iran.

Email: mahdavi319@yahoo.com

Tel: 04133392238



Extended Abstract

Since the inception of philosophy in the Islamic world, two distinct attitudes toward it have emerged among Islamic thinkers. One group did not perceive philosophy as being in conflict with Islamic doctrines; rather, they embraced it and employed it to explain and consolidate Islamic teachings. Conversely, another group opposed philosophy, engaging in its critique and rejection. Allamah Muhammad Baqir Majlisi, a prominent Islamic scholar and traditionist (Hadith scholar), belongs to the latter group. He adopted a critical approach toward Peripatetic (Mashsha'i) philosophy—particularly the works of Avicenna—as well as Illuminationist (Ishraqi) philosophy, at times deeming their doctrines contrary to the fundamentals of religion and declaring them as heresy (takfir).

This research aims to provide a critical analysis of his views on Islamic philosophy. Majlisi's critiques can be categorized into two main groups: A) Epistemological and methodological critiques, which address the origins, methods, and foundations of philosophical knowledge (such as the Greek origins of philosophy and the self-sufficiency of reason); and B) Critiques of specific philosophical doctrines, such as the eternity of the world and the impossibility of the reappearance of non-existence (imtinā'-i i'ādat-i ma'dūm). Among these, the former is of greater significance, as it concerns the epistemological foundations and the relationship between reason and revelation in Majlisi's intellectual framework, effectively shaping his overall stance toward philosophy. This article focuses on this first category. Utilizing primary sources such as Bihar al-Anwar and Avicenna's philosophical works,

alongside contemporary secondary sources, this study employs comparative analysis and critical reasoning.

The findings indicate that the core axes of Majlisi's critique are: the non-revelatory origin of philosophy, the claim of reason's independence from revelation, the method of philosophical hermeneutics (ta'wil), and the contradictions between philosophical schools. From his perspective, Islamic philosophy—particularly the Peripatetic school—is built upon the intellectual systems of ancient Greek philosophers rather than divine revelation; thus, it lacks religious authority (hujjiyya). Majlisi attributes the entry of philosophy into the Islamic world to the calculated political agendas of the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphs to counter the Ahl al-Bayt (as).

Furthermore, in his view, Islamic philosophers—especially the Peripatetics—deviated from divine guidance due to an excessive reliance on reason. He contends that when reason is treated as an independent source from revelation, it leads to error. His third methodological critique targets the philosophers' method of interpretation (ta'wil) of religious texts. He argues that Peripatetic philosophers, through rationalistic and symbolic interpretations of Quranic verses and Hadiths, have distanced themselves from the literal meaning (zāhir) of religious texts, resorting to unregulated hermeneutics. Additionally, Majlisi views the deep-seated disagreements between philosophical schools, such as the Peripatetic and Illuminationist schools, as clear evidence of philosophy's fundamental weakness. He posits that if philosophy claims to discover truth through pure reason, it should yield a coherent system and certain results; however, the historical reality of



philosophy is characterized by conflicting views and incompatible th

Theoretical frameworks. This divergence, in Majlisi's view, proves the failure of purely rational methods in attaining absolute truth.

Comparative analysis reveals that the entry of philosophy into the Islamic world was not merely a passive transfer of Greek thought, but a reconstructive process shaped by the theological needs of Islamic civilization.

Muslim philosophers, including the Peripatetics, Illuminationists, and proponents of Transcendent Philosophy (Hikmat al-Muta'aliyah), did not place reason in opposition to revelation but viewed it as a tool for a deeper understanding of divine guidance. They saw reason as an extension of revelation, employing philosophical interpretation within the framework of reason and text to achieve a profound understanding of

religion. Consequently, ta'wil for philosophers was not an emergency measure but a natural method for harmonizing tradition (naql) and reason ('aql). Moreover, in the history of human thought, internal disagreement is not a sign of weakness but an indicator of scientific dynamism. Divergent views, if grounded in logic and argumentation, serve to clarify the path toward truth.

In conclusion, this research demonstrates that Majlisi's critiques are rooted in a methodological and text-centered approach, driven by the concern of safeguarding the authority of revelation and tradition against the perceived tyranny and self-sufficiency of reason. While his critiques may not be philosophically exhaustive from a purely epistemological standpoint, they played a crucial role in preserving the foundations of religious epistemology and shaping the dialogue between reason and tradition within the Islamic heritage.