History of Islamic Philosophy

Edited by
SEYYED HOSSEIN NASR
and
OLIVER LEAMAN

History of Islamic Philosophy

Islamic philosophy has often been treated as being largely of historical interest, and belonging to the history of ideas rather than to philosophical study. This volume successfully overturns such a view. Emphasizing the living nature and rich diversity of the subject, it

• examines the main thinkers and schools of thought, from the earliest period to the present day.

• discusses the key concepts of Islamic philosophy, and in related traditions in Greek and Western philosophy.

• covers a vast geographical area, analyzing Islamic philosophy in the Arabic, Persian, Indian, Turkish and South East Asian worlds as well as in the Jewish tradition.

This indispensable reference tool includes a comprehensive bibliography and an extensive index.

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Routledge History of World Philosphies
Volume 1

History of Islamic Philosophy

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Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

LONDON AND NEW YORK

Contents

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Preface

There are a variety of possible approaches to the question of what a history of Islamic philosophy should be. Until now, the most common approach has been to treat leading individual thinkers and at best put them within the context of their own times. There are advantages to this approach in that it makes leading intellectual figures well known and helps relate Islamic philosophy to other aspects of the culture of the period in question. This approach tends often, however, to concentrate more on individual thinkers than on philosophical ideas, and there is the danger of treating Islamic philosophy as a constituent of the history of ideas rather than as part of the history of philosophy.

As editors of these volumes we very much view Islamic philosophy as a living philosophical tradition while, of course, accepting its relation to other intellectual developments of Islamic civilization. Islamic philosophy in fact deals with conceptual issues which are not tied to a particular author or period, and which have universal import. We have, therefore, sought to deal as much with philosophical ideas as individual thinkers, and to deal with the subject as a whole but not necessarily cover everyone who might be described as an Islamic philosopher. There are other general reference books with entries for most Islamic intellectual figures and we do not wish to compete with them. We have had to select from among the vast body of thought

which constitutes Islamic philosophy particular thinkers, ideas and intellectual movements which we regard as the most significant.

The sections of the History are written by different authors who have been selected to represent the various approaches to the subject, and we should not be taken to share their views. We hope that this work reflects the different tendencies and methods prevalent in the field of the study of Islamic philosophy today. We have not sought to impose uniformity on the different ways in which the authors of these volumes have treated their topics. We want to represent the diversity existing within the contemporary study of Islamic philosophy, with all the controversy and disagreement that such diversity entails. Our task has been to
safeguard the scholarly content of these volumes. It is for the reader to decide what attitude to Islamic philosophy is most successful and will be most fruitful in the future.

There are a number of people whom we should like to thank for their help in bringing this project to completion. We have first of all to thank the contributors for their efforts and for having found time to write their chapters. Our editor at Routledge, Richard Stoneman, has been a steadfast supporter of the project, and Heather McCallum and Vicky Peters have been hugely efficient and helpful voices at the end of the telephone when things seemed to be going wrong. Harry Gilonis created the index, and Joanne Snooks saw the whole project through the printing stage. Finally, the editors would like to thank each other for what we hope the reader will find to be a fruitful collaboration.

OL
SHN
June 1995

Transliteration and style

Transliteration has normally been carried out in accordance with the schedule set out here. This has not always been done, though, especially for terms very frequently used, and it seemed more natural to allow authors slight differences in transliteration, particularly in the sections on Jewish philosophy. The original attempt to apply the transliteration schedule strictly proved unsatisfactory, since it resulted in a text which often looked rather strange. Authors have followed their own preferences in some respects for spelling and capitalization of key terms. Some additional bibliographical material has been supplied by the editors.

ARABIC CHARACTERS

ء	'	غ	gh	
ب	b	ف	f	
ت	t	ق	q	
ث	th	ك	k	
ج	j	ل	l	
ح	ḥ	م	m	
خ	kh	ن	n	
د	d	ه	h	
ذ	dh	و	w	
ر	r	ي	y	
ز	z	ة	ah; at (construct state)	
س	s	ال	(article) al- and 'l- (even before the anteropalatals)	
ش	sh			
ص	ṣ			
ض	ḍ	**long vowels**		
ط	ṭ	اى	ā	
ظ	ẓ	و	ū	
ع	'	ي	ī	

short vowels

...َ...	a
...ُ...	u
...ِ...	i

diphthongs

و ...َ...	aw
ي...َ...	ai (ay)
ـِيّ	īy (final form ī)
ـُوّ	uww (final form ū)

Persian letters added to the Arabic alphabet

پ	p
چ	ch
ژ	zh
گ	g

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Introduction

Oliver Leaman

The obvious question which arises for anyone looking at these volumes is why the thinkers who are discussed here are classified under the description of Islamic philosophy. Some of these thinkers are not Muslims, and some of them are not philosophers in a straightforward sense. What is Islamic philosophy? This has been a controversial question for a long time, and it is indeed difficult to find a label which is entirely satisfactory for such thinkers and systems of thought. To label such philosophy as Arabic does indeed make appropriate reference to the language in which the Qur'an was originally transmitted, but it is hardly appropriate as a description of the philosophy we have in mind here. Many of our thinkers did not write in Arabic, and many of them were not Arabs. It is true that an important strand in Islamic philosophy developed in the Arabic language, and in Arabic translations of Greek texts, but this is only a strand, however important it may have been. A vast proportion of Islamic philosophy was written in languages other than Arabic, especially Persian, and by non-Arabs, and that continues to be the case today. Whatever is meant by Arabic philosophy cannot hope to be comprehensive enough to encompass the whole of Islamic philosophy.

Islamic philosophy might be thought to be the sort of philosophy produced by Muslims, but this would be too narrow also. A good deal of philosophy which we have included was produced by non-Muslims, and some of it has no direct religious relevance anyway as the term religion is understood in the West today, so that the religious provenance we might seek to apply to it is misleading. Many Christian and Jewish philosophers worked within the style and tradition of Islamic philosophy, and it would be invidious to exclude them merely on account of their religious beliefs. Also, we do include some philosophical work here which has no direct reference to any religious topic at all but which is just philosophy, a formal enquiry into the structure of the most general

concepts available. Work on logic and grammar, for example, has this character. It is possible to derive some religious implications from such work, of course, if one tries very hard, but not usually very fruitfully. So the Islamic credentials of some of this kind of philosophical work seem to be rather slim, and it might appear problematic to include such work in a book on Islamic philosophy.

There are discussions in these volumes which clearly are Islamic, but which are certainly not clearly philosophy. For example, we thought it was important to have an account of different kinds of theology, since theology played such a large part in the development of Islamic philosophy, often as something which that philosophy could react against. It is important to understand the context within which ideas are produced, not just as an essay in the history of ideas but in order to understand those ideas more clearly. Despite the best efforts of some of the philosophers we shall consider, it is not always easy to distinguish philosophy from theology, or even

from law or grammar, the traditional Islamic sciences. Many of the questions which arise within these contexts have direct philosophical relevance, and the shape of that philosophy was powerfully affected by the disciplines which produced the issues. It is important to realize that we have here a dynamic relationship between the Islamic sciences and philosophy, with a constant interplay of arguments and suggestions, so that it is important to include a discussion of those sciences in such a way that one can see how they have both affected and been affected by philosophy.

It would be tempting to argue that what makes Islamic philosophy an appropriate general concept is that it encompasses a feature of that philosophy which is shared by all its instances. For example, if there is an agenda which is implicit or explicit in all such philosophy, then it would be easy to argue that it should all go under the same general name. Many commentators have argued that indeed there is such an agenda. A very influential school of interpretation originating with Leo Strauss is convinced that the basis of all work in Islamic philosophy is the opposition between religion and reason, between faith and philosophy, and between Islam and Greek thought. Sometimes this is phrased as representing the clash between Jerusalem and Athens. Followers of this approach claim that it is possible to interpret any aspect of Islamic philosophy in line with this central problem, since this problem runs through all such writing. If it is not obvious that it does, then there are ways to find appropriate clues beneath the surface of the text which will show that the central problem lurks there somewhere, and in fact represents the deep structure of the argument of the text. A different but not unrelated view has it that the whole of Islamic philosophy represents an attempt to accommodate Islam with rationality,

so that the central issue is to carry out such a reconciliation. This was the leading motive of the
philosophers themselves, and when we assess their work we have to bear this in mind if we are to understand what the texts they produced actually mean. Unless we grasp the central idea which is the basis to the philosophical writings, we are in danger of misunderstanding those writings, and the assumption is made that there is just such a common theme to those writings. After all, calling philosophy "Islamic" implies, or might seem to imply, that the religious character of what is discussed is crucial, and, since it is linked with philosophy, the apparent conflict between two different approaches to the same issue might seem to be highlighted.

We should resist this temptation. Although there are many discussions in Islamic philosophy of religion and reason, it is entirely mistaken to see this dichotomy as lying at the heart of that philosophy. It might be that that dichotomy lies at the heart of medieval Jewish and Christian philosophy, or at least of much of it, but there is no reason to import such a dichotomy as a leading principle in Islamic philosophy. The attempt to reduce a vast variety of philosophical endeavour to just one such slogan is simplistic and should be avoided. It runs the danger of trying to fit the whole of Islamic philosophy into a conceptual strait-jacket which will inevitably restrict its scope and interest. The intention has been to present in these volumes as much of the variety of Islamic philosophy as possible, and to represent it as a continuing and living tradition of philosophical work, not a dead and completed doctrine from the Middle Ages. Even the work produced in the Middle Ages is too varied in form and content to be subsumed under a simple concept, and forms

very much of a dialogue which continues to have resonance today.

Is there, then, no philosophical agenda which Islamic philosophy has and which uniquely characterizes it? There is such an agenda, but it is more various than is commonly realized. Quite obviously, a society which is Islamic will produce thinkers who will frame their philosophical questions in terms of that society. Sometimes these are just Islamic versions of entirely universal philosophical issues. For example, the question of how it is possible to know God will take a particular form within an Islamic context, given the emphasis on the unity of God. Knowing God will involve knowing a being from which all anthropomorphic description is removed. Yet this is not a uniquely Islamic issue, since many religious philosophies will have an account of how it is possible to know a God who cannot be described in terms which apply to His creation. What is philosophical about the discussion is its use of very abstract concepts to make sense of the idea of such knowledge. What is Islamic about the discussion is its conception of God and His Qualities. This need not be a uniquely Islamic idea, but it will be framed within the language of Islam and will reflect on the way in which that conception of divinity has been refined and developed within Islam. It is not a huge step from discussing the relationship between God and His properties,
which is after all an important aspect of what it is to know God, to wondering what the relationship is between a subject and its properties in general. This latter enquiry has no direct reference to the religious context out of which it originally arose, and yet it is still part of a way of doing philosophy which starts with a religious problem.

What justification is there in calling such a logical problem a part of Islamic philosophy? The problem itself is clearly not only an Islamic problem, nor is it a problem with any direct relevance to religion as such, albeit the way in which it is answered will have an impact upon the way in which one answers questions about God and His properties. It certainly would be mistaken to think that the philosophers whom we are considering would have in the forefront of their minds the religious implications of their work on logic while they were engaged upon such work. They need not have been thinking about those implications, and it would not be far-fetched to suggest that they may not ever have considered those implications. It certainly would be dangerous, then, to refer to an Islamic logic, but not to the inclusion of logic within Islamic philosophy. Such an inclusion makes appropriate reference to the context within which a piece of intellectual work was produced, within the cultural context of Islamic society. We can usefully employ a concept from the Islamic sciences here, that of a chain of transmission. The relevant question is how far the particular philosophical idea or theory can be connected with predominantly Islamic ideas along a chain of transmission or influence. This leaves us with a series of issues and topics which range very widely across traditional philosophical concerns, and that is how it should be. Islamic philosophy is first of all philosophy, and its content is going to resemble the content of philosophy in general. Yet there will remain a connection with ideas or thinkers who worked within the context of Islamic culture at some stage.

Of course, there is a limit to how far one can trace the chain of transmission, and some writers are wildly over-ambitious in claiming to discover a link between aspects of Islamic

philosophy and subsequent developments in Western philosophy. On the other hand, there are interesting links, and these have been to a degree described here, but not as part of the commonplace attitude that such a link would establish the significance of Islamic philosophy. The latter has a significance which is entirely sui generis, as readers of these volumes will surely realize, but what makes it significant is the excellence of the philosophy itself, and the wealth of ideas which were produced. It is patronizing to suggest that one has to stress the impact of Islamic philosophy on the West, and beyond, for it to be taken seriously. None the less, that impact has to be acknowledged and assessed. The emphasis here is not on transmission either into or out of Islamic philosophy but is rather on the ideas of that philosophy itself, since it is the ideas which ultimately demand our

attention and deserve our respect. It is not always easy for Islamic philosophers to pursue those ideas and hold on to the version of Islam with which they started, and the tension which often exists as a result is a very fruitful feature of the intellectual creativity which results.

So when we talk about Islamic philosophy we have in mind a very general concept of an Islamic culture out of which that philosophy grew, and it is consequently important to understand aspects of that culture if the philosophy is to be properly understood. This does not mean that we should fall into the danger of treating Islamic philosophy as though it were only a part of the history of ideas. The history of ideas is far too limiting to encompass the scope of Islamic philosophy. Yet there has often been an over-concentration on the pursuit of Islamic philosophy as an historical task, which has led to what are really philosophical problems about validity being misrepresented as historical problems about attribution and

context. While these historical questions are no doubt interesting and difficult to answer, so that it is an intriguing intellectual task to resolve them, they are of an entirely different order from philosophical questions. The time has come to put Islamic philosophy within its appropriate context, that of philosophy, so that it can be recognized as a dynamic and living tradition which speaks to philosophers today just as it did in the past.

Although we have stressed here the role of Islamic philosophy as a vibrant and important philosophical activity, it cannot be doubted that much of the discussion of this type of philosophy is carried out in terms of exploring its roots in other areas. That is, commentators will examine how the non-philosophical aspects of Islam affect the development of the philosophy which appeared in the Islamic world, and also how different cultural factors influenced Islamic philosophy. In particular, a whole range of that sort of philosophy was quite clearly influenced by Greek thought, and the peripatetic tradition in Islamic philosophy is obviously based upon an originally non-Islamic source. It is important to emphasize that this is but one type of Islamic philosophy, and a type which has been criticized by some Islamic philosophers for its very distance from religion. They have argued on occasion that what we have here is the mere replication of Greek ideas in Arabic dress, without any real attempt at showing how those ideas link up with specifically Islamic issues. It will be fairly clear to any reader of the sections in this book which look at this sort of philosophy that such a criticism is misplaced. There was a genuine attempt at seeing how the conceptual machinery of Greek thought could be applied to Islamic issues, and in this contact between two cultural

movements a great deal of interesting and perceptive work resulted.

Yet we should be very careful in what we say about such cultural contact. It is all too easy to link discussions in Islamic philosophy with
earlier Greek discussions, and to think as a result that what is going on is quite different from what is really going on. Let us take as an example the sorts of discussions which often went on in Islamic philosophy concerning political thought. We are immediately obliged to confront a difficulty here, a difficulty concerning translation. There was a tendency for Greek terms like nomos (law) to be translated not as ndmus, the new Arabic term coined to convey the same meaning as the Greek term, but as Shari'ah, the term for law in Arabic. Now, the latter is a term with religious connotations, which is absent from the Greek notion of law. What the philosophers like al-Farabi meant by this is that the Arabic term can be used to illustrate the sort of point which the Greek thinkers wished to make, and he tried to show this in terms of the language which would strike a resonance with his Muslim compatriots. After all, he did not only wish to convey the nature of the argument to the Islamic community, he wished also to naturalize the argument, to show that this is an argument which is both relevant and interesting to his contemporaries.

This approach is likely to lead to a difficulty in interpretation, though. Many readers will observe al-Farabi using religious terminology to express a point from Greek philosophy, and they will argue that what he is doing is arguing that the latter form of thought is compatible with Islam. That is, they will see the task of reconciling reason with religion as the leading

theme of Islamic philosophy, whereas all that an Islamic philosopher may be doing is representing an originally Greek argument in a manner which would make sense to his audience, in this case using Islamic language. Of course, it might be said that it would be far more accurate to construct a new term, a term which wears its Greek heart on its sleeve, as it were, to convey the original argument. To do otherwise is to run the risk of misleading one's audience, since it appears to be a matter of representing what was an originally secular argument as in fact a religious argument. Perhaps al-Farabi was deliberately trying to pass off Greek thought as being far more religious, or at least Islamic, than it really was. Perhaps he was using Islamic language to describe Greek arguments in order to take a short cut along the path of reconciling Islam with Greek philosophy. After all, once the key terms of Plato's Republic have been translated into Islamic language, it seems to be an easy matter to argue that Plato's argument is perfectly compatible with Islam itself.

This is not an inevitable conclusion. The faldsifah tended to use the language which came most naturally to them, and this obviously meant that they would be using the sort of language which was most familiar with their peers. In any case, they wanted to show that the kinds of issues which arose within the Greek world had interesting and important implications for contemporary problems in the Islamic world, and the best way to present this view is by using the ordinary language of the community for which they were writing. Neologisms were then kept
to a minimum. Those thinkers who were directly concerned with the nature of religion and religious experience did not wish to distinguish precisely between the Greek use of philosophical terminology and its Islamic version, since they

went on to try to show how relevant the conceptual distinctions in question are to the living experience of faith. It has to be acknowledged also that the philosophers were interested in campaigning for not only the acceptability, but also the inevitability of what they were doing. They wanted to show that the Islamic sciences which were part of the traditional canon of doing things and sorting out problems needed to be supplemented by the ancient sciences, and especially by philosophy, and this could only be done if the same sort of language is used in both cases.

If all that the philosophers were doing was to use what were originally Greek ideas and applying them to Islamic problems, one might think that there is not much originality or creativity at issue here. All that was going on would have been highly derivative, and at the most we would be able to observe an interesting arrangement of material which actually was developed elsewhere. In fact, much of the work which goes on in Islamic philosophy is of this nature, it looks for the roots of the discussion elsewhere and implies that the interest of the discussion within the Islamic world is secondary to its original manifestation in the Greek original context. Islamic philosophy then gets relegated to the history of ideas, and is regarded as an interesting aspect of cultural contact, as compared with the systems of philosophy which created the conceptual materials of the debate in the first place. To this situation is added the observation that the Islamic philosophers did not have access to the Greek thinkers in their original language or even in many cases in very accurate translations, and they misidentified some of the authors anyway. Their interpretation of Greek philosophy was highly mediated by Hellenistic and Neoplatonic traditions, and failed to represent clearly what the original debate was.

What this version of Islamic philosophy does not capture adequately is the fact that cultural contact is a far more complicated notion than many understand. It is far too simple to suggest that a term moves from the context of Greek culture to a new Islamic home and then takes up the same form of existence in its new surroundings. The whole semantic structure of the Greek term has not moved into the Islamic world; on the contrary, the new term will incorporate aspects of the original term but will also be very different. We have seen how this applies to terms like nomos and Shari'ah, but they are far from unique in this respect. That is, it is possible to use the new term to make many of the same points made by the old term, yet this should not conceal from us that the new term is different from the old term. The system of concepts and practices in which the old term was embedded are now absent, or at least

different, and the way in which the new term will have to be related to such a system is distinct.

This is very relevant to the accusation that Islamic philosophy is derivative and so not of the first calibre in so far as philosophical thought goes. It is not the case that the Islamic philosophers took Greek (and indeed other) concepts and then used them in their attempts to make sense of the Islamic world. Concepts are not like clothes which one can just pick up and put on. But they are like clothes to the extent that, if they have to go on a different frame, then they will only fit if they are adapted to the new body. It is very difficult to adapt a concept which was appropriate within a particular context to a very different state of affairs, and it is on this that the significance of much Islamic philosophy rests. It was capable of taking some of the key philosophical concepts from earlier cultures and using them to answer problems which arose

within their own culture, and of adapting the concepts so that they could carry out such a task. The combination of abstract philosophical thought on the one hand with problems which arose within Islam on the other is a potent and unstable mixture responsible for the richness and diversity of Islamic philosophy itself.

It might be accepted that Islamic philosophy is interesting, and yet its dependence on a system of thought coming originally from without the Islamic world has led to the development of a tendency to study it from an historical rather than a philosophical perspective. After all, if one is interested primarily in the philosophical issues, one might be tempted to study them within the context of their original Greek expression rather than via the accretions which occurred during their passage through the Islamic world. But the Islamic philosophers should not be seen as being primarily concerned with ersatz philosophical notions derived originally from non-Islamic cultures. These thinkers certainly did use the notions which came to them through the rich intellectual background which was available to them, and they transformed them in the ways in which they used them. This was a matter not just of choice but really of necessity. The philosophical issues which arose in the Greek world could not always be simply replicated in the Islamic world but have to be adapted to make sense, since the terms themselves when moved from one context to another have a different range of meanings.

This is not to suggest that some of the traditional philosophical issues and controversies which arise within every developed culture did not arise within the Islamic world in much the same way as everywhere else. Some problems,

especially the most abstract metaphysical ones, appear to be common to a whole range of cultures. It is just that the nature of a particular culture puts the emphasis upon a different aspect of the problem depending upon the nature of that culture. For example, in discussions of the creation of the world it is important to note that

the Islamic world wanted to mark the fact that according to the Qur'an the world had a beginning and will have an end. This is not to say that Islamic philosophers could therefore abandon Aristotelian accounts of the creation of the world which seem to point to its being eternal because it went against the scriptural truth. Many Islamic philosophers produced modifications of the Aristotelian theory which made it compatible, or apparently compatible, with their understanding of the Qur'an, while others criticized the certainty which philosophers applied to Aristotle's theory. They could not just say that Aristotle was wrong because he seemed to go against scripture – this would be very poor philosophy or indeed theology indeed. They could not just say that Aristotle was right and the Qur'an was wrong, since this would also be to refuse to examine the interesting conceptual links which exist between two apparently distinct and contrary descriptions of creation. It is in the tension between different accounts of the same phenomenon that philosophy really gets to work, presenting a solution which satisfies the need for a rational explanation of the apparent aporia or difficulty. Some of these philosophical expositions are more interesting and well-constructed than others, of course, but the important point to make is that they are all philosophical arguments, and are to be assessed from the perspective of philosophy. How creative were the Islamic philosophers? I think it will be clear to anyone who reads many of the chapters in these volumes that many of them were very

creative. They certainly did not have a tabula rasa on which to write, but, given the concepts and ideas which they had available to them, they used these to their fullest extent. They did not just accept the concepts which were handed down to them, but adapted them and constructed new concepts to make sense of the nature of the problem as they saw it. There is a tendency for us to identify creativity with an entirely new way of tackling an issue, and we live in a period of great artistic creativity in this respect. Artists use a vast variety of often novel forms of expression, some so novel that we are unsure how to assess them. Yet there is good reason to call creative those works by earlier artists which were constructed within the constraints of a particular system of representation, and in some ways it is easier to say that something is creative if we can judge it within the context of an artistic tradition. We can then see precisely how the new contribution to the aesthetic area borrows from what has preceded it and extends the previous understanding of what was possible to do something new. A similar point can be made about Islamic philosophy. We can grasp the context within which it worked, and we can often see how influenced it was by the competing pressures of a variety of cultural traditions, but it does not follow that it cannot be creative because it is dependent upon previously existing intellectual traditions. On the contrary, we can see how on the basis of those traditions it represents a new direction of thought, or, at the very least, is capable
of stepping out in a new direction. Much Islamic philosophy, like much philosophy of any kind, is just the accretion of new technical representations of existing issues, but some of it is capable of establishing entirely new ways of going on which in turn establish new traditions of thinking about problems and resolving difficult conceptual issues.

Islamic philosophy is primarily philosophy, and the appropriate techniques to use in order to understand it are going to be philosophical. There is certainly no one philosophical approach present in Islamic philosophy, but a large variety of different techniques which depend upon the particular point of view of the thinkers themselves. The very diversity of approach might lead one to query yet again the notion of philosophy being "Islamic" at all, since we might expect that label to represent a common view or a consensus as to how to do philosophy. If that expectation was justified, then the philosophy which resulted would be of far less interest, since it would be comparatively narrow and represent something of a party line on how to operate. The breadth of Islamic philosophy represents the diversity of cultures in which Islam has featured, and in these volumes we have attempted to celebrate both.

Introduction

Seyyed Hossein Nasr

Although of course a single reality in itself, Islamic philosophy nevertheless has had and continues to have several historical "embodiments" which are also reflected in how the subject is studied in both East and West. There is first of all the living and continuous tradition of Islamic philosophy in Persia and certain adjacent areas from Iraq to India. When one sits at the feet of a master of this discipline in Isfahan, Tehran or Qom one experiences a living tradition and an organic bond to figures such as Ibn Slna (the Latin Avicenna) and al-Farabi who lived, visited or taught in those very cities or in cities nearby over a millennium ago. In this "embodiment" Islamic philosophy has had a continuous history going back to the earliest Islamic centuries and based not only on written texts but also on an oral tradition transmitted from master to disciple over numerous generations. Moreover, in this ambience Islamic philosophy, called falsafah and later hikmah, is an Islamic intellectual discipline in contention, debate, accord or opposition with other intellectual disciplines but in any case it was and remains a part and parcel of Islamic intellectual life despite the opposition of many jurists. One need only look at the number of students studying Islamic philosophy today in Qom in Iran, that is, in the premier centre of religious studies in that land, to realize how true is this

assertion and how significant is Islamic philosophy even in comparison with jurisprudence, not to speak of kaldm or theology which it overshadows in those intellectual circles in many ways. Then there is the tradition of Islamic philosophy in the Arab part of the Islamic world. Although often called "Arabic philosophy" in the West because of the predominant but not exclusive use of Arabic as its language of discourse, strangely enough in the Arab world, with the exception of Iraq and to some extent Yemen, this philosophy was to have a shorter life as an independent intellectual perspective than in Persia, being consumed in lands west of Iraq after the seventh/thirteenth century by

kalam on the one hand and doctorial Sufism (al-ma'rifah or al-'irfan) on the other. In this world falsafah as a separate discipline came to be marginalized in the centres of Islamic learning, replaced by kalam and usul al-fiqh and often considered as a foreign intrusion. In fact it was not until the last century that Islamic philosophy was revived in Egypt by Jamal al-Dln al-Afghani (Astrabadi) who had been a student of the school of Mulla Sadra in Persia before migrating to Cairo. But in any case, despite the appearance of a number of well-known scholars of Islamic philosophy in Egypt, Syria and Lebanon since Jamal al-Din's days, the relation between falsafah and the Islamic sciences in most parts of the Arab world has been different from what one finds in such places as Iran and certain centres of Islamic learning in the Indo-Pakistani subcontinent. Nor has there been the continuous oral tradition in the domain of philosophy in the Arab world that one finds in Iran and adjacent areas. To some extent this situation also holds true for Turkey although the tradition of Islamic philosophy survived in a continuous manner there longer than it did in Egypt, the Arab Near East and North Africa.

There is also an Islamic philosophy seen by the West as part of its own intellectual tradition and usually referred to as Arabic philosophy. This view saw Islamic philosophy as having stopped abruptly with Ibn Rushd (the Latin Averroes), when the influence of Islamic philosophy upon the West diminished and gradually died out. For over seven centuries in such places as Paris, Louvain, Padua and Bologna this version of Islamic philosophy has been taught as part and parcel of Western intellectual history. Moreover, this Eurocentric view of Islamic philosophy has been taken in the West for Islamic philosophy itself, a view that has been confirmed during this century by much of the scholarship from the Arab world, some of whose well-known figures have found in the European identification of Islamic philosophy with Arabic philosophy a solid theoretical support for the suppositions of Arab nationalism. In any case this understanding of Islamic philosophy, held mostly in Catholic circles and by those interested in medieval European philosophy and theology, has produced a number of great scholars who, however, until quite recently have preferred to remain impervious to the eight centuries of Islamic philosophy after Averroes and the fact that Islamic philosophy is not only "medieval" but also contemporary if not modern.

Parallel with this view is that of Jewish philosophy which developed in a remarkably similar fashion to Islamic philosophy and which also used to a large extent the same language and vocabulary as Islamic philosophical Arabic at least until the destruction of Islamic rule in Spain after which Western Jewish philosophy parted ways from Islamic modes of thought. But in any case there is such a thing as the Jewish understanding of Islamic philosophy and a close rapport

between the two from at least the third/ninth to the seventh/
thirteenth centuries, a link which is reflected
not only in the development of schools of Jewish thought
closely parallel to those of Islam but also in the contribution
of a number of Jewish scholars in the late thirteen/nineteenth
and early fourteenth/twentieth centuries to the early modern
studies of Islamic philosophy in Europe and America.

Also, from the middle of the thirteenth/nineteenth century
onwards, with the rise of the discipline of the "history of
philosophy" in Germany and then other European countries,
combined with the development of Oriental studies, the
attention of a number of Western scholars turned to Islamic
philosophy, which they sought to study "scientifically". This
Orientalistic view of Islamic philosophy, while contributing
much to the editions of texts and historical data, was
primarily philological and historical rather than philosophical,
the appearance of a figure such as Henry Corbin being quite
exceptional. At best this view has dealt with Islamic
philosophy in the context of cultural history or the history of
ideas but hardly ever as philosophy. The fact that in the West
the study of Islamic philosophy continues to be largely
confined to departments of Oriental, Middle Eastern or
Islamic studies, and is rarely treated in philosophy
departments, is not only due to the narrow confines of much
of modern philosophy, which has reduced philosophy to logic
and linguistics. It is also due to a large extent to the way in
which Islamic philosophy has been studied and presented by
Orientalists for over a century.

To make matters even more complicated it is necessary to
point also to the understanding of Islamic philosophy by three
generations of Muslim scholars themselves, scholars who,

while Muslim, have learned their Islamic philosophy from Western sources and still look upon their own intellectual identity through the eyes of others. The latter group have produced a number of works in Arabic, Turkish, Urdu and English – and much less so in Persian – which seem to deal with Islamic philosophy from the Islamic point of view but in reality reflect works of Western scholars which they then try to accommodate to their own situation. One needs only to look at the number of universities in Pakistan and India, the land of such figures as Shah Wallullah of Delhi, where the History of De Boer is still taught, a work according to which Islamic philosophy came to an end six hundred years before Shah Wahullah.

All these "embodiments" of the Islamic philosophical tradition have received treatments in various histories of Islamic philosophy which have appeared in both Islamic and Western languages during the past few decades although most available works still reflect the Western views of Islamic philosophy, whether it be the older school going back to the medieval period or modern Orientalism which shares one major feature with the earlier school in that it also considers Islamic philosophy to have come to an end with Ibn Rushd or soon thereafter.

It was precisely to avoid such a limitation of historical perspective, and also the refusal by many to take Islamic philosophy seriously as philosophy, that when invited by Routledge to edit these volumes on Islamic philosophy with Oliver Leaman, I accepted the task despite full knowledge of the impossibility of doing full justice to the subject with our present knowledge of the various aspects and periods of Islamic philosophy. Having had long training in the study of Islamic philosophy in Persia with traditional masters as well

as in the West and also being acquainted with the Arab world, I thought that my co-operation with Oliver Leaman would make possible the presentation of Islamic philosophy not only in its Western but also in some of its other "embodiments", especially the one identified with this tradition as it has been viewed from within.

Our choice of topics and authors was dictated precisely with these points in mind. In the work that follows we have sought to study Islamic philosophy both morphologically and historically, in relation to the Islamic revelation and other intellectual disciplines within Islamic civilization and in itself, as an independent philosophical tradition and in its relation to earlier schools of thought, especially the Greek, as well as its influence upon later Western thought. We have also drawn our authors from both the diverse regions of the Islamic world and the West, from Muslims trained in traditional schools and those who have studied in modern universities, from Western scholars well versed in Jewish and Christian thought and those whose interest in philosophy is more secular. There is no unanimity of opinion among the authors of these volumes but they do represent as a whole the various perspectives, methods and approaches to the study of Islamic philosophy prevalent today in the Islamic world and the West taken together.

There are among the authors those whose interests are primarily in cultural history, history of ideas or philology. But we have sought to combine such interests with the philosophical in such a way as to emphasize that Islamic philosophy is philosophy, a point with which Oliver Leaman and I are in full agreement whatever differences we may entertain in the understanding of various aspects of the

subject. There are of course among the authors also differences of a philosophical nature. There are those who follow Thomism or traditional schools of Jewish philosophy and others who espouse the views of phenomenology or historical or logical positivism. And then there are those who take Islamic philosophy seriously and identify with it. We have not sought to exclude various philosophical suppositions as long as the subject has been treated in a scholarly fashion. The net result reflects naturally the tension which actually exists today between various understandings of Islamic philosophy not only between the Islamic world and the West but also within each of those worlds.

The current state of knowledge of Islamic philosophy has of course dictated both the plan and content of these volumes. At present there is a dearth of critical editions of Islamic philosophical texts, and in fact there is not a single Islamic philosopher all of whose works have been critically edited. Then there are whole periods of Islamic philosophy, such as that ranging from the seventh/thirteenth to the tenth/sixteenth centuries in Persia, the Ottoman period, or the whole tradition of Islamic philosophy in the Subcontinent, which have not been carefully studied and whose history cannot therefore be as yet written in any detail. There are also important figures of Islamic philosophy from Bahmanyar, Muhammad al-Shahrazuri, Athir al-Din al-Abhari, Qutb al-Dln al-RazI and Mansur Dashtakl in Persia to Ibn Sab'ln in Spain and many others especially in India and Turkey about whom much more monographic study needs to be carried out in order to clarify whole areas and periods of Islamic philosophy.

There is also the question of the interaction between Islamic philosophy and other disciplines ranging from jurisprudence

to the natural sciences. This work has tried to take this important domain into consideration but the present state of research leaves much to be desired in such fields as the philosophy of mathematics, the philosophy of medicine and the vast domain of the philosophy of art. Lack of available knowledge and scholars who could treat such subjects in a work of this nature are reflected indirectly in the contents of the chapters which follow. It is obvious that we as editors could avail ourselves only of scholars capable and willing to participate in such a venture but it is necessary to add that the fact that certain important questions have not been treated in the present work does not mean that they were not of concern in the Islamic intellectual universe. Even today there is a vast body of knowledge especially in such domains as the philosophy of art, including both architecture and music, which remains oral and is transmitted only personally by traditional masters many of whom refuse to present their knowledge in written form.

As a result of those and other factors related to the present state of the art as far as the study of Islamic philosophy is concerned, the present work cannot and does not claim to be complete and exhaustive. What it has sought to do, however, is to cast its net as widely as possible to deal with all the periods of Islamic philosophy up to the present day as opposed to the supposed termination of this philosophical tradition with Ibn Rushd, bridging the artificial gap created by Western and some modern Muslim scholars between Islamic philosophy, which it classifies as being medieval, and so-called modern Islamic thought, which is often studied in a vacuum as if it had suddenly sprung up in a civilization without any significant previous intellectual history. We have

also sought to deal as much as possible with other disciplines with which Islamic philosophy
has reacted in one way or another over the ages, including law, science and mysticism. We have sought also to situate Islamic philosophy globally by studying the pre-Islamic schools of thought which nurtured it and other philosophical traditions such as the Jewish and Christian which it influenced deeply and with which it interacted in many ways. Finally, we have tried to bring out the relation of Islamic philosophy to the Islamic revelation itself and also to point out its rapport with other religious and theological discourses and disciplines which grew over the ages as branches of that tree of knowledge which has its roots in the Qur'anic revelation and whose many branches include Islamic philosophy itself.

I wish to terminate this introduction with a subject which in a sense should have come at the beginning of this discussion, but, having already been treated in another way by Oliver Leaman, is perhaps more suited as the concluding comment of my introduction. That subject is why we have called Islamic philosophy Islamic philosophy. My co-editor has provided his own reasons to which I wish to add mine. First of all, the tradition of Islamic philosophy is deeply rooted in the world view of the Qur'anic revelation and functions within a cosmos in which prophecy or revelation is accepted as a blinding reality that is the source not only of ethics but also of knowledge. It is therefore what Henry Corbin quite rightly called la philosophic prophetique. Secondly, while being philosophy in the fullest sense of the term, its very conception of al-'aql (reason/ intellect) was transformed by the intellectual and spiritual universe within which it functioned in the same way that reason as transformed by the

rationalism of the Age of Enlightenment began to function differently from the ratio and intellectus of a St Thomas. This fact is an undeniable truth for anyone who has studied Islamic philosophy from within the tradition and it remains an essential reality to consider despite the attempt of a number of not only Western but also Westernized Muslim scholars who, having surrendered to the rationalism of modern philosophy, now wish to read this understanding of reason back into Islamic philosophy. Thirdly, the Islamic philosophers were Muslim and nearly all of them devout in their following of the Shartah. It should never be forgotten that the paragon of rationalistic philosophy in Islam, Ibn Rushd, long considered in the robe of Averroes as the epitome of rationalism in the West, was the chief religious authority of Cordova (modern Spanish Cordoba) and that Mulla Sadra, one of the greatest of Islamic metaphysicians, journeyed seven times on foot to Mecca (Makkah) and died during the seventh pilgrimage. There are also other reasons which it is not possible to discuss here but which are mentioned in several of the essays that follow.

All these factors converge to point to the Islamic nature of Islamic philosophy in the same way that Christian philosophy is Christian and Jewish philosophy is Jewish. It is strange that no one protests against the
use of the term Jewish philosophy because a number of Talmudic scholars over the centuries have opposed it, and the same holds true mutatis mutandis for Christianity. In the case of Islam, however, most Western scholars of the subject have chosen to identify other schools of Islamic thought such as kaldm as Islamic and Islamic philosophy as "foreign", appealing to those very voices within the Islamic world

which, like the Talmudic scholars in Judaism, have opposed Islamic philosophy.

Furthermore, this Western view has been adopted by a number of Muslim scholars trained in the rationalistic and sceptical modes of Western thought and impervious to the still living tradition of Islamic philosophy within the Islamic world and the possibility of gaining certitude (al-yaqin) intellectually. Certainly, Islamic philosophy has had its opponents in Islamic circles but it has also had its defenders in not only the Shi'ite world but also in certain areas and schools of the Sunni world, although, as already mentioned, falsafah became more or less wed to either kaldm or ma'rifah in later centuries in much of Sunnism at least in the Arab world. In any case Islamic philosophy has remained a major intellectual activity and a living intellectual tradition within the citadel of Islam to this day while continuing to be fully philosophy if this term is not limited to its recent caricature in the Anglo-Saxon world which would deny the title of philosopher to even Plato and Aristotle.

Islamic philosophy is not Arabic philosophy for several reasons, although this term has a respectable history in the West while having no historical precedence in the Islamic world itself before the fourteenth/twentieth century. First of all, although most works of Islamic philosophy were written in Arabic, much was also written in Persian going back to Ibn Slna himself. Secondly, while many of the Islamic philosophers were Arabs, such as al-Kindl or Ibn Rushd, many and in fact most were Persian while some were from Turkish or Indian ethnic backgrounds. Moreover, Persia has remained the main centre of Islamic philosophy during most of Islamic history.

And then there are arguments from the other side. Much of Jewish philosophy was written in Arabic but is not called Arabic philosophy and there is a whole Christian Arabic literature of a philosophical nature which is of some significance in the early history of Islamic philosophy but which belongs to a distinct philosophical tradition. If one puts modern nationalistic and chauvinistic ideas aside and looks upon the whole of the Islamic philosophical tradition, one cannot but call it Islamic philosophy for both intellectual and historical reasons, and if the term Arabic philosophy is still used in European languages it must be understood strictly in its medieval sense and not transposed into the modern understanding of this term. Islamic philosophy was created by Muslims who were Arabs, Persians and later Turks, Indians, Malays etc. on the basis of translations often made by Christians and influenced to some extent by Christian and

Jewish interactions with Greek philosophy. And yet, Islamic philosophy functioned in a universe dominated by the Qur'anic revelation and the manifestation of the nature of the Divine Principle as the One. In such a world, a philosophical tradition was created which acted as catalyst for the rise of medieval Jewish philosophy and had a profound impact upon both philosophy and theology in the Christian West. It also exercised an influence upon Hindu India with which the present volumes have not been greatly concerned although some allusions have been made to this important chapter in the interaction of Islamic philosophy with intellectual traditions of other civilizations. The Islamic philosophical tradition reacted in numerous ways with other schools of Islamic thought and, on the basis of much of the wisdom of antiquity, created one of the richest intellectual traditions in the world, one which has survived as a living reality to this day. It is our hope that the present volumes will reveal some

of the riches of this tradition as well as clarify its history and role for Islamic civilization as well as for European intellectual history in which it played a crucial role at an important stage of the development of Western thought.

wa'Llāhu ā'lam

I

Religious, intellectual and cultural context

CHAPTER 1

The meaning and concept of philosophy in Islam

Seyyed Hossein Nasr

❧❦❧

In the light of the Qur'an and Hadith in both of which the term hikmah has been used,[1] Muslim authorities belonging to different schools of thought have sought over the ages to define the meaning of hikmah as well as falsafah, a term which entered Arabic through the Greek translations of the second/eighth and third/ninth centuries. On the one hand what is called philosophy in English must be sought in the context of Islamic civilization not only in the various schools of Islamic philosophy but also in schools bearing other names, especially kalam, ma'rifah, mill al-fiqh as well as the awail sciences, not to speak of such subjects as grammar and history which developed particular branches of philosophy. On the other hand each school of thought sought to define what is meant by hikmah or falsafah according to its own perspective and this question has remained an important concern of various schools of Islamic thought especially as far as the schools of Islamic philosophy are concerned.

During Islamic history, the terms used for Islamic philosophy as well as the debates between the philosophers, the theologians and sometimes the Sufis as to the meaning of these terms varied to some extent from one period to another but not completely. Hikmah and falsafah continued to be used while such terms as al-hikmat al-ilahiyyah and al-hikmat al-mutaaliyah gained new meaning and usage in later centuries of Islamic history, especially in the school of Mulla Sadra. The term over which there was the greatest debate was hikmah, which was claimed by the Sufis and mutakallimun as well as the philosophers, all appealing to such Hadith as "The acquisition of hikmah is incumbent upon you and the good resides in hikmah."[1] Some Sufis such as Tirmidhl were called hakim and Ibn Arabl refers to the wisdom which has been unveiled through each manifestation of the logos as hikmah as seen in the very title
of his masterpiece Fusus al-hikam? while many mutakallimun such as Fakhr al-Dln al-RazI claimed that kaldm and not falsafah was hikmah,[A] Ibn Khaldun confirming this view in calling the later kaldm (kaldm al-muta'akhkhirin) philosophy or hikmah)

Our discussion in this chapter is concerned, however, primarily with the Islamic philosophers' understanding of the definition and meaning of the concept of philosophy and the terms hikmah and falsafah.[6] This understanding includes of course what the Greeks had comprehended by the term philosophia and many of the definitions from Greek sources which were to find their way into Arabic sometimes with only slight modifications. Some of the definitions of Greek origin most common among Islamic philosophers are as follows:[7]

1 Philosophy (alfalsafah) is the knowledge of all existing things qua existents (ashya' al-mawjudah bi ma hiya mawjudah)?

2 Philosophy is knowledge of divine and human matters.

3 Philosophy is taking refuge in death, that is, love of death.

4 Philosophy is becoming God-like to the extent of human ability.

5 It [philosophy] is the art (sind'ah) of arts and the science (Him) of sciences.

6 Philosophy is predilection for hikmah.

The Islamic philosophers meditated upon these definitions of falsafah which they inherited from ancient sources and which they identified with the Qur'anic term hikmah believing the origin of hikmah to be divine. The first of the Islamic philosophers, Abu Ya'qub al-Kindl wrote in his On First Philosophy, "Philosophy is the knowledge of the reality of things within people's possibility, because the philosopher's end in theoretical knowledge is to gain truth and in practical knowledge to behave in accordance with truth."[9] Al-Farabl, while accepting this definition, added the distinction between philosophy based on certainty (al-yaqiniyyah) hence demonstration and philosophy based on opinion (al-maznilnah),[10] hence dialectic and sophistry, and insisted that philosophy was the mother of the sciences and dealt with everything that exists.[11]

Ibn Slna again accepted these earlier definitions while making certain precisions of his own. In his 'Uyiin al-hikmah he says "Al-hikmah [which he uses as being the same as philosophy] is the perfection of the human soul through conceptualization [tasawwur] of things and judgment [tasdiq] of theoretical and practical realities to the measure of human ability."[12] But he went further in later life to distinguish between Peripatetic philosophy and what he called "Oriental philosophy" (al-hikmat al-mashriqiyyah) which was not based on ratiocination alone but included realized knowledge and which set the stage for the hikmat al-ishraq of Suhrawardl.[13] Ibn Slna's foremost student Bahmanyar meanwhile identified falsafah closely with the study of existents as Ibn Slna had done in

his Peripatetic works such as the Shifa, repeating the Aristotelian dictum that philosophy is the study of existents qua existents. Bahmanyar wrote in the introduction to his Tahsil, "The aim of the philosophical sciences is knowledge of existents."[14]

Ismā'īlī and Hermetico-Pythagorean thought, which paralleled in development the better-known Peripatetic philosophy but with a different philosophical perspective, nevertheless gave definitions of philosophy not far removed from those of the Peripatetics, emphasizing perhaps even more the relation between the theoretical aspect of philosophy and its practical dimension, between thinking philosophically and leading a virtuous life. This nexus, which is to be seen in all schools of earlier Islamic philosophy, became even more evident from Suhrawardi onward and the hakim came to be seen throughout Islamic society not as someone who could only discuss mental concepts in a clever manner but as one who also lived according to the wisdom which he knew

theoretically. The modern Western idea of the philosopher never developed in the Islamic world and the ideal stated by the Ikhwan al-Safa' who lived in the fourth/ tenth century and who were contemporary with Ibn Slna was to echo ever more loudly over the ages wherever Islamic philosophy was cultivated. The Ikhwan wrote, "The beginning of philosophy (falsafah) is the love of the sciences, its middle knowledge of the realities of existents to the measure of human ability and its end words and deeds in accordance with knowledge."[15]

With Suhrawardi we enter not only a new period but also another realm of Islamic philosophy. The founder of a new intellectual perspective in Islam, Suhrawardi used the term hikmat al-ishraq rather than falsafat al-ishraq for both the title of his philosophical masterpiece and the school which he inaugurated. The ardent student of Suhrawardi and the translator of Hikmat al-ishraq into French, Henry Corbin, employed the term theosophie rather than philosophy to translate into French the term hikmah as understood by Suhrawardi and later sages such as Mulla Sadra, and we have also rendered al-hikmat al-muta'aliyah of Mulla Sadra into English as "transcendent theosophy"[16] and have sympathy for Corbin's translation of the term. There is of course the partly justified argument that in recent times the term "theosophy" has gained pejorative connotations in European languages, especially English, and has become associated with occultism and pseudo-esoterism. And yet the term philosophy also suffers from limitations imposed upon it by those who have practised it during the past few centuries. If Hobbes, Hume and Ayer are philosophers, then those whom Suhrawardi calls hukama are not philosophers and vice versa. The narrowing of the meaning of philosophy, the divorce between philosophy and spiritual practice in the West and especially

the reduction of philosophy to either rationalism or empiricism necessitate making a distinction between the meaning given

to hikmah by a Suhrawardl or Mulla Sadra and the purely mental activity called philosophy in certain circles in the West today. The use of the term theosophy to render this later understanding of the term hikmah is based on the older and time-honoured meaning of this term in European intellectual history as associated with such figures as Jakob Bohme and not as the term became used in the late thirteenth/nineteenth century by some British occultists. Be that as it may, it is important to emphasize the understanding that Suhrawardl and all later Islamic philosophers have of hikmah as primarily al-hikmat al-ilahiyyah (literally divine wisdom or theosophia) which must be realized within one's whole being and not only mentally. Suhrawardl saw this hikmah as being present also in ancient Greece before the advent of Aristotelian rationalism and identifies hikmah with coming out of one's body and ascending to the world of lights, as did Plato.[17] Similar ideas are to be found throughout his works, and he insisted that the highest level of hikmah requires both the perfection of the theoretical faculty and the purification of the soul.[18]

With Mulla Sadra, one finds not only a synthesis of various earlier schools of Islamic thought but also a synthesis of the earlier views concerning the meaning of the term and concept philosophy. At the beginning of the Asfar he writes, repeating verbatim and summarizing some of the earlier definitions, 'falsafah is the perfecting of the human soul to the extent of human ability through the knowledge of the essential reality of things as they are in themselves and through judgment concerning their existence established upon demonstration and not derived from opinion or through imitation".[19] And in

al-Shawahid al-rubiibiyyah he adds, "[through hikmah] man becomes an intelligible world resembling the objective world and similar to the order of universal existence".[20]

In the first book of the Asfar dealing with being, Mulla Sadra discusses extensively the various definitions of hikmah, emphasizing not only theoretical knowledge and "becoming an intelligible world reflecting the objective intelligible world" but also detachment from passions and purification of the soul from its material defilements or what the Islamic philosophers call tajarrud or catharsis.[21] Mulla Sadra accepts the meaning of hikmah as understood by Suhrawardl and then expands the meaning of falsafah to include the dimension of illumination and realization implied by the ishraqi and also Sufi understanding of the term. For him as for his contemporaries, as well as most of his successors, falsafah or philosophy was seen as the supreme science of ultimately divine origin, derived from "the niche of prophecy" and the hukama'as the most perfect of human beings standing in rank only below the prophets and Imams.[22]

This conception of philosophy as dealing with the discovering of the truth concerning the nature of things and combining mental knowledge with the purification and perfection of one's being has lasted to this day wherever the tradition of Islamic philosophy has continued and is in
fact embodied in the very being of the most eminent representatives of the Islamic philosophical tradition to this day. Such fourteenth/twentieth-century masters as Mlrza Ahmad AshtiyanI, the author of Ndma-yi rahbardn-i dmiizish-i kitdb-i takwin ("Treatise of the Guides to the Teaching of the Book of Creation"); Sayyid Muhammad Kazim Assar, author of many treatises including Wahdat

ctl-wujiid ("The Transcendent Unity of Being"); Mahdi Ilahi Qumsha'i, author oi Hikmat-i ildhi khwdss wa 'dmm ("Philosophy/Theosophy – General and Particular") and Allamah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'l, author of numerous treatises especially Usul-i falsafa-yi rVdlizm ("Principles of the Philosophy of Realism") all wrote of the definition of philosophy along lines mentioned above and lived accordingly. Both their works and their lives were testimony not only to over a millennium of concern by Islamic philosophers as to the meaning of the concept and the term philosophy but also to the significance of the Islamic definition of philosophy as that reality which transforms both the mind and the soul and which is ultimately never separated from spiritual purity and ultimately sanctity that the very term hikmah implies in the Islamic context.

NOTES

1 For the use of hikmah in the Qur'an and Hadith see S. H. Nasr, "The Qur'an and Hadith as Source and Inspiration of Islamic Philosophy", Chapter 2 below.

2 Alayka bVl-hikmah fa inna'l-khayr fi'l-hikmah.

3 See Muhyl al-Dln Ibn Arabl, The Wisdom of the Prophets, trans. T. Burckhardt, trans, from French A. Culme-Seymour (Salisbury, 1975), pp. 1-3 of Burckhardt's introduction; and M. Chodkiewicz, Seal of the Saints – Prophethood and Sainthood in the Doctrine of Ibn Arabi, trans. S. L. Sherrard (Cambridge, 1993): 47-8.

4 See S. H. Nasr, "Fakhr al-Dln Razl", in M. M. Sharif (ed.), A History of Muslim Philosophy, 1 (Wiesbaden, 1963): 645-8.

5 Abd al-Razzaq Lahljl, the eleventh/seventeenth-century student of Mulla Sadra who was however more of a theologian than a philosopher, writes in his kalami text Gawhar-murady "Since it has become known that in acquiring the divine sciences and other intellectual matters the intellect has complete independence, and does not need to rely in these matters upon the SharVah and the proof of certain principles concerning the essence of beings in such a way as to be in accord with the objective world through intellectual demonstrations and reasoning … the path of the hukama the science acquired through this means is called in the vocabulary of scholars hikmah. And of necessity it will be in accord with the true SharVah for the truth of the SharVah is realized objectively through intellectual demonstration" (Gawhar-murad (Tehran, 1377): 17-18). Although speaking as a theologian, Lahljl is admitting in this text that hikmah should be used for the intellectual activity of the philosophers and not the mutakallimun, demonstrating the shift in position in the understanding of this term since the time of Fakhr al-Dln al-RazI.

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There is considerable secondary material on this subject in Arabic as well as in European languages. See Abd al-Hallm Mahmud, al-Tafkir al-falsafi fi'l-isldm (Cairo, 1964): 163-71; Mustafa ᶜAbd al-Raziq, Tamhid li-ta'rikh al-falsafat al-isldmiyyah (Cairo, 1959), chapter 3: 48ff.; G. C. Anawati, "Philosophic medievale en terre d'Islam", Melanges de Tlnstitut Dominicain dEtudes Orientates du Caire, 5 (1958):

175-236; and S. H. Nasr, "The Meaning and Role of 'Philosophy in Islam", Studia Islamica, 37 (1973): 57-80.

7 See Christel Hein, Definition und Einleitung der Philosophie – Von der spatan-tiken Einleitungsliteratur zur arabischen Enzyklopadie (Bern and New York, 1985): 86.

8 This is repeated with only a small alteration by al-Farabl in his al-Jam' bayn ra'ay al-hakimayn. According to Ibn Abi Usaybi'ah, al-Farabl even wrote a treatise entitled Concerning the Word 'Philosophy' (Kalam ft ism al-falsafah) although some have doubted that this was an independent work. See S. Strouma, "Al-Farabl and Maimonides on the Christian Philosophical Tradition", Der Islam, 68(2) (1991): 264; and Aristoteles – Werk und Wirkung, 2, ed. J. Weisner (Berlin, 1987).

9 Quoted in Ahmed Fouad El-Ehwany, "Al-Kindl", in M. M. Sharif (ed.), A History of Muslim Philosophy, 1 (1963): 424.

10 Kitab al-Hurufi ed. M. Mahdi (Beirut, 1969): 153-7.

11 Kitab Jam' bayn ra^{y}ay al-hakimayn (Hyderabad, 1968): 36-7.

12 Pontes sapientiae CUyun al-hikmah), ed. Abdurrahman Badawl (Cairo, 1954): 16.

13 On Ibn Slna's "Oriental philosophy" see Chapter 17 below.

14 Kitab al-Tahsll ed. M. Mutahharl (Tehran, 1970): 3.

15 RasaiU 1 (Cairo, 1928): 23.

16 See S. H. Nasr, The Transcendent Theosophy of Sadr al-Din Shirazi (Tehran, 1977).

17 See his Talwihat, in H. Corbin (ed.) Oeuvres philosophiques et mystiques, 1 (Tehran, 1976): 112-13.

18 See S. H. Nasr, Three Muslim Sages (Delmar, 1975): 63-4.

19 Al-Asfdr al-arba'ah, ed. AJlamah Tabataba'l (Tehran, 1967): 20.

20 Mulla Sadra, al-Shawahid al-rububiyyah, ed. S. J. AshtiyanI (Mashhad, 1967).

21 See the Introduction of the Asfdr.

22 Muhammad Khwajawl, LawamV al-'arifin (Tehran, 1987): 18ff., where many quotations from the different works of Mulla Sadra on the relation between authentic hikmah and revelation and the spiritual power and sanctity of the Imams (waldyah) are cited.

CHAPTER 2

The Qur'ān and Hadīth as source and inspiration of Islamic philosophy

Seyyed Hossein Nasr

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Viewed from the point of view of the Western intellectual tradition, Islamic philosophy appears as simply Graeco-Alexandrian philosophy in Arabic dress, a philosophy whose sole role was to transmit certain important elements of the heritage of antiquity to the medieval West. If seen, however, from its own perspective and in the light of the whole of the Islamic philosophical tradition which has had a twelve-century-long continuous history and is still alive today, it becomes abundantly clear that Islamic philosophy, like everything else Islamic, is deeply rooted in the Qur'an and Hadith. Islamic philosophy is Islamic not only by virtue of the fact that it was cultivated in the Islamic world and by Muslims but because it derives its principles, inspiration and many of the questions with which it has been concerned from the sources of Islamic revelation despite the claims of its opponents to the contrary.[1]

All Islamic philosophers from al-Kindl to those of our own day such as Allamah Tabataba'l have lived and breathed in a universe dominated by the reality of the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet of Islam. Nearly all of them have lived according to Islamic Law or the Shanah and have prayed in the direction of Makkah every day of their adult life. The most famous among them, such as Ibn Slna (Avicenna) and Ibn Rushd (Averroes), were conscious in asserting their active attachment to Islam and reacted strongly to any attacks against their faith without their being simply fideists. Ibn Slna would go to a mosque and pray when confronted with a difficult problem,[2] and Ibn Rushd was the chief qadi or judge of Cordova (Spanish Cordoba) which means that he was himself the embodiment of the authority of Islamic Law even if he

were to be seen later by many in Europe as the arch-rationalist and the very symbol of the rebellion of reason against faith. The very presence of the Qur'an and the advent of its revelation was to transform radically the universe in which and about which Islamic philosophers were to philosophize, leading to a specific kind of philosophy which can be justly called "prophetic philosophy".[3]

The very reality of the Qur'an, and the revelation which made it accessible to a human community, had to be central to the concerns of anyone who sought to philosophize in the Islamic world and led to a type of philosophy in which a revealed book is accepted as the supreme source of knowledge not only of religious law but of the very nature of existence and beyond existence of the very source of existence. The prophetic consciousness which is the recipient of revelation (al-wahy) had to remain of the utmost significance for those who sought to know the nature of things. How were the

ordinary human means of knowing related to such an extraordinary manner of knowing? How was human reason related to that intellect which is illuminated by the light of revelation? To understand the pertinence of such issues, it is enough to cast even a cursory glance at the works of the Islamic philosophers who almost unanimously accepted revelation as a source of ultimate knowledge.[4] Such questions as the hermeneutics of the Sacred Text and theories of the intellect which usually include the reality of prophetic consciousness remain, therefore, central to over a millennium of Islamic philosophical thought.

One might say that the reality of the Islamic revelation and participation in this reality transformed the very instrument of philosophizing in the Islamic world. The theoretical intellect (al-'aql al-nazart) of the Islamic philosophers is no longer that of Aristotle although his very terminology is translated into Arabic. The theoretical intellect, which is the epistemological instrument of all philosophical activity, is Islamicized in a subtle way that is not always detectable through only the analysis of the technical vocabulary involved. The Islamicized understanding of the intellect, however, becomes evident when one reads the discussion of the meaning of 'aql or intellect in a major philosopher such as Mulla Sadra when he is commenting upon certain verses of the Qur'an containing this term or upon the section on 'aql from the collection of Shi'ite Hadith of al-Kulayni entitled Usui al-kafi. The subtle change that took place from the Greek idea of the "intellect" (nous) to the Islamic view of the intellect (al-'aql) can also be seen much earlier in the works of even the Islamic Peripatetics such as Ibn Slna where the Active Intellect (al-'aql al-fa"al) is equated with the Holy Spirit (al-ruh al-qudus).

As is well known to students of the Islamic tradition, according to certain hadith and also the oral tradition which has been transmitted over the centuries, the Qur'an and all aspects of the Islamic tradition which are rooted in it have both an outward (zdhir) and an inward (batin)
dimension. Moreover, certain verses of the Qur'an themselves allude to the inner and symbolic significance of the revealed Book and its message. As for the Hadlth, a body of this collection relates directly to the inner or esoteric dimension of the Islamic revelation and certain sayings of the Prophet refer directly to the esoteric levels of meaning of the Qur'an.

Islamic philosophy is related to both the external dimension of the Qur'anic revelation or the Shari'ah and the inner truth or Haqiqah which is the heart of all that is Islamic. Many of the doctors of the Divine Law or Shari'ah have stood opposed to Islamic philosophy while others have accepted it. In fact some of the outstanding Islamic philosophers such as Ibn Rushd, Mir Damad and Shah Wallullah of Delhi have also been authorities in the domain of the Sacred Law. The Shari'ah has, however, provided mostly the social and human conditions for the philosophical activity of the Islamic philosophers. It is to the Haqiqah that one has to turn for the inspiration and source of knowledge for Islamic philosophy.

The very term al-haqiqah is of the greatest significance for the understanding of the relation between Islamic philosophy and the sources of the Islamic revelation.[5] Al-haqiqah means both truth and reality. It is related to God Himself, one of whose names is A-Haqq or the Truth, and is that whose discovery is the goal of all Islamic philosophy. At the same time al-haqiqah constitutes the inner reality of the Qur'an and can be reached through a hermeneutic penetration of the meaning

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of the Sacred Text. Throughout history, many an Islamic philosopher has identified falsafah or hikmah, the two main terms used with somewhat different meaning for Islamic philosophy, with the Haqiqah lying at the heart of the Qur'an. Much of Islamic philosophy is in fact a hermeneutic unveiling of the two grand books of revelation, the Qur'an and the cosmos, and in the Islamic intellectual universe Islamic philosophy belongs, despite some differences, to the same family as that of ma'rifah or gnosis which issues directly from the inner teachings of Islam and which became crystallized in both Sufism and certain dimensions of Shi'ism. Without this affinity there would not have been a Suhrawardl or Mulla Sadra in Persia or an Ibn Sab'in in Andalusia.

Philosophers living as far apart as Nasir-i Khusraw (fifth/ eleventh century) and Mulla Sadra (tenth/sixteenth century) have identified falsafah or hikmah explicitly with the Haqiqah lying at the heart of the Qur'an whose comprehension implies the spiritual hermeneutics (tawil) of the Sacred Text. The thirteenth/nineteenth-century Persian philosopher J a'far Kashifl goes even further and identifies the various methods for the interpretation of the Qur'an with the different schools of philosophy, correlating tafsir (the literal interpretation of the Qur'an) with the Peripatetic (mashshai) school, ta'wil (its symbolic interpretation) with the Stoic (riwdqi),[6] and tafhim (in-depth comprehension of the Sacred Text) with the Illuminationist (ishrdqi).[7] For the main tradition of Islamic philosophy, especially as it developed in later centuries, philosophical activity was inseparable from interiorization of oneself and penetration into the inner meaning of the Qur'an and Hadlth which those philosophers who were of a Shi'ite bent considered to be made possible through the power issuing from the cycle of initiation (da hat al-walayah) that

follows the closing of the cycle of prophecy (dairat al-nubuwwah) with the death of the Prophet of Islam.

The close nexus between the Qur'an and Hadlth, on the one hand, and Islamic philosophy, on the other, is to be seen in the understanding of the history of philosophy. The Muslims identified Hermes, whose personality they elaborated into the "three Hermes", also well known to the West from Islamic sources, with Idrls or Enoch, the ancient prophet who belongs to the chain of prophecy confirmed by the Qur'an and Hadith? And they considered Idrls as the origin of philosophy, bestowing upon him the title of Abu'l-Hukama' (the father of philosophers). Like Philo and certain later Greek philosophers before them and also many Renaissance philosophers in Europe, Muslims considered prophecy to be the origin of philosophy, confirming in an Islamic form the dictum of Oriental Neoplatonism that "Plato was Moses in Attic Greek". The famous Arabic saying "philosophy issues from the niche of prophecy" (yanba'u'l-hikmah min mishkat al-nubuwwah) has echoed through the annals of Islamic history and indicates clearly how Islamic philosophers themselves envisaged the relation between philosophy and revelation.

It must be remembered that al-Hakim (the Wise, from the same root as hikmah) is a Name of God and also one of the names of the Qur'an. More specifically many Islamic philosophers consider Chapter 31 of the Qur'an, entitled Luqman, after the Prophet known proverbially as a hakim, to have been revealed to exalt the value of hikmah, which Islamic philosophers identify with true philosophy.

This chapter begins with the symbolic letters alif, lam, mim followed immediately by the verse, "These are revelations of the wise scripture [al-kitab al-haklmY (Pickthall translation), mentioning directly the term hakim. Then in verse 12 of the same chapter it is revealed, "And verily We gave Luqman wisdom [al-hikmah], saying: Give thanks unto Allah; and whosoever giveth thanks, he giveth thanks for [the good of] his soul. And whosoever refuseth – Lo! Allah is Absolute, Owner of Praise." Clearly in this verse the gift of hikmah is considered a blessing for which one should be grateful, and this truth is further confirmed by the famous verse, "He giveth wisdom [hikmah] unto whom He will, and he unto whom wisdom is given, he truly hath received abundant good" (2: 269).

There are certain Hadlth which point to God having offered prophecy and philosophy or hikmah, and Luqman chose hikmah which must not be confused simply with medicine or other branches of
traditional hikmah but refers to pure philosophy itself dealing with God and the ultimate causes of things. These traditional authorities also point to such Qur'anic verses as "And He will teach him the Book [al-kitdb] and Wisdom [al-hikmah]" (3: 48) and "Behold that which I have given you of the Book and Wisdom" (3: 81): there are several where kitdb and hikmah are mentioned together. They believe that this conjunction confirms the fact that what God has revealed through revelation He had also made available through hikmah, which is reached through 'aql, itself a microcosmic reflection of the macrocosmic reality which is the instrument of revelation.[9] On the basis of this doctrine later Islamic philosophers such as Mulla Sadra developed an elaborate doctrine of the intellect in its relation to the prophetic intellect and the

descent of the Divine Word, or the Qur'an, basing themselves to some extent on earlier theories going back to Ibn Slna and other Muslim Peripatetics. All of this indicates how closely traditional Islamic philosophy identified itself with revelation in general and the Qur'an in particular.

Islamic philosophers meditated upon the content of the Qur'an as a whole as well as on particular verses. It was the verses of a polysemic nature or those with "unclear outward meaning" (mutashdbihdt) to which they paid special attention. Also certain well-known verses were cited or commented upon more often than others, such as the "Light Verse" (ayat al-nur) (24: 35) commented upon already by Ibn Slna in his Ishdrdt and also by many later figures. Mulla Sadra was in fact to devote one of the most important philosophical commentaries ever written upon the Qur'an, entitled Tafsir ay at al-nur, to this verse.[10]

Western studies of Islamic philosophy, which have usually regarded it as simply an extension of Greek philosophy,[11] have for this very reason neglected for the most part the commentaries cf Islamic philosophers upon the Qur'an, whereas philosophical commentaries occupy an important category along with the juridical, philological, theological (kaldm) and Sufi commentaries. The first major Islamic philosopher to have written Qur'anic commentaries is Ibn Slna, many of whose commentaries have survived.[12] Later Suhrawardl was to comment upon diverse passages of the Sacred Text, as were a number of later philosophers such as Ibn Turkah al-Isfahani.

The most important philosophical commentaries upon the Qur'an were, however, written by Mulla Sadra, whose Asrar

al-ayat and Mafdtih al-ghayb[13] are among the most imposing edifices of the Islamic intellectual tradition, although hardly studied in the West until now. Mulla Sadra also devoted one of his major works to commenting upon the Usui al-kdfi of Kulaynl, one of the major Shi'ite texts of Hadith containing the sayings of the Prophet as well as the Imams. These works taken together constitute the most imposing philosophical commentaries upon

the Qur'an and Hadith in Islamic history, but such works are far from having terminated with him. The most extensive Qur'anic commentary written during the past decades, al-Mizdn, was from the pen of Allamah Tabataba'i, who was the reviver of the teaching of Islamic philosophy in Qom in Persia after the Second World War and a leading Islamic philosopher of this century whose philosophical works are now gradually becoming known to the outside world.

Certain Qur'anic themes have dominated Islamic philosophy throughout its long history and especially during the later period when this philosophy becomes a veritable theosophy in the original and not deviant meaning of the term, theosophia corresponding exactly to the Arabic term al-hikmat al-ilahiyyah (or hikmat-i ilahi in Persian). The first and foremost is of course the unity of the Divine Principle and ultimately Reality as such or al-tawhid which lies at the heart of the Islamic message. The Islamic philosophers were all muwahhid or followers of tawhid and saw authentic philosophy in this light. They called Pythagoras and Plato, who had confirmed the unity of the Ultimate Principle, muwahhid while showing singular lack of interest in later forms of Greek and Roman philosophy which were sceptical or agnostic.

How Islamic philosophers interpreted the doctrine of Unity lies at the heart of Islamic philosophy. There continued to exist a tension between the Qur'anic description of Unity and what the Muslims had learned from Greek sources, a tension which was turned into a synthesis of the highest intellectual order by such later philosophers as Suhrawardl and Mulla Sadra.[14] But in all treatments of this subject from al-Kindl to Mulla All Zunuzl and Hajjl Mulla Hadl Sabziwari during the thirteenth/nineteenth century and even later, the Qur'anic doctrine of Unity, so central to Islam, has remained dominant and in a sense has determined the agenda of the Islamic philosophers.

Complementing the Qur'anic doctrine of Unity is the explicit assertion in the Qur'an that Allah bestows being and it is this act which instantiates all that exists, as one finds for example in the verse, "But His command, when He intendeth a thing, is only that he saith unto it: Be! and it is [kun fa-yakun]" (36: 81). The concern of Islamic philosophers with ontology is directly related to the Qur'anic doctrine, as is the very terminology of Islamic philosophy in this domain where it understands by wujud more the verb or act of existence (esto) than the noun or state of existence (esse). If Ibn Slna has been called first and foremost a "philosopher of being",[15] and he developed the ontology which came to dominate much of medieval philosophy, this is not because he was simply thinking of Aristotelian theses in Arabic and Persian, but because of the Qur'anic doctrine of the One in relation to the act of existence. It was as a result of meditation upon the Qur'an in conjunction with Greek thought that Islamic philosophers developed the doctrine of Pure Being which stands above the chain of being and is discontinuous with it, while certain other philosophers such as a number of

Ismāʾīlīs considered God to be beyond Being and identified His act or the Qur'anic kun with Being, which is then considered as the principle of the universe.

It is also the Qur'anic doctrine of the creating God and creatio ex nihilo, with all the different levels of meaning which nihilo possesses,[16] that led Islamic philosophers to distinguish sharply between God as Pure Being and the existence of the universe, destroying that "block without fissure" which constituted Aristotelian ontology. In Islam the universe is always contingent (mumkin al-wujud) while God is necessary (wdjib al-wujud), to use the well-known distinction of Ibn Slna.[17] No Islamic philosopher has ever posited an existential continuity between the existence of creatures and the Being of God, and this radical revolution in the understanding of Aristotelian ontology has its source in the Islamic doctrine of God and creation as asserted in the Qur'an and Hadith.[18] Moreover, this influence is paramount not only in the case of those who asserted the doctrine of creatio ex nihilo in its ordinary theological sense, but also for those such as al-Farabl and Ibn Slna who were in favour of the theory of emanation but who none the less never negated the fundamental distinction between the wujud (existence) of the world and that of God.

As for the whole question of "newness" or "eternity" of the world, or huduth and qidam, which has occupied Islamic thinkers for the past twelve centuries and which is related to the question of the contingency of the world vis-a-vis the Divine Principle, it is inconceivable without the teachings of the Qur'an and Hadith. It is of course a fact that before the rise of Islam Christian theologians and philosophers such as John Philoponus had written on this issue and that Muslims

had known some of these writings, especially the treatise of Philoponus against the thesis of the eternity of the world. But had it not been for the Qur'anic teachings concerning creation, such Christian writings would have played an altogether different role in Islamic thought. Muslims were interested in the arguments of a Philoponus precisely because of their own concern with the question of huduth and qidam, created by the tension between the teachings of the Qur'an and the Hadith, on the one hand, and the Greek notion of the non-temporal relation between the world and its Divine Origin, on the other.

Another issue of great concern to Islamic philosophers from al-Kindl to Mulla Sadra, and those who followed him, is God's knowledge of the world. The major Islamic philosophers, such as al-Farabl, Ibn Slna, Suhrawardl, Ibn Rushd and Mulla Sadra, have presented different views on the subject while, as with the question of huduth and qidam, they have been constantly criticized and attacked by the mutakallimun, especially over the question of God's knowledge of particulars.[19] Now,
such an issue entered Islamic philosophy directly from the Qur'anic emphasis upon God's knowledge of all things as asserted in numerous verses such as, "And not an atom's weight in the earth or the sky escapeth your Lord, nor what is less than that or greater than that, but it is written in a clear Book" (10: 62). It was precisely this Islamic insistence upon Divine Omniscience that placed the issue of God's knowledge of the world at the centre of the concern of Islamic philosophers and caused Islamic philosophy, like its Jewish and Christian counterparts, to develop extensive philosophical theories totally absent from the philosophical perspective of Graeco-Alexandrian antiquity. In this context the Islamic

doctrine of "divine science" (al-'ilm al-laduni) is of central significance for both falsafah and theoretical Sufism or al-ma'rifah.

This issue is also closely allied to the philosophical significance of revelation (al-wahy) itself. Earlier Islamic philosophers such as Ibn Slna sought to develop a theory by drawing to some extent, but not exclusively, on Greek theories of the intellect and the faculties of the soul.[20] Later Islamic philosophers continued their concern for this issue and sought to explain in a philosophical manner the possibility of the descent of the truth and access to the truth by knowledge based on certitude but derived from sources other than the senses, reason and even the inner intellect. They, however, pointed to the correspondence between the inner intellect and that objective manifestation of the Universal Intellect or Logos which is revelation. While still using certain concepts of Greek origin, the later Islamic philosophers such as Mulla Sadra drew heavily from the Qur'an and Hadith on this issue.

Turning to the field of cosmology, again one can detect the constant presence of Qur'anic themes and certain Hadith. It is enough to meditate upon the commentaries made upon the "Light Verse" and "Throne Verse" and the use of such explicitly Qur'anic symbols and images as the Throne (al-'arsh), the Pedestal (al-kursi), the light of the heavens and earth (nur al-samawat wa'l-ard), the niche (mishkat) and so many other Qur'anic terms to realize the significance of the Qur'an and Hadith in the formulation of cosmology as dealt with in the Islamic philosophical tradition.[21] Nor must one forget the cosmological significance of the nocturnal ascent of the Prophet (al-mi'rdj) which so many Islamic philosophers

have treated directly, starting with Ibn Slna. This central episode in the life of the Prophet, with its numerous levels of meaning, was not only of great interest to the Sufis but also drew the attention of numerous philosophers to its description as contained in certain verses of the Qur'an and Hadith. Some philosophers also turned their attention to other episodes with a cosmological significance in the life of the Prophet such as the "cleaving of the moon" (shaqq al-qamar) about which the ninth/fifteenth-century Persian philosopher Ibn Turkah IsfahanI wrote a separate treatise.[22]

In no branch of Islamic philosophy, however, is the influence of the Qur'an and Hadtth more evident than in eschatology, the very understanding of which in the Abrahamic universe was alien to the philosophical world of antiquity. Such concepts as divine intervention to mark the end of history, bodily resurrection, the various eschatological events, the Final Judgment, and the posthumous states as understood by Islam or for that matter Christianity were alien to ancient philosophy whereas they are described explicitly in the Qur'an and Hadtth as well as of course in the Bible and other Jewish and Christian religious sources.

The Islamic philosophers were fully aware of these crucial ideas in their philosophizing, but the earlier ones were unable to provide philosophical proofs for Islamic doctrines which many confessed to accept on the basis of faith but could not demonstrate within the context of Peripatetic philosophy. We see such a situation in the case of Ibn Slna who in several works, including the Shifd', confesses that he cannot prove bodily resurrection but accepts it on faith. This question was in fact one of the three main points, along with the acceptance of qidam and the inability of the philosophers to demonstrate

God's knowledge of particulars, for which al-Ghazzall took Ibn Slna to task and accused him of kufr or infidelity. It remained for Mulla Sadra several centuries later to demonstrate the reality of bodily resurrection through the principles of the "transcendent theosophy" (al-hikmat al-muta'dliyah) and to take both Ibn Slna and al-Ghazzall to task for the inadequacy of their treatment of the subject.[23] The most extensive philosophical treatment of eschatology (al-ma'dd) in all its dimensions is in fact to be found in the Asfdr of Mulla Sadra.

It is sufficient to examine this work or his other treatises on the subject such as his al-Mabda' wa'l-ma'dd or al-Hikmat al-'arshiyyah to realize the complete reliance of the author upon the Qur'an and Hadtth. His development of the philosophical meaning of ma'ad is in reality basically a hermeneutics of Islamic religious sources, primary among them the Qur'an and Hadtth. Nor is this fact true only of Mulla Sadra. One can see the same relation between philosophy and the Islamic revelation in the writings of Mulla Muhsin Fayd KashanI, Shah Wallullah of Delhi, Mulla 'Abd Allah Zunuzl, Hajji Mulla Hadl Sabziwari and many later Islamic philosophers writing on various aspects of al-ma'dd. Again, although as far as the question of eschatology is concerned, the reliance on the Qur'an and Hadtth is greater during the later period, as is to be seen already in Ibn Slna who dealt with it in both his encyclopedic works and in individual treatises dealing directly with the subject, such as his own al-Mabda wa'l-ma'dd. It is noteworthy in this context that he entitled one of his most famous treatises on eschatology al-Risdlat al-adhawiyyah, drawing from the Islamic religious term for the Day of Judgment.

In meditating upon the history of Islamic philosophy in its relation to the Islamic revelation, one detects a movement toward ever closer association of philosophy with the Qur'an and Hadith as falsafah became transformed into al-hikmat al-ildhiyyah. Al-Farabl and Ibn Sina, although drawing so many themes from Qur'anic sources, hardly ever quoted the Qur'an directly in their philosophical works. By the time we come to Suhrawardl in the sixth/twelfth century, there are present within his purely philosophical works citations of the Qur'an and Hadith. Four centuries later the Safavid philosophers wrote philosophical works in the form of commentaries on the text of the Qur'an or on certain of the Hadith. This trend continued in later centuries not only in Persia but also in India and the Ottoman world including Iraq.

As far as Persia is concerned, as philosophy became integrated into the Shi'ite intellectual world from the seventh/ thirteenth century onwards, the sayings of the Shi'ite Imams began to play an ever greater role, complementing the Prophetic Hadith. This is especially true of the sayings of Imams Muhammad al-Baqir, Ja'far al-Sadiq and Musa al-Kazim, the fifth, sixth and seventh Imams of Twelve-Imam Shi'ism, whose sayings are at the origin of many of the issues discussed by later Islamic philosophers.[24] It is sufficient to study the monumental but uncompleted Sharh Usui al-kafi of Mulla Sadra to realize the philosophical fecundity of many of the sayings of the Imams and their role in later philosophical meditation and deliberation.

The Qur'an and Hadith, along with the sayings of the Imams, which are in a sense the extension of Hadith in the Shi'ite world, have provided over the centuries the framework and matrix for Islamic philosophy and created the intellectual and

social climate within which Islamic philosophers have philosophized. Moreoever, they have presented a knowledge of the origin, the nature of things, humanity and its final ends and history upon which the Islamic philosophers have meditated and from which they have drawn over the ages. They have also provided a language of discourse which Islamic philosophers have shared with the rest of the Islamic community.[25] Without the Qur'anic revelation, there would of course have been no Islamic civilization, but it is important to realize that there would also have been no Islamic philosophy. Philosophical activity in the Islamic world is not simply a regurgitation of Graeco-Alexandrian philosophy in Arabic, as claimed by many Western scholars along with some of their Islamic followers, a philosophy which grew despite the presence of the Qur'an and Hadith. On the contrary, Islamic philosophy is what it is precisely because it flowered in a universe whose contours are determined by the Qur'anic revelation.

As asserted at the beginning of this chapter, Islamic philosophy is essentially "prophetic philosophy" based on the hermeneutics of a Sacred Text which is the result of a revelation that is inalienably linked to the
microcosmic intellect and which alone is able to actualize the dormant possibilities of the intellect within us. Islamic philosophy, as understood from within that tradition, is also an unveiling of the inner meaning of the Sacred Text, a means of access to that Haqiqah which lies hidden within the inner dimension of the Qur'an. Islamic philosophy deals with the One or Pure Being, and universal existence and all the grades of the universal hierarchy. It deals with man and his entelechy, with the cosmos and the final return of all things to God. This interpretation of existence is none other than

penetration into the inner meaning of the Qur'an which "is" existence itself, the Book whose meditation provides the key for the understanding of those objective and subjective orders of existence with which the Islamic philosopher has been concerned over the ages.

A deeper study of Islamic philosophy over its twelve-hundred-year history will reveal the role of the Qur'an and Hadith in the formulation, exposition and problematics of this major philosophical tradition. In the same way that all of the Islamic philosophers from al-Kindi onwards knew the Qur'an and Hadith and lived with them, Islamic philosophy has manifested over the centuries its inner link with the revealed sources of Islam, a link which has become even more manifest as the centuries have unfolded, for Islamic philosophy is essentially a philosophical hermeneu-tics of the Sacred Text while making use of the rich philosophical heritage of antiquity. That is why, far from being a transitory and foreign phase in the history of Islamic thought, Islamic philosophy has remained over the centuries and to this day one of the major intellectual perspectives in Islamic civilization with its roots sunk deeply, like everything else Islamic, in the Qur'an and Hadith.

NOTES

1 Within the Islamic world itself scholars of kaldm and certain others who have opposed Islamic philosophy over the ages have claimed that it was merely Greek philosophy to which they opposed philosophy or wisdom derived from faith (al-hikmat al-yunaniyyah versus al-hikmat al-imdniyyah).

Some contemporary Muslim scholars, writing in English, oppose Muslim to Islamic, considering Muslim to mean whatever is practised or created by Muslims and Islamic that which is derived directly from the Islamic revelation. Many such scholars, who hail mostly from Pakistan and India, insist on calling Islamic philosophy Muslim philosophy, as can be seen in the title of the well-known work edited by M. M. Sharif, A History of Muslim Philosophy. If one looks more deeply into the nature of Islamic philosophy from the traditional Islamic point of view and takes into consideration its whole history, however, one will see that this philosophy is at once Muslim and Islamic according to the above-given definitions of these terms.

2
When accused on a certain occasion of infidelity, Ibn Slna responded in a famous Persian quatrain: "It is not so easy and trifling to call me a heretic; / No faith in religion is firmer than mine. / I am a unique person in the whole world and if I am a heretic; / Then there is not a single Muslim anywhere in the world." Trans, by S. H. Barani in his "Ibn Sina and Alberuni", in Avicenna Commemoration Volume (Calcutta, 1956): 8 (with certain modifications by S. H. Nasr).

3 This term was first used by H. Corbin and myself and appears in Corbin, with the collaboration of S. H. Nasr and O. Yahya, Histoire de la philosophic islamique (Paris, 1964).

4 We say "almost" because there are one or two figures such as Muhammad ibn Zakariyya' al-RazI who rejected the necessity of prophecy. Even in his case, however, there is a rejection of the necessity of revelation in order to gain

ultimate knowledge and not the negation of the existence of revelation.

5 See Corbin, op. cit. 26ff.

6 The term riwaqi used by later Islamic philosophers must not, however, be confused with the Roman Stoics, although it means literally stoic (riwaq in Arabic coming from Pahlavi and meaning stod).

7 Corbin, op. cit.: 24.

8 On the Islamic figure of Hermes and Hermetic writings in the Islamic world see L. Massignon, "Inventaire de la litterature hermetique arabe", appendix 3 in A. J. Festugiere and A. D. Nock, La Revelation d'Hermes Trismegiste, 4 vols (Paris, 1954-60); S. H. Nasr, Islamic Life and Thought (Albany, 1981): 102-19; F. Sezgin, Geschichte der arabischen Schrifitums, 4 (Leiden, 1971).

9 See for example the introduction by one of the leading contemporary traditional philosophers of Persia, Abu'l-Hasan Sha'rani, to Sabziwari, Asrdr aUhikam (Tehran, I960): 3.

10 Edited with introduction and Persian translation by M. Khwajawl (Tehran, 1983).

11 The writings of H. Corbin are a notable exception.

12 See M. Abdul Haq, "Ibn Slna's Interpretation of the Qur'an", The Islamic Quarterly, 32(1) (1988): 46-56.

13 This monumental work has been edited in Arabic and also translated into Persian by M. Khwajawl who has printed all of Mulla Sadra's Qur'anic commentaries in recent years. It is interesting to note that the Persian translation entitled Tarjuma-yi mafatih al-ghayb (Tehran, 1979) includes a long study on the rise of philosophy and its various schools by Ayatullah Abidl Shahrudl, who discusses the rapport between Islamic philosophy and the Qur'an in the context of traditional Islamic thought.

14 See I. Netton, Allah Transcendent (London, 1989), which deals with this tension but mixes his account with certain categories of modern European philosophy not suitable for the subject.

15 See E. Gilson, Avicenne et le point de depart de Duns Scot, Extrait des archives d'histoire doctrinale et litteraire du Moyen Age (Paris, 1927); and A. M. Goichon, "L'Unite de la pensee avicennienne", Archives Internationale d'Histoire des Sciences, 20-1 (1952): 290ff.

16 See D. Burrell and B. McGinn (eds), God and Creation (Notre Dame, 1990): 246ff. For the more esoteric meaning of ex nihilo in Islam see L. Schaya, La
Creation en Dieu (Paris, 1983), especially chapter 6: 90ff.

17 This has been treated more amply in Chapter 16 below on Ibn Slna. See also Nasr, An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines (Albany, 1993), chapter 12.

18 See T. Izutsu, The Concept and Reality of Existence (Tokyo, 1971).

19 The criticisms by al-Ghazzall and Imam Fakhr al-Dln al-RazI of this issue, as that of huduth and qidam, are well known and are treated below. Less is known, however, of the criticism of other theologians who kept criticizing the philosophers for their denial of the possibility of God knowing particulars rather than just universals.

20 See F. Rahman, Prophecy in Islam, Philosophy and Orthodoxy (London, 1958), where some of these theories are described and analysed clearly, but with an over-emphasis on the Greek factor and downplaying of the role of the Islamic view of revelation itself.

21 On this issue see Nasr, An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines', and Nasr, "Islamic Cosmology", in Islamic Civilization, 4, ed. A. Y. al-Hassan et al (Paris, forthcoming).

22 See H. Corbin, En Islam iranien, 3 (Paris, 1971): 233ff.

23 Mulla Sadra dealt with this debate in several of his works especially in his Glosses upon the Theosophy of the Orient of light (of Suhrawardl) (Hashiyah 'aid hikmat al-ishraq). See H. Corbin, "Le theme de la resurrection chez Molla Sadra ShlrazI (1050/1640) commentateur de Sohrawardl (587/ 1191)", in Studies in Mysticism and Religion – Presented to Gershom G. Scholem (Jerusalem, 1967): 71-118.

24 The late Allamah Tabataba'l, one of the leading traditional philosophers of contemporary Persia, once made a study of the number of philosophical problems dealt with by early and later Islamic philosophers. He once told us that, according to his study, there were over two hundred philosophical issues

treated by the early Islamic philosophers and over six hundred by Mulla Sadra and his followers. Although he admitted that this approach was somewhat excessively quantitative, it was an indication of the extent of expansion of the fields of interest of Islamic philosophy, an expansion which he attributed almost completely to the influence of the metaphysical and philosophical utterances of the Shi'ite Imams which became of ever greater concern to many Islamic philosophers, both Shi'ite and Sunni, from the time of Naslr al-Dln al-TusI onwards.

25 The Qur'an and Hadith have also influenced directly and deeply the formation of the Islamic philosophical vocabulary in Arabic, an issue with which we have not been able to deal in this chapter.

CHAPTER 3

The Greek and Syriac background

F. E. Peters

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The Islamic philosopher, the faylasuf was engaged in an enquiry that was numbered, together with the study of medicine, mathematics, astronomy and physics, among what were called the "foreign sciences". The categorization was neat and altogether commonplace in Islamic circles, this setting of the "foreign sciences" over against the traditional "Islamic sciences", and, while it represents a judgment about the origins of the two bodies of knowledge, it also suggests that we might here be in the presence of an academic distinction, two curricula, perhaps, representing two schools, or, on the model of a medieval European university, even two different faculties of the same institution of higher learning.

The historical judgment is, in fact, correct. The faylasuf, like the physician and scientist, was caught up in an intellectual enterprise whose foreign and, more precisely, Hellenic origins are as transparent as the name. The faylasuf was a philosophos, the heir to an intellectual tradition that had originated among the Greeks and, after a long career in that

milieu, had passed, without break or diminution, into the possession of Islam. That was the received wisdom of the ninth and tenth century A.D. Muslims, and it is not very far from the fact. Much farther from the fact is the suggestion that the "foreign" or Hellenic sciences constituted part of an academic curriculum or faculty in the official madrasahs. They did represent a kind of idealized school curriculum, but in an academic setting that few Sunni savants had ever seen or could likely have even imagined, although falsafah has been taught in traditional madrasahs in the Shl'l world.

The Islamic view, or, better, the view of the relatively few Muslims who engaged in the "foreign sciences", was that they were the heirs of Plato and Aristotle. Indeed they were, though their inheritance was
mediated through the long and highly creative file of philosophers who stretched between the ancient paradigms and themselves, thinkers the Muslims knew about, but whose position and role in the history of later Greek philosophy they but ill understood. We are somewhat better informed on the subject, to be sure, at least for the first three or four centuries of the Christian era; but our knowledge too grows somewhat faint as we approach the fifth, sixth and seventh century A.D. stages of the Platonic and Aristotelian traditions, the very ones to which the Muslims were more precisely heirs. Many of the texts we have; so too did the Muslims, though not a great number are preserved. Where we differ is on what to make of them, how to trace the passage, and the subsequent transformations, of Plato and Aristotle at the hands of their commentators, all of them professors in the universities of the Eastern Roman Empire.

To understand falsafah it is not enough to acknowledge what the Muslims knew of Plato and Aristotle, to note which works of the masters were translated, how and by whom and when; some measure must be taken of the quality of their inherited Platonism and Aristotelianism, which turn out to be very different from that of their eponyms. And to do that we turn first to the Muslims' own best and most complete account, that provided by Ibn al-Nadlm, and attempt to reconstruct, with the aid of his witness, the complex philosophical tradition of late antiquity.

In 377/987 or 988 the Baghdad bookseller Abu'l-Faraj Muhammad ibn al-Nadlm completed his Fihrist or Catalogue. The work may have begun simply as a bookseller's handlist, but the author's own learning and curiosity and the bracing intellectual climate of Buyid Baghdad eventually produced something more ambitious: the Catalogue is nothing less than a tenth-century A.D. encyclopedia of the literary arts and sciences of Islam. From calligraphy to alchemy, Ibn al-Nadlm noted down, with biographical and historical comments, the sum of the books of Islam. But it is something more as well. The Catalogue paid particular attention to the Muslims' translation activity, and so it is one of our better guides to their understanding of the philosophical and scientific landscape of the Islamic world in late antiquity. With the Catalogue in hand it is possible to describe in some detail how much and what kind was the "foreign" heritage available to the Muslims, and to make some surmises why it was such.

Two extraordinary elements of the Hellenism inherited – or, perhaps better, expropriated – by Islam spring immediately to eye from the pages of Ibn al-Nadlm. The complex of literary, political and philosophical values we call Hellenism had met

and in varying degrees transformed other cultures, even religious cultures, before, but normally through a native intelligentsia that had already learned Greek. This encounter of Hellenism with Islam was, however, remarkable: the Muslim accepted
neither the language nor the humanistic values nor, he thought, the religion of the Greeks; his borrowings came exclusively through translation and, more, were severely limited to a technical and scientific Hellenism. The few professional translators apart, the Muslims knew Greek philosophy but no Greek; read Plato and Aristotle, Euclid, Galen and Ptolemy, but never so much as glimpsed a page of Homer, Sophocles or Thucydides.

This latter omission was not the Muslims' own choice. In the centuries before the Muslims came in contact with that culture, the humane values of the Hellenic legacy were absorbed, transformed or discarded by Christianity. As a result, the rich hoard of scientific learning that the Catalogue reveals was transmitted almost intact to the Muslims, accompanied by a few random ethical gnomai but with little real understanding of Greek paideia, the cultural and humane ideals of Hellenism. This easy separation of the head from the trunk reflects ominously on the educational practices of late antiquity, when higher education must have been so severely professional in tone and content that it was possible to pass to others the curricula of the natural sciences, medicine and philosophy without any intimation that they were once part of an enkyk-lios paideia, a general education that included grammar and rhetoric.

As we read the evidence, rhetoric was the chief vehicle for the professional study of humane letters in late antiquity. It was a

popular subject even among the Christian intelligentsia, and there were endowed municipal chairs in rhetoric scattered over the provinces of the Eastern Roman Empire. But there was one venue in late antiquity that was, despite its high professional standards in medicine, philosophy and the mathematical sciences, notoriously uninterested in rhetoric. Egypt, with its great intellectual centre of Alexandria, conforms very precisely to a hypothesized source for the Muslims' scientific but decidedly illiberal version of Hellenism. The university there, which was still very much alive in the seventh century A.D., had a curriculum that was strongly developed in philosophy and the sciences (particularly medicine and mathematics) and weak in rhetoric – the humanities and law.

We are not very well informed on the higher schools of the early Byzantine Empire. Something is known, however, of the teaching of philosophy at Athens and Alexandria in the fifth and early sixth centuries A.D., and what is plain in the evidence is that, whatever the homage rendered to Aristotle, it was one or another variety of Platonism/ Neoplatonism that dominated the few places where philosophy was formally taught. The Muslims were confused on this matter. Most of them were transparently Neoplatonists and yet were so oblivious of the true nature of their Platonism that they could not identify its author. The lecturers at Athens and Alexandria knew whence they had come, however. Truth lies in Platonic orthodoxy, Plotinus had taught, and his
Greek successors did not forget the lesson. But the Muslims, who had as much claim to be heirs of Plato as the Hellenized Damascius or Olympiodorus, did not recognize their affiliations and read Plotinus as a pseudepigraphon: an

abridgement of books 4—6 of the Enneads circulated in Islam under the title of the Theology of Aristotle.

Ibn al-Nadim knew nothing of the actual Plotinus. Even his treatment of Plato in the Catalogue is foggy and unenlightening: a jumble of epitomes, a scattering of commentaries that had been turned into Arabic, and not much more; the entry represents, we assume, the little about the Platonic school tradition or its practitioners that was known to Ibn al-Nadim or his sources. Following upon his unenlightening and almost tabular treatment of Plato, however, is Ibn al-Nadim's presentation of the biography of Aristotle and his informed history of the Aristotelian translations. This emphasis was not a peculiarity of the Catalogue; whatever the actual content of their philosophical heritage, Aristotle was regarded by the Muslims as the chief of the file of Hellenic sages, and al-Farabl, the most considerable Muslim Platonist, was being measured not against Plato but against Aristotle when he was flatteringly called "the Second Master".

The Catalogues review of the post-Aristotelian philosophers reveals the same perspective. The list includes Theophrastus, Proclus "the Platonist", Alexander of Aphrodisias, Porphyry, Ammonius (Hermieu), Themistius, Nicolaus, Plutarch (of Chaeronea), Olympiodorus, Hippocrates, Epaphroditus, "another Plutarch", John Philoponus, and a final hodge-podge of names drawn from some other source which includes Gregory of Nyssa and Theon of Smyrna, "whose periods and order of sequence are not known". In the entire group only Proclus and Theon are identified as Platonists; the rest are seen almost exclusively through the focus of an Aristotelian exegetical tradition.

When and where did this dissimulation arise? In talking about the late antique scholastic tradition we mean nothing more than the history of the Platonic schools. At the beginning of the third Christian century the actual schools of Epicurus, Zeno and Aristotle were moribund, if not dead; after A.D. 200 there existed among the Greeks of the Empire only the Platonic academies at Alexandria and Athens and their lesser reflections at Apamea and Pergamum. And, four hundred years later, on the eve of the Muslim invasion, there remained only Alexandria. The final masters at Alexandria, and their solitary and non-teaching Platonic contemporary at Athens, were, however, deeply invested in the study of Aristotle.

Somewhere within this paradox lies the explanation of the Muslims' confusion about their own philosophical identity. The Athenian Academy traced its mixed Platonism of the second and third centuries A.D. from the insights first of Plotinus (d. 270), and then of Porphyry (d. c. 306), Iamblichus (d. 325) and Proclus (d. 485), men whose penchant for magic and the occult proved dangerous and finally deadly to Athenian Platonism. The pains of this transformation from Platonists to somewhat disingenuous syncretizers, from philosophers to theosophists, were lost on the Muslims, though they had perhaps inherited, without fully understanding it, the same dissimulations that enabled the Alexandrian Platonists to outlive their Athenian colleagues.

One of Proclus' fellow students at Athens under the brief tenure of Syrianus as scholarch there (A.D. 432—7?) was Hermias, and it was from him that the last Alexandrians descended. At Athens itself Proclus' immediate successors, Isidore and Zenodotus, were not distinguished. We are aware of them solely from Damascius' Life of Isidore, an important

historical source denied to the Muslims; no trace of their own work survives. There were, in addition, growing difficulties with the Christian authorities. Even Proclus, who could be prudent when need be on the subject of his paganism, was forced to go into exile for a year. His successors in the Academy were apparently less careful in a world that had reached the limits of its tolerance of the old heathen cults, and in A.D. 529 the Emperor Justinian closed down the Athenian school for good and confiscated its properties.

There followed the curious and interesting sojourn of the seven Athenian philosophers, including the current Platonic "successor" Damascius with his student Simplicius, at the court of the Sassanian Shah Khusraw I at Ctesiphon. Their stay there was exceedingly brief, less than a year perhaps, before their return to Byzantine territory under terms of the peace treaty of 532, and so it is probably unwise to draw many conclusions from the episode. When it was all over what was left can be described only as a chastened Platonic paganism. Such was certainly the posture of Simplicius who, upon his return to Athens after 533, devoted his researches exclusively to the study not of Plato but of Aristotle. On his return from Persia Damascius was well into his seventies, but Simplicius still had an active career before him. But not as a teacher. Lecturing had ceased for ever in the Athenian Academy, and so Simplicius became of necessity a library scholar, a philosopher whose chief monuments are his learned commentaries on Aristotle. Of these the Muslims appear to have known only those on the Categories and On the Soul. They did not possess his extensive commentaries on the Physics or On the Heavens, though they were well instructed on the controversies with the Christian philosopher John Philoponus that unfolded there.

How Philoponus and Simplicius, both students at Alexandria of Ammonius, who had in turn matriculated with Proclus at Athens, came to be debating Aristotle and not Plato in the first half of the sixth Christian century carries us back to Ammonius himself. Like his father Hermias, Ammonius had gone to Athens for his philosophical education. Both
men, father and son, eventually returned to Alexandria to teach and write, Hermias on Plato and Ammonius chiefly on Aristotle. The interest in Aristotle is not strange in someone trained in a Platonic tradition that had been studying Peripatetic works at least since the days of Plotinus and Porphyry, but the publication of almost exclusively Aristotelian material is curious and abrupt. And among its results was the fact that the Muslims, who had limited literary access to late antiquity, regarded Ammonius and his successors almost exclusively as Aristotelian commentators.

Ammonius' students dominated at both Athens and Alexandria during the next generation; the Athenian "successor" Damascius, who was unknown to the Muslims, and his student Simplicius; Olympiodorus, Asclepius and John Philoponus at Alexandria. Olympiodorus, who was almost certainly not a Christian, appears to have moved none the less to a more accommodating posture vis-a-vis Christianity, but there is no mention of a Christian in the Catalogue until the next of Ibn al-Nadlm's entries, that on John Philoponus, "a bishop over some of the churches of Egypt, upholding the Christian sect of the Jacobites".

John "the grammarian", as the Muslims called him and as he styled himself (grammatikos) in his own works, was a well-known figure in Islam as an Aristotelian commentator, a medical writer and historian, and, considerably more

obscurely, as a Christian theologian. Over the years John's work apparently turned away from his earlier scholastic work under Ammonius. His redaction of his professor's notes on the Physics dates from A.D. 517, but by 529, the same year that Justinian closed the Academy for its flagrant paganism, Philoponus was working in a far more Christian vein. In that year appeared his On the Eternity of the World against Proclus, followed shortly by the complementary Against Aristotle, a twofold attack on the current Neoplatonic position on the eternity of the cosmos. The Muslims, who naturally shared Philoponus' view of creation in time, were highly interested in the controversy and could follow it closely through the Arabic versions of the Timaeus (albeit in an epitome), Aristotle's On the Heavens and Physics, Proclus' Arguments and commentary on the Timaeus, and, finally, Philoponus' refutation. But they knew or cared nothing about the rest of Philoponus' career after A.D. 530, his progressive involvement with Christian theology and his final bout with tritheism.

In the Muslims' version of the history of philosophy, Olympiodorus' Christian students at Alexandria, Elias and David, have no place, nor do the Christian Platonists of Gaza: Aeneas, Zacharias the bishop of Mytilene, and his brother Procopius. The last known scholarch at Alexandria, Stephen, was summoned to Constantinople some time about A.D. 616 to assume a teaching post there. His portrait among the Muslims is thin but congruent with Greek sources. Stephen's commentaries on the
Categories and On Interpretation were extant in Arabic, as well as some medical writings.

This is the end of the Greek philosophical tradition in late antiquity. Stephen, who served Heraclius, touches the chronological limits of Islam. The Muslims who followed pieced together their knowledge of that tradition from the philosophical texts available to them and from a far less easily identified set of historical perspectives. Both, however, betray their origins in a clear way: clustered around the works of Aristotle are the names of the great commentators from the Platonic school tradition at Alexandria from Ammonius in the fifth century A.D. to Stephen in the seventh. From there it is possible for us, though not for Ibn al-Nadlm and his contemporaries, to trace the connection back to Porphyry in the fourth century, the man who introduced the textual exegesis of Aristotle in the curriculum of the Platonic schools.

On the witness of Porphyry's biography of his teacher, Aristotle was already carefully and critically studied by Plotinus. Porphyry himself did the same, and in a somewhat more systematic manner than Plotinus, whose approach to philosophy had been formed in his own teacher's notoriously informal seminars. There may have been some sense of a school curriculum in the Platonic school tradition before Plotinus, a notion that was ignored by Plotinus but reasserted by Porphyry. And it is clear from Porphyry's own work that Aristotle was part of that curriculum. Porphyry was the first Platonist to produce formal commentaries on the treatises of Aristotle, a fact that guaranteed in the sequel that Aristotle would be studied in the Platonic schools.

According to the view that emerged in the post-Porphyrian school tradition, there were two major branches of philosophy, that which had to do with the various manifestations of physical reality, the study known generally

as physics, and that which devoted itself to the contemplation of supra-sensible reality, that is, theology, or, to use the word favoured by later Platonic pietists, "mystical viewing" (epopteia). Whatever role ethics may have played in the scheme, it was severed from its original connection with politics and reduced to the status of a cathartic preliminary to the study of philosophy proper.

The position of logic was paradoxical. On the original Aristotelian view, logic was a method, or an instrument (organon), and not a part of philosophy. This was a departure from Plato's teaching, which united dialectic and metaphysics, philosophy and philosophizing, in an intimate and inviolable union. The later Platonists continued to pay lip service to the Platonic ideal, but in reality they were dogmatists and not dialecticians. Whatever they may have said about dialectic, they used logic as a tool, and in the manner set down by Aristotle. Porphyry installed the logical Organon at the starting point of the curriculum, and it remained there during the rest of the history of the school.

From the Organon the Platonist proceeded to the study of the Aristotelian philosophy proper, particularly the physical and psychological treatises. When Proclus was doing his studies at Athens in the fifth century A.D., the Aristotelian part of the curriculum took two years. At its completion the student was ready for natural theology, a theology that was, of course, Platonic and centred upon the exegesis of the Timaeus and the Parmenides. Beyond that lay the sacred theology of the Chaldean Oracles, the touchstone of late Platonic occultism.

This was, we are certain, the standard curriculum in the only surviving philosophical school in late antiquity, the Platonic.

It was not, however, what was passed on to the Muslims. What they knew of a curriculum came from translated examples of a standard "introduction to Aristotle" and not from what was actually being taught in the schools of Athens or Alexandria. The laying-out of the Aristotelian treatises from the Categories to the Metaphysics, the arrangement found in Ibn al-Nadlm's Catalogue, and the one that determined the structure of most Muslim encyclopedias of the "foreign sciences", was not a curriculum at all. Rather, it was an academic "division of the sciences". The simple fact is that neither we nor the Muslims have much information about the actual curriculum of any Aristotelian school.

The Muslim celebration of Aristotle, to which Ibn al-Nadlm bears such detailed witness, was a novel event in the Near East. During the preceding five centuries all who studied the philosopher did so from a far more limited pragmatism than that which the Muslims brought to the task. The Neoplatonists had granted him a place in their curriculum, but it was a subordinate one. And the Christians too, when they discovered their own need of Aristotle, were even more severe in their restrictions on his use.

The Christian use of Aristotle was, in the end, more important than the restrictions placed upon it. The works of the great eastern Neoplatonists appeared in no other language but their original Greek until the coming of Islam; Christianity and its theologians leaped cultural frontiers, including that which separated the Hellenes from the Semites of the Aramaic-speaking East. Before there was an Arabic Aristotle there was a Syriac Aristotle, who served, in this limited capacity, the cause of Christian theology.

Though Syriac literature was properly a creation of Christian times, the Aramaic-speaking peoples of the Near East had been living within a Hellenized milieu since the time of Alexander's conquests. And if at Edessa the contact between Aramean and Hellene produced a literature that was overwhelmingly Christian in its sentiments and interests, the same contact at nearby Harran brought forth a far different cultural mix: pagan, scientific and occult, rather than meditative, ascetic, musical and primarily Christian. Harran produced no literature until the days of the Muslim conquest, but what was otherwise revealed there shows that Greek learning had been at work in some of the Semitic centres of the Near East for a considerable length of time, and that not all of its offspring were impeccably Hellenic.

The Christian embrace of scholastic Platonism of the type prevalent in the schools from Porphyry to Proclus was hesitant and, in the end, indirect. The Neoplatonists were among the severest intellectual critics of Christianity, and neither the polemics of Porphyry, the attempts at a Neoplatonic revival by Julian nor the theurgic pieties of Proclus reassured the Christian intellectual that there was some common ground between Jerusalem and Athens. The revival of the doctrines of Origen on the pre-existence of the soul and the controversies they provoked in the sixth century A.D. made the Christian theologians even more cautious on the subject of Plato – and that, paradoxically, when a major piece of Neoplatonic metaphysics was beginning to circulate in the East under the name of Dionysius the Areopagite.

Origenism was, however, a theological diversion in the sixth century. The central issue continued to be the Christological debate begun in the previous decades and inflamed, not

settled, by the decisions of the two councils at Ephesus in A.D. 431 and 449 and that at Chalcedon in 451. The fathers assembled at Chalcedon had condemned Monophysit-ism, but by the mid sixth century both Egypt and Syria were largely Monophysitic in their sympathies and conviction. The great ideologue of the sect was Severus of Antioch (d. 538), but their great strength lay in the labours of missionaries, not theologians, men like Jacob Baradai (d. 578), who, through the friendly influence of the Empress Theodora, was consecrated bishop of Edessa and, in the years that followed, almost singlehandedly reconstituted the sore-pressed Monophysite hierarchy in the East.

Severus was a theologian of some subtlety, and the Christological controversy itself was intricately interwoven with semantic considerations. The Chalcedonians, Monophysites and Nestorians were engaged, as none of their predecessors, in a bellum lexicographicum fought over the meanings of substance, nature, person and hypostasis. The terms had arisen gradually into view since Nicea, but by A.D. 500 none could follow the turnings of the polemic without considerable instruction in what had unexpectedly come to be the handbook to the theological warfare, the Organon of Aristotle.

The theologians of Antioch may have been the first to lay their hands on the new weapons, and because they were primarily exegetes rather than metaphysicians in the Alexandrian style, they found the logical Aristotle of more use than the theologian Plato. The primary exegete of the Antiochene school, "the Interpreter" par excellence, was Theodore of Mopsuestia (d. A.D. 428). His approach to Scripture was carefully literal

and historical, and his exegetical instruments were dialectical in the manner of Aristotle rather than allegorical in the style of Plato and the later Platonists.

Whatever the judgments about Theodore's own orthodoxy, he held for the East Syrians the same position that he held at Antioch, that of the authoritative exegete of the Christian Scriptures. We do not know a great deal about theological instruction at Antioch, but it seems highly likely that during Theodore's lifetime, or in the century following, the training in Christian exegesis was preceded by some kind of instruction in Aristotelian logic, since the introduction of Theodore's works and methods into the Syriac-speaking school at Edessa was marked by the simultaneous appearance of the Organon in the curriculum there.

The school at Edessa, founded during the life-time of the famous Ephraim the Syrian (d. A.D. 373), was the centre for higher theological studies among the Aramaic Christians of the East, both those within the borders of the Roman Empire and those farther east under the rule of the Sassanian shahs. During the first half of the fifth century A.D. instruction at Edessa was closely tied to the theology of Antioch, and it was during that period that the works of Theodore were translated into Syriac and made the basis of the programme of studies. It was then too that Proba, one of Theodore's translators, turned his hand to the Aristotelian logic. Parts of his Syriac translations of Porphyry's Eisagoge and Aristotle's On Interpretation and Prior Analytics have been preserved, and the Categories too must have come into Syriac at that time.

In A.D. 431 the Council of Ephesus condemned the Christology of Theodore's student Nestorius. The notorious

connection of the Edessan faculty both with Nestorius and with Antioch began to create problems with the ecclesiastical authorities in Syria at this time, and particularly when Hiba, the great champion of Theodore of Mopsuestia, was promoted to the bishopric of Edessa in A.D. 435. Hiba's power and prestige protected the school until his death in 457, but thereafter the faculty at Edessa, still faithful to the Antiochene tradition, was discomforted by the rising tide of Monophysitism, until in 489 the Emperor Zeno ordered the school to be closed for good.

Even before the final closure, some of the faculty at Edessa had begun to migrate to the friendlier atmosphere of the Shah's territories to the east. They included Narsai, who had been the director at Edessa for twenty years, and who, some time after 471, crossed the frontier to Nisibis and opened there a new school, or rather a continuation of the old school in a new location. In the genuine Antiochene and Edessan tradition, the scholarch was also "the Interpreter". But if exegesis was the principal concern of the school, it was undergirded by instruction in the elements of writing, including the copying of manuscripts, and in reading the Scriptures of Syriac-speaking Christianity.

It is difficult to draw many conclusions about the substance of the curriculum at Nisibis except that it was, on the face of it, resolutely theological. There are, however, some occasional illuminations. One is the work of a Syrian called "Paul the Persian" in the Byzantine sources. This Paul debated with a Manichaean in Constantinople in A.D. 527, and later wrote for Junilius, the Quaestor of the Sacred Palace, a Greek version of the hermeneutical textbook used at Nisibis. This Parts of the Divine Law shows the now close relationship

between the Antioch—Edessa—Nisibis exegetical tradition on one hand and the Aristotelian logic on the other. The first part is quite simply the adaptation of a Porphyrian-Aristotelian "how to approach the study of a book" to the reading of the Bible; the terminology is lifted directly from the early Syriac translation of On Interpretation.

The second section of the Parts of the Divine Laws lays down in a didactic manner the theological principles underlying the study of Scripture: God, His essence and power; the Divine Names; creation and providence; the present world, its creation and governance; an analysis of free will and its works; and, finally, the world to come. Again, the method is scholastic and Aristotelian, and the resemblance to what Muslim theologians would be discussing in the eighth century A.D. is no less striking.

In the sixth century A.D. the school of Nisibis fell upon hard days. In 540 one of its teaching staff, Mar Aba (d. 557), was named Nestorian Catholicos or patriarch at the Sassanian capital of Seleucia-Ctesiphon, but the promise of the event came to nothing when Khusraw Anushlrvan closed down the school and shortly afterwards sent the new Catholicos into exile. What occurred instead is that Christian physicians began appearing in Sassanian court circles, and when Nisibis was eventually reopened it boasted a new medical faculty.

The last great director at Nisibis was Henana, who after a stormy thirty-year career as "the Interpreter", led the bulk of his students and faculty out of Nisibis and into a form of self-imposed exile. This occurred about A.D. 600, and the school never recovered. The immediate cause of the dispute was Henana's attempts at replacing Theodore of Mopsuestia

and the Antiochene exegetical tradition with something palpably more Alexandrian and Platonic, a position that struck many of his Nestorian contemporaries as tantamount to betraying their Christology to the Monophysites.

By Henana's day Aristotelian logic was thoroughly domesticated in Syriac and was a hallmark of the education shared by the Christian exegetes and theologians who constituted the east Syrian intelligentsia. The study of medicine was likewise flourishing. The Alexandrian medical school curriculum was translated into Syriac at the beginning of the sixth century by the west Syrians and must already have been in use at what was emerging as the Nestorians' chief medical centre at Jundishapur in
Khuzistan in Persia. The material was Hellenic and Hellenistic, but its study did not necessarily imply a knowledge of Greek. The only east Syrian churchman of the sixth century who is credited with a knowledge of Greek is Mar Aba, who was educated at Nisibis but had to return to Byzantine Edessa to learn Greek.

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CHAPTER 4

The Indian and Persian background

Syed Nomanul Haq

The phenomenon of the transmission of Indian and Persian ideas into the world of Islam and their influence upon Islamic thought constitutes an immensely complicated problem for the historian. To begin with, an exchange of ideas had existed between India and Persia long before the rise of Islam.[1] Among other things, this process consisted in a doctrinal blending and therefore much modification, even transformation, of the ideas of the one by the local traditions of the other. Then, both India and Persia had come variously under Hellenistic influence. And this meant that many ultimately Greek notions and systems had reached India and Persia not from the Near Eastern centres of Hellenistic learning but indirectly from each other after having undergone local treatments. But at the same time, to make the situation even more intractable, both India and Persia had also received Greek ideas directly, by means of translations of authentic Greek texts.[2] All this gave rise to a highly intricate intellectual complex of what may be called the pre-Islamic

Perso-Indian ethos, and it is this complex which was subsequently inherited by Islam.

Again, in the formative phases of Islam's own philosophical and scientific tradition ideas were flowing into it from a multiplicity of sources, and here the complications of the situation were further compounded. When Alexandria fell in 21 /641, the Arab conquest of the Near East was virtually complete, and with this came the legacy of many Hellenized academies that had variously flourished during the first six centuries of the Christian era. Among them were the powerful seats of Syriac learning that had existed in Edessa (al-Ruha', modern Urfa east of the upper Euphrates),[3] Nisibis (near the upper Tigris, north-west of Mosul),[4] Resain (Ra's al-Ayn, Theodosiopolis),[5] Kinnesrin (Qinnasrln),[6] Horns and Baalbek (Heliopolis). Also gained by Muslims was the important centre
of Harran (Classical Carrhae), which lay a short distance south of Edessa. Harran was primarily a locality of star worshippers which perpetuated an indigenous religion and influences from far in the East – these influences, it is important to note, included also those received from India.[7]

But this represents only part of what the Muslims inherited. In 651 the last Sassanian shah died and Persia came completely into the expanding fold of Islam. Some fifteen years later, Muslim armies crossed the river Oxus, and by 95/713 Sind and Transoxiana were being ruled by Damascus. These cultural areas now contributed additional elements to a developing intellectual matrix of Islam. One of the most important elements from our point of view was that provided by the academy at Jundishapur in southern Persia which reached its zenith around the middle of the sixth century A.D.

during the reign of Anushlrvan. Continuing to flourish long after the Islamic conquest, Jundishapur had become a cradle of intellectual activity when in A.D. 489 Emperor Zeno closed the academy of Edessa and some fleeing Nestorian scholars found in the Persian ruler a hospitable and enthusiastic host. Settling first at Nisibis, some of these Hellenized scholars later joined Jundishapur. Then, in 529 the Neoplatonic school at Athens too was closed by a decree of Emperor Justinian and, again, sacked scholars took refuge in Persia. Thus, with its elaborate hospital and enormous academic resources, Jundishapur came to function as the hub of exchange for the learning of Persia, Greece, Rome, Syria and, significantly, that of India. Indeed, reports have it that it actually housed a number of Indian sages.[8]

Given this complex multiplicity of channels through which foreign ideas were travelling into the early world of Islam, and given the intellectual exchanges that had taken place within these channels whereby many indigenous ideas had been modified, integrated and transformed, it seems hardly possible to provide a simple and neat account of the role of Indian and Persian ideas in the development of Islamic thought. In fact, the problem is rendered even more difficult by the fact that Arabic translations of Sanskrit, Pahlavi and Syriac texts were carried out during the earliest phase of Islamic intellectual history, a phase at the end of which translators had directed their attention almost wholly to Greek works. These earliest translations have barely survived; likewise only fragments of some of the writings of the earliest Muslim thinkers have come down to us. Moreover, much of what has survived still lies unstudied in manuscripts in various libraries of the world. It seems, then, that the best one can accomplish at this stage of modern scholarship is a

tentative and somewhat disjointed exposition based largely on later Arabic sources and secondary accounts, an exposition making no pretensions to a definitive grand picture.

Contemporary scholars have for some time been speaking about Indian influences upon the cosmological doctrines of kaldm, the non-Aristotelian
atomistic philosophical tradition of Islam, often somewhat misleadingly dubbed Islamic scholastic theology. Having been introduced into modern scholarship by Schmolders in the 1840s,[9] the question of Indian influence upon kaldm has received many scholarly treatments since. In fact some fifty years after Schmolders, the French historian Mabilleau could feel so confident as to declare that the entire doctrine of kaldm atomism had come from India.[10] And, in an atmosphere where Goldziher was receiving tributes for seeing the whole Sufi tradition as a shadow of Buddhism,[11] Horten "tried to paste Indian labels on all kinds of kaldm views"[12] – something that elicited the censure of Massignon, who remarked that Horton was making sweeping claims on the basis merely of "isolated coincidences".[13]

But a somewhat narrower and qualified view was expressed in 1928 by Macdonald, who claimed only that some aspects of kaldm atomism show Indian influences.[14] He pointed out that the Indian Buddhist school of Sautrantikas (originated in the first or second century B.C.) held a doctrine of time atomism, namely that time is not infinitely divisible but rather consisted ultimately of discrete atomic moments which cannot be further divided.[15] Macdonald placed against this doctrine the report of the faylasuf Maimonides (d. 601/1204) that the mutakallimun (espousers of kaldm, sing, mutakallim) believed that "time consists of moments (dndt); this means

that time consists of a great many 'times' which cannot be further divided".[16] Given that a developed theory of time atomism was not to be found in the Greek tradition, argued Macdonald, the mutakallimun must have borrowed their doctrine from the Buddhists. Indeed, a learned support for this conclusion came in 1936 from Pines, who spoke also of the influences on kaldm of the Indian atomistic cosmology of Jainism (originated c. sixth century B.C.) as well as that of the Brahmanic Nyaya-Vaiseska (originated c. third century B.C.).[17]

But, in view of the problem's intricacies which we have already noted, it is hardly surprising that later scholarship found reasons to disagree with these conclusions.[18] First, there is no clear evidence that Indian philosophical texts expounding atomistic doctrines were available to early mutakallimun. What was, then, the channel of transmission? No doubt one does find in kaldm writings references to an Indian philosophical fraternity "Samaniyyah", but there still seems to be no agreement among historians as to who these Samaniyyah were.[19] References are found also to "Brahimah"; again, scholars have hesitated to identify these Brahimah simplistically with the Indian Brahmans.[20] Besides, in neither case is the context of these references atomistic. More important, however, is the recent discovery of some primary kaldm texts which were unknown to earlier historians such as Pines.[21] Warranting a revision of many earlier views which were based perforce on secondary Arabic sources, these discovered texts provide no direct evidence that the early mutakallimun

did believe in time atomism.[22] Indeed, Maimonides himself had only inferred logically on the basis of an Aristotelian

analysis of motion that the mutakallimun must have "of necessity" believed in time atomism.[23] Similarly, significant differences have now been shown to exist between the specific features of kaldm atomism and that of both Greek and Indian atomism;[24] therefore, this whole problem needs to be examined afresh. At this juncture now rests the question of a direct Indian influence on the mutakallimun.

It should be pointed out, however, that there does exist unmistakable evidence of some knowledge of Indian philosophical thought on the part of early Arabic writers. For example, in the Kitab Sirr al-khaliqah attributed to Balinas (pseudo-Apollonius of Tyana, the Neopythagorean sage of the first century A.D.),[25] an early source that has played a fundamental role in much of Islam's alchemical tradition, one finds a refutation of the views of the "Brahman" concerning the attributes of God. Thus the author of the Sirr tells us that

the Brahman[s] say: "the Creator [al-Khaliq] is Light 7Vr], unlike the lights [anwdr] seen by the eye; for He is Light, and He is All-Knowing [Alim], All-Hearing [Sami']$_y$ All-Seeing [Basir], All-Powerful [Qadir]." They say to us: "You, the people of Byzantine, worship only a name, for you know not what this name means!"[26]

These views are then vehemently dismissed, and in this dismissal a favourable rhetorical reference is made to the Buddha (al-Budd).[27] Evidently, it is not easy to identify these "Brahmans" in a definitive manner, and yet it seems plausible that the reported views were derived from the doctrines of classical Vedic philosophy. We recall that the Upanisads, a corpus of metaphysical dialogues written as commentaries on the Vedas (Veddntas), go beyond the idea of

anthropomorphic deities and speak of one All-Transcending principle from which all else proceeds, something that led to the doctrine of non-duality in Indian philosophy.[28] Therefore to say that God is Light which is unlike the lights of the corporeal world is to remain consistent with the metaphysical thrust of the Upanisads.

Similarly in the Book of Treasures of al-Ma'mun's physician Job of Edessa (Ayyub al-RuhawI,^?. c. 203/817)[29] there are references to unnamed Indian sages and their medical and cosmological ideas. But in this case some of these sages have indeed been clearly identified with historical Indian figures, such as the great medical authority Caraka of Kashmir (second century A.D.), and the famous physician of an earlier period, Susruta.[30] References to these and other Indian medical authorities are found also in the Firdaws al-hikmah of Ibn Sahl Rabban al-Tabarl (d. c. 247/861) who in addition speaks of an interesting Indian cosmological theory of elements.[31] Yet, from the point of view of the discipline of philosophy, and notwithstanding the familiarity of the Muslims with Sanskrit medical texts, the Indian cosmological ideas referred to by these two authors cannot clearly be demonstrated to have played any direct role in determining the character of Islamic cosmological theories.[32]

What is clear, however, is the role of Persian dualism in the formation of certain fundamental cosmological and theological doctrines of kaldm. To be sure, there exists overwhelming evidence of an early contact between the mutakallimun and the Manichaean dualists of Persia, something that generated much polemical kaldm literature against dualist ideas. Thus we read in the Kitdb al-Aghdni of Abu'l-Faraj al-Isfahanl (d. 357/957) that some students of the

grand patriarch of kaldm, al-Hasan al-Basri (d. 110/728), held discussions with those who were accused of espousing Manichaeism[33] – evidence that an active contact with the dualists was established already during the earliest formative period of kaldm. Indeed, many kaldm accounts of dualist cosmology are recorded by, among others, the mutakallimun 'Abd al-Jabbar (d. 415/1025)[34] and al-Maturidi (d. 331/942),[35] the bio-bibliographer Ibn al-Nadlm (d. 385/995),[36] and the heresiographer al-Shahrastani (d. 548/1153).[37] At the same time, Muslim historians and bibliographers have consistently told us of Arabic translations of Manichaean tracts, and these included, they report, the books of ManI himself.[38]

The interest of the mutakallimun in dualism and their contacts with Persian dualists should hardly surprise us. Historically, this situation seems inevitable since Muslim conquerers had inherited a sizeable Manichaean population within their expanding borders. And, philosophically, it makes much sense given the mutakallimun's intense preoccupation with the problem of causality. The Manichaean doctrine that light and darkness were both active and alive principles, that both had a will and were capable of causing real phenomena, and that both had a nature which restricted the former from producing evil and the latter from producing good – all this stood in fundamental conflict with certain essential premisses of kaldm doctrines.

Indeed, the mutakallimun had in general rejected the notion of natural causation,[39] namely that things have "natures" which cause them necessarily to be, or to behave, always in a certain way. For the mutakallimun the characteristics of corporeal bodies did not arise out of any "nature" or inalienable

permanent qualities; rather, these characteristics were both logically and physically reducible to atoms and accidents created by God, the only Active Agent (Amil, Fa"dl).[40] Indeed, the sole Regulator, Sustainer and the Cause of the cosmos was God, not the principle of light or darkness, nor any other entity. Evidently, dualism had threatened the very foundation of kaldm; therefore it is small wonder that there arose an enormous body of Arabic philosophical literature aimed at

refuting the doctrines of Persian Manichaeans. In fact the term jawhar which the mutakallimun frequently used for their atom was itself an Arabicization of the Persian word gawhar.

But it was not only for the sake of defending their own views that the mutakallimun subjected dualism to such feverish critical examination. To be sure, there existed also a positive aspect to their enterprise, namely an active search for a coherent doctrine of primary constituents of things, a doctrine that would comprehensively explain the qualitative and quantitative characteristics of the corporeal world, including the phenomenon of motion and change.[41] Much relevant material was provided to this search by the dualist cosmological literature; and this included not only Manichaean writings but also those derived from the teachings of the Aramaic philosopher Bardaisan (d. A.D. 222)[42] and the Christian heretic Marcion (fl. c. A.D. 140).[43] This material seems to have played a fundamentally important role in the articulation and crystallization of kalam cosmology.

There is in addition a theological aspect to the mutakallimun s preoccupation with Manichaeism. It is known that many dualist texts written within the early Islamic empire had

attacked some of the basic tenets of Islam such as prophecy and revelation; effectively, this constituted an attack both on the Prophet and on the Qur'an.[44] What was shocking to the sensibilities of Islamic piety was the fact that some authors of these texts were professed Muslims. Among them was the well-known Persian convert to Islam, Abd Allah ibn al-Muqaffa'[45] – the writer of model Arabic prose to whom we owe, besides much else, the ever-fresh Arabic translation from Pahlavi of the tales of the Indian sage Bidpai, Kalilah wa Dimnah. Ibn al-Muqaffa''s life came to an abrupt and tragic end when, like numerous others who were considered to have concealed old Persian religious ideas under the veil of Islam, he was put to death in 139/776 on the charge of this specific kind of "heresy" called zandaqah.[46] The works of the zanadiqah (sing, zindiq, the one who commits zandaqah) were certainly known to early mutakallimun, who wrote powerful refutations in response.[47] In fact, the mutakallimun s involvement in the issue was so well recognized that the first Abbasid caliphs actually recruited some of them in the official crusade launched in the second/eighth century against these zanadiqah.[48] It is highly probable, then, that much of the early kalam literature on reason and revelation, on God's creation ex nihilo$_y$ on His justice and His attributes, were all shaped by Manichaean attacks on these fundamental theological notions of Islam.

Attacks on the notion of prophecy and revelation came also from some freethinking individuals of the early period of Islam's intellectual history. Among them is the outstanding Persian alchemist and physician from Rayy, Abu Bakr al-RazI (d. 313/925), the celebrated Rhazes of the Latin West.[49] Razl's dismissal of the necessity of prophecy, however, was

not directed specifically against Islam; rather it was a general rejection of the necessity of all prophets who professed revealed knowledge. Thus in his Tricks of the Prophets he rejects the necessity of not only the prophets of the three monotheistic religions but also the dualist Manl.[50] Razl's religious nonconformism is further manifested by his belief in the transmigration of the soul. But he was a philosophical nonconformist too, a non-Aristotelian in his belief in an atomic constitution of matter; and in his doctrine of absolute space which he thought of as pure extension, and of absolute time which he called eternity (dahr).[51] Again, as opposed to Aristotelians, Razi believed in the temporal creation of the world and posited in his cosmogony five pre-eternal principles: Creator (al-Bdri'), Soul (al-nafs), Matter (al-hayuld'), Time (al-dahr) and Space (al-makdn).[52]

What was the source of Razl's daring ideas? Scholars generally claim that he drew much of his philosophy from the non-Islamic Perso-Indian ethos. This is a plausible claim, particularly in view of the fact that the greatest Muslim authority on India, al-Blrunl (d. 440/1048), had a great deal of interest in this freethinker, painstakingly preparing an extensive bibliography of his writings.[53] Al-Blrunl speaks also of one Abu'l-Abbas al-Iranshahrl, a Persian, whom he considers practically the only scholar of the Islamic world to give an objective account of the religious beliefs of the Indians.[54] While no writings of this Iranshahrl have come down to us, he is mentioned by one other source, the Persian Ismā'īlī author Nasir-i Khusraw (d. 481/1088), who quoteslranshahrl and reports that Razi was associated with him and that it was Iranshahrl from whom Razi took his idea of matter, space and time.[55] Indeed, concerning Razl's familiarity with Manichaeism there is no doubt since he

explicitly cites the writings of Manl. As for his knowledge of Indian philosophy, it has been pointed out that both his atomism and his concept of the five pre-eternal principles show a striking resemblance to the system of Nyaya-Vaiseska[56] – and this may have been the result of his learning from Iranshahrl.

But this claim can be only tentative, since we have no direct evidence at hand, and since Razl's own perception of himself was that he was a disciple of Plato.[57] Further, one cannot here rule out the possibility of a heavy dependence upon Harranian sources, for in his historical work Kitab al-shawahid ("Book of Testimonies") the authority most quoted by Razi is one Salim al-Harranl.[58] And as for the resemblance between certain features of Razl's ideas and those found in the Nyaya-Vaiseska system, a resemblance there evidently is, but the two still remain profoundly dissimilar in their fundamental drift. Thus one wonders if this resemblance between certain elements of the two is not an isolated phenomenon. The most important thing, however, is to note that the philosophical views of the great Persian physician do not represent a trend or a tradition in Islamic thought: he was an individual free spirit, a solitary figure who "had to pay the classic price for his intellectual boldness: the consignment of most of his literary output to oblivion".[59]

Concerning the rich and enduring falsafah tradition of Islam, something that has typically been considered by Western scholarship virtually to be the sole expression of Islamic philosophy, it is a tradition which postdates kaldm. In fact the dates of the first representative of this tradition, "the Philosopher of the Arabs" al-Kindl (b. mid third/ninth century), practically coincide with those of the aggressive and

highly systematic translation activity in the Bayt al-Hikmah –
and at this centre the interests of prolific translators had
quickly and systematically shifted almost exclusively to
Greek texts. 'The falsafah tradition, to which some towering
giants belonged, received its fundamental inspiration from the
translated Greek works, remained committed to Aristotelian
logic, operated in the framework of Neoplatonic metaphysics,
and held the mutakallimun in intellectual contempt. If these
Hellenized personages such as al-Kindl, al-Farabl (d. 339/
950) and Ibn Slna (d. 429/1037) – known in the Islamic
tradition as the falasifah (sing, faylasuf) – are the only
representatives of Islamic speculative philosophy, then the
pre-Islamic Perso-Indian tradition would appear not to have
played an important role in the intellectual history of Islam
although even here Indian sources have been posited by some
scholars for some of Ibn Slna's visionary recitals, and
Suhrawardl's ishraqi doctrines draw heavily from ancient
Persian sources.

If we now finally move from the discipline of philosophy to
that of the natural sciences, medicine and mathematics, the
picture becomes much clearer and definitive, thanks to the
critical researches of some recent scholars.[60] Here,
particularly in the case of astronomy, we are now in a position
to trace the myriad historical channels through which the
Perso-Indian tradition had reached early Islam; equally, we
are now able to demonstrate the role which this tradition
played as one of the essential elements determining the very
course of the Islamic exact sciences. But here we are outside
the domain of philosophy proper, and therefore only a
summary account is warranted. An account must be given
none the less, since the two disciplines of science and
speculative philosophy were frequently integrated in the mind

of one and the same individual, and since one discipline had implications for the other.

One can identify in the Islamic astronomical tradition, to take one of the best studied areas first,[61] three distinct elements which determined the course of its development. The first, and chronologically the earliest, element was provided by Arabic translations and adaptations in the second/eighth century of Sanskrit and Pahlavi texts. This introduced into the world of Islam some concepts of Greek mathematical astronomy, concepts which were largely non-Ptolemaic altered in one way or another by the local traditions of Persia and India. The Greco-Syrian and Byzantine astronomical traditions, the former being partially Ptolemaic
and the latter entirely Ptolemaic, constitute the second element reaching Islam in the late second/early ninth century. But these two traditions, we pause to note, were themselves not altogether independent of India and Persia. Finally, the third element came from the general availability in Arabic renderings of the works of Ptolemy himself whose Almagest was first translated, presumably from a Syriac version, under the patronage of the Persian Barmak family during the reign of Harun al-Rashld (170/786-194/809). "This led to the development in Islam," we learn from Pingree, "of a mathematical astronomy that was essentially Ptolemaic, but in which new parameters were introduced and new solutions to problems in spherical trigonometry derived from India tended to replace those of the Almagest."[62]

A word ought be said in elaboration, since here we have a case that illustrates the process of a curious blending of ideas, something of which we spoke in the beginning of this chapter. Long before the rise of Islam, Persians had become familiar

not only with the Almagest but also with Greek and Indian astrological texts through translations sponsored by the earliest Sassanian rulers Ardashlr I (A.D. 226—41) and Shapur I (A.D. 241-72). Around the middle of the fifth century A.D., a set of royal astronomical tables, the fateful Zik-i shahrydrdn, were composed. This zik (astronomical tables; Arabic zij) incorporated some parameters of the Indian Brahmapaksa school which had come into being in the fifth century, and which had itself integrated some Greek material. A century later, the Sassanian Shah Anushlrvan ordered a comparison of the Almagest with an Indian text called in Arabic Zij al-arkand (arkand being an Arabic corruption of Sanskrit ahargana) belonging to the partially Hellenized Ardharatrikapaksa school of the fifth century. This resulted in a new redaction of the Zik-i shahrydrdn, and this was known to Arabic writers. Finally, during the reign of the last Sassanian monarch Yazdigird another version of Zik-i shahrydrdn was made, once again combining Persian, Greek and Indian elements; again, this too was known in the Islamic world.[63]

It is clear that Indian texts constituted the proximate source of the earliest Islamic astronomical works. Thus we have the Zij al-arkand written in 117/735 in Sind essentially on the basis of the Khandakhddyaka composed by Brahmagupta in 665. Not long after, two other sets of tables were composed – the Zij al-jdmV and Zij al-hazilr, both deriving from the Arkand. Then, in 125/742 we got the Zij al-harqan, again combining Persian and Indian material including that found in the Aryabhatiya of Aryabhata (b. 476).[64] Then, during the reigns of al-Mansur (137/754-159/775) and Harun al-Rashld more Indian material was infused, and this was accompanied by Arabic translations of the Zik-i shahrydrdn (Zij al-shdh) and

of the works of Ptolemy. The Indian material was provided by the translation of a Sanskrit text related to the Brahmapaksa school, apparently bearing the title Mahdsiddhdnta and dependent on the

Brdhmasphutasiddhdnta of Brahmagupta written in 628. Thus came into being the Zij al-sindhind al-kabir, a text that combines various Indian elements with those derived from Ptolemy as well as from Zij al-shdh and other Persian sources; and this introduced a distinct Sindhind tradition in early Islamic astronomy.[65]

It would appear, then, that the role of the Perso-Indian tradition in the development of Islamic astronomy looms large. Indeed, a very large number of early astronomers of Islam were Persians – al-Nawbakht al-FarisI, Ibn al-Farrukhan al-Tabari, Masha' Allah, all of whom were associated with the court of al-Mansur; and Yahya ibn Abl Mansur and Ibn Musa al-Khwarazml, the astronomers working under al-Ma'mun (198/813-218/833); these are only some of the significant Persian figures of the period. As for the Indians who actually worked in the Islamic world, Ibn al-Nadlm names Manka (or Kanka),[66] Ibn Dahn,[67] Judar,[68] Sanjahil,[69] and Naq[70] – none of these is reported to be a speculative philosopher; rather, we are told that they were translators of Sanskrit astronomical, astrological and medical works. In fact Manka is generally recognized as a member of the Indian embassy which brought the Mahdsiddhdnta to al-Mansur.[71]

The role of India and Persia in the field of medicine and mathematics is, again, clear and significant. Ibn al-Nadlm and other Muslim sources list early Arabic translations of the works of a large number of Indian medical authorities

including Susruta, Caraka and Vagbhata (a Buddhist of no later than the third/ninth century);[72] added in these lists are also several Indian medical texts of unnamed authors, for example, Sundastdq; the Book ofRiisd; Book of Indian Drugs;[73] etc. In fact, the translation of one Indian medical texts is actually preserved, namely, Kitdb Shdndq fi sumum wal-tariydq ("Book of Chanakya [third century B.C.] on Poisons and Antidotes").[74] But it seems that most of these works were translated from Pahlavi versions – and here the contribution of Jundishapur is paramount.

From the beginning Jundishapur provided the Muslim caliphs with loyal and able physicians,[75] such as the Nestorian family of Bukhtishu', whose earliest representative at the court of al-Mansur, Georgius ibn Jibra'il, was the head of the medical school at Jundishapur and was instrumental in the establishment of the first hospital in Baghdad.[76] Indeed, it is said that the very first translator of Syriac medical texts into Arabic was none other than a Persian from Jundishapur, the physician Masarjawayh (fl. c. first half of second/eighth century).[77] Representing the character of his school, Masarjawayh's own Arabic medical works expressly blend Greek, Indian and Persian material.[78] But contacts with Jundishapur seem to have been established as early as the birth of Islamic society itself, for the medical historian Ibn Abl Usaybi'ah (d. 669/1270) reports in detail the activities in that school of al-Harith ibn Kaladah, an elder contemporary of the Prophet.[79] Finally, we recall another venerable physician from Jundishapur, Yuhanna ibn Masawayah (d. 243/857), the first head of the celebrated Bayt al-Hikmah during the reign of al-Ma'mun, and the teacher of the greatest translator of Islam, the Nestorian Christian Hunayn ibn Ishaq (d. 264/877).[80]

The contribution of Indian quantitative techniques in the development of the mathematical tradition of Islam is a relatively well-known phenomenon. Indeed, this is effectively recognized by everyone who speaks of "Arabic numerals" – the numerals 1 to 9 and 0 functioning in a decimal place-value system. These are, in fact, Indian numerals systematically introduced to the world of science by a Persian: the outstanding mathematician and astronomer Muhammad ibn Musa al-Khwarazml (d. c. 233/847), a Muslim of Zoroastrian ancestry to whose Latinized name we owe the living term "algorism" (these days spelt "algorithm"). While it is certainly possible that al-Khwarazml was not the first Muslim writer to have become familiar with the Indian place-value decimals, he does remain the first scientific figure to expound them systematically. Needless to say, his work was of seminal importance for the whole field of exact sciences; and here we ought to recognize an ultimate debt to India, even though al-Khwarazml's proximate sources may well have been Pahlavi or Syriac.[81]

A brief word might be added concerning trigonometry. This subject, one can safely claim, is essentially a creation of the Islamic world[82] – but, once again, it is a creation in which the Indian background has played a fundamental role. The pre-Islamic proto-trigonometry, to give a highly simplified account, was based on a single function, the chord of an arbitrary circular arc. The Indians transformed the chord functions into varieties of the sine, and this marks a crucial stage in the birth of trigonometry. By the third/ninth century the mathematicians of the Islamic world had taken the sine function from India; then, for the next six centuries the new sine function and the old shadow functions (tangent, secant, etc.) were elaborately tabulated by them as sexagesimals. At

the same time, Muslim mathematicians preoccupied themselves with enunciating a large number of theorems which freed their subject from dependence upon the complete quadrilateral, a feature of the Hellenistic proto-trigonometry due to the application of the theorem of Menelaus (c. first century A.D.).[83] "With this development," writes an expert, "the first real trigonometry emerged, in the sense that only then did the object of study become the spherical or plane triangle, its sides and angles."[84] It seems, then, that the Arabic knowledge of the Indian sine function (Sanskrit ardhajya (half chord) —> Arabic jyb (jayb, pocket) —> Latin sinus —> English "sine") marks the turning point in the history of trigonometry.

But whatever Islam received from the Indian and Persian background, it was all transformed and assimilated into a new matrix that
was characteristically Islamic. Transmitted ideas and systems functioned in this matrix in novel ways as integral elements of a distinct intellectual synthesis: it is this synthesis wherein lies the originality of Islamic thought. By the time Islamic philosophy crystallized into a fully developed and independent tradition, Persia had been totally absorbed into the framework of Islam. And while Sind was achieving its political and administrative freedom from the central caliphal authority, India once again became a mysterious, remote outpost. Al-BlrunI came too late to make a difference: "I find it very hard to work in the subject [of India]," he lamented, "although I have a great liking for it – but in this respect I stand quite alone in my time!"[85]

NOTES

1 The well-known fourth/tenth-century bio-bibliographer Ibn al-Nadlm, for example, tells us that the founder of the Sassanian dynasty Ardashlr I "sent to India and China for books in those directions … Shapur, his son, followed his example so that there were transcribed into Persian all of those books, such as those of … Ptolemy and Farmasib the Indian" (Dodge, trans. (1970): 574). Indeed, the reliability of such accounts is borne out by overwhelming independent evidence. Cf. Tabarl (1879-90), 1: 1052-3, 10; Meyerhof (1937); Nasr (1975); Pingree (1973).

2 An illustrative example of this tangled web of transmission channels is to be found in Pingree's studies of the history of Islamic astronomy. See particularly Pingree (1973).

3 One recalls Caliph al-Mahdfs (158/775-169/785) chief astrologer Thawfil al-Ruml (Theophilus of Edessa, d. 169/785) who not only knew Greek, Syriac and Arabic but was familiar also with Indian sources. Ayyub al-RuhawI (Job of Edessa) was another important personage from this city; he too knew Indian sources (see below).

4 This was the home town of the famous bishop Severus Sebokht (fl. mid seventh century A.D.). He is said to have known Indian ("Arabic") numerals. See Pingree (1973): 35.

5 To this place belonged the great scholar Sergius (d. 536 A.D.) who translated Galen into Syriac (cf. Brunet and Mieli (1935): 880). It is believed that Sergius was responsible also for the Syriac version of Ptolemy's Almagest, and this was

probably the version used by al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf (fl. 170/ 786-218/833) for his Arabic translation. See Pingree (1973): 34.

6 Severus Sebokht had settled here (see n. 4 above).

7 Harran is considered to have been the major agency for the transmission to Islam not only of Neopythagorean, Hermetic and Gnostic doctrines but also of indigenous Chaldaean notions and certain characteristically Chinese ideas. Harranians had styled themselves "Sabaeans" (Sabi'un) in the third/ninth century in the time of al-Ma'mun to enjoy the privileges of the "People of the Book" (Ahl-al-kitdb), proclaiming themselves to be the Sabi'un mentioned in the Qur'an (5: 72-3). Indian influences on Harran are clearly evident from the accounts
found in pseudo-Majritl's Ghdyat al-hakim (composed 340s/ 950s; German trans. Ritter and Plessner 1962): there were similarities between the Harranian and Indian worship of planets, and the Sanskrit names of planets were known at Harran. See the classic study of Chwolson (1856); cf. Kraus (1942-3): 305ff

8 See Meyerhof (1937): 22. For the history of Jundishapur see Yaqut (1966-70), 2: 130; Campbell (1926), 2: 46; "Djundai-Sabur," Encyclopaedia of Islam, new ed. (Leiden, I960), 1: 1064.

9 Schmolders (1942).

10 Mabilleau (1895): 328ff.

11 See, e.g., Duka (1904).

12 Wolfson's remark (1976: 68) on Horten (1912).

13 Massignon (1912): 408.

14 Macdonald (1928).

15 Macdonald cited Jacobi (1910) as his authority. For the atomism of Sautrantikas see Keith (1921); Pines (1936): 104-6.

16 In his Guide of the Perplexed (Pines, trans. (1963)), Maimonides gives a list of twelve fundamental propositions of the atomistic position of kalam. Macdonald (p. 10) quotes from the third proposition; I have only slightly changed his translation.

17 Pines (1936): 102-23. Cf. Radhakrishnan, ed. (1953): 139-51; 219-30.

18 For example, Wolfson was not sympathetic to Pines's views (see Wolfson (1976): 473ff.).

19 Thus Lang tells us that Classical Greek sources had adapted the Prakrit term samana, "an ascetic", to refer to Buddhists as "Samanians"; and that this term excluded Brahmans (Lang (1957): 24). Concerning Arabic writers, he says: "Adapting, like the classical writers before them, the Indian term samana$_y$ usually used to designate a Buddhist ascetic, some of the Arabic authorities refer to the Buddha as the prophet of samaniyyc? (ibid: 30; emphasis added). Lang does not cite any Arabic sources here; rather, he makes the statement on the authority of two of his colleagues (1957: 30; n. 1). Sachau in his introduction to al-Birunl's India vocalizes

the term as "Shamaniyya" which, he says, not only derived from the Indian term, but also from the Arabic al-Muhammarah, i.e. the red-robed people (= raktapatd) this referred to the red-brown cloaks of the Buddhist monks (Sachau, trans. (1888): 261).

On the other hand, Dodge informs us that "Shamaniya [were] idolators of Central Asia who became somewhat influenced by Buddhism" (Dodge, trans. (1970), 2: 923; emphasis added). He cites Monier-Williams as his authority (Monier-Williams (1891): 75, 261-3). Schmolders traced the Samaniyyah to Charvakas in India (Schmolders (1842): 114). Dhanani says only that the Samaniyyah were "an Indian group which espoused skepticism and therefore denied the possibility of any knowledge beyond that derived from the senses" (Dhanani (1991): 47; cf. Vajda (1937)). Finally, it is interesting to note that the historian Hamzah al-Isfahanl (d. 356/957) mentions the view that in the most ancient times humanity was of one kind but distinguished by the name Samaniyyun in the East and Kaldaniyyun in the West (Gottwaldt, ed. and trans. (1844-8): 5).

20 Paul Kraus was of the opinion that it was the renegade mutakallim Ibn al-Rawandl's (d. mid third/ninth century) Kitab al-Zumurrud which served as the
source for the Arabic writers' view that the "Brahimah" reject prophecy on account of the supremacy and sufficiency of the human intellect; and that "Brahimah" was a mere invention of Ibn al-Rawandl meant to disguise views which were his own (Kraus 1933, 1934). A recent scholar, Stroumsa, however, disagrees with Kraus, arguing that the views attributed to "Brahimah" are genuinely Indian and were known to early mutakallimun (Stroumsa 1985).

21 A recent study of kalam atomism is Dhanani (1991) which takes into account these newly discovered texts. I draw heavily upon this study.

22 Dhanani (1991): 259.

23 In his third proposition Maimonides says (see n. 16 above): "This premise is … necessary for them because of the first premise [namely, that all corporeal bodies are made up of atoms]. That is to say, they must have seen Aristotle's demonstration in which he had demonstrated that distance, time and motion are all three of them equivalent with respect to existence. I mean that the relationship of each of them to the other is the same and that when one is divided so is the other in the same proportion. Hence, they knew necessarily that if time were continuous and capable of infinite division, then it follows that the part which they considered indivisible must likewise be capable of infinite division … For this reason they presumed that … time reaches a limit, namely the moments, beyond which further division is impossible …" (Pines, trans. (1963), 1: 196; quoted by Dhanani (1991): 259). In his comments, Dhanani writes: "Maimonides does not have direct evidence for time-atoms in kaldm, but he insists on the basis of Aristotle's analysis that such a doctrine must, of necessity, be held by any kind of atomism" (Dhanani (1991): 260).

24 See Dhanani (1991): 182-330.

25 This text is available in Weisser's 1979 critical edition.

26 Weisser, ed. (1979): 63.

27 Weisser, ed. (1979).

28 See Radhakrishnan (1924); Schweitzer (1951).

29 Mingana, ed. and trans. (1935).

30 Ibid.: xxv. See n. 32 below.

31 Siddiqi, ed. (1938). The parts relevant to Indian knowledge have been translated in Siggel (1950).

32 The renegade mutakallim Abu 'Isa al-Warraq (d. 247/861) says in his account of the dahriyyah (natural philosophers who believed in the eternity of the world) that "one group [of the dahriyyah] claims that the world is constituted out of five things, which like it are eternal: hot, cold, dry and moist. The fifth is pneuma (ruh) …". (This account is preserved in the Mutamad fi usul al-din of the mutakallim Rukn al-Dln al-Malahmi (d. 536/1141); the section on the dahriyyah has been edited and translated in McDermott (1984). I have taken the selection from Dhanani's citation (1991: 88), making minor changes in the translation.) Dhanani places against this account the report of Ibn Sahl Rabban al-Tabari on an Indian theory of five elements (mahabut): "The term mahabut means the elements (taba'i) which they take to be five by [the addition of] wind rihY (Firdaws al-hikma, Siddiqi, ed. (1938): 557; I quote Dhanani's citation (1991): 93). A similar account of the Indian theory is to be found in the Book of Treasures of Job of Edessa: "Some Indians … believe in the existence of five elements, four of which we ourselves believe in, while the fifth is the

wind" (Mingana, trans. (1935): 221). Dhanani's conclusion, however, is that the source of the dahriyyah view was not Indian but Stoic (1991: 94).

33 Quoted by Vajda (1937): 193, n. 6; Dhanani (1991): 47, n. 1.

34 Al-Mughni, Cairo ed. (1960-5).

35 Al-Tawhid, Kholeif, ed. (1970).

36 Fihrist, Flugel, ed. (1871); Dodge, trans. (1970).

37 Al-Milal wa al-nihal, Badran, ed. (1956); Haarbriiker, ed. and trans. (1850).

38 See, e.g., the Muruj al-dhahab of the historian al-Mas'udl (d. 345/956), Pellat, ed. (1966-79), 5: 212.

39 There are possible exceptions: see Wolfson (1976): 559-78.

40 An extensive discussion of the kalam doctrines of causality is to be found in Wolfson (1976): 518-600. See also Dhanani (1991): 53ff

41 Cf. Dhanani (1991): 46ff.

42 Embracing Christianity in 179 A.D., this Aramaic philosopher had blended gnosticism with dualism. See ShahrastanI, Haarbriiker, ed. and trans. (1850), 1: 293; "Ibn Daisan", Encyclopaedia of Islam, 2: 370; Ibn al-Nadim, Dodge, trans. 1970): 776, 805-6; Drijvers (1966).

43 Probably a Christian shipmaster in Pontus. Around A.D. 140 he went to Rome and founded a heretical sect. See Ibn al-Nadim, Dodge, trans. (1970): 775-6, 806-7; ShahrastanI, Haarbriiker, ed. and trans. (1850), 1: 295.

44 See Mas'udl, Pellat, ed. (1966-79), 5: 212; Vajda (1937).

45 Among them were also al-Warraq and Ibn al-Rawandi whom we have met above.

46 See Ibn Khallikan, de Slane, trans. (1843-7), 1: 431; Ibn al-Nadim, Dodge, trans. (1970): 24, 99, 259, 275-6, 366, 581, 598, 599, 715; "Ibn al-Mukaffa ", Encyclopaedia of Islam, 3: 883. Fragments of Ibn al-Muqaffaĩ°s Manichaean tract are preserved in a refutation by the Zaydl Imam al-Rassi (d. 246/ 860), al-Radd 'aid al-Zindiq al-Ia'Tn Ibn al-Muqaffa, Guidi, ed. and trans. (1927). Cf. Dhanani (1991): 50ff. On the phenomenon of zandaqah an important study is Vajda (1937); see also Nicholson (1969): 372-5.

47 Dhanani (1991): 50fĩ£; Vajda (1937).

48 This is reported, e.g., by Mas'udl, Pellat, ed., 5: 212.

49 A good account of Razi is the article of Pines, s.v.y Dictionary of Scientific Biography. Cf. Pines (1936); 34-93; Kraus, ed. (1939); Fakhry (1983): 94-106.

50 Pines, Dictionary of Scientific Biography, 11: 323.

51 Pines (1936); Pines, Dictionary of Scientific Biography, 11: 324.

52 Pines, ibid.: 326; Fakhry (1983): 94-106.

53 This has been edited by Kraus (1936).

54 India, Sachau, trans. (1888): 4; al-Iranshahrl is mentioned also in al-Blrum's al-Athar al-bdqiya, Sachau, ed. (1878): 222, 225. Cf. Pines (1936): 34.

55 Zad al-musafirin, Belin, ed. (1341), quoted by Pines (1936): 34ff.

56 Pines (1936): 34ff.

57 Pines, Dictionary of Scientific Biography, 11: 324.

58 Stapleton, Azo and Husain (1927): 340-2; Stapleton and Azo (1910): 68, 72.

59 Fakhry (1983): 33.

60 Thanks, particularly, to the painstaking works of David Pingree, E. S. Kennedy and David King.

61 My account of the history of Islamic astronomy draws rather heavily upon
Pingree (1973); in fact what I give below is practically a paraphrase of this important study.

62 Pingree (1973): 32.

63 Ibid.: 36.

64 Ibid.: 37. Around the end of second/beginning of ninth century another version of Aryabhatiya was circulating among Muslim astronomers (Pingree, "'Ilm al-Hay'a", Encyclopaedia of Islam, 4: 1136). The Indian text has been studied by Clark (1930).

65 Pingree (1973): 38.

66 Dodge, trans. (1970): 589, 644, 710. This personage is mentioned by other sources too, such as Qiftl, Lippert, ed. (1903): 265.

67 Dodge, trans. (1970): 590, 710. He looked after the bimaristan (hospital) under the Persian Barmak family. Cf. Fliigel (1857).

68 Dodge, trans. (1970): 645. See Ibn Abl Usaybi'ah, Muller, ed. (1884), 2: 33.

69 Dodge, trans. (1970): 645. Cf. Ibn Abl Usaybi'ah, 2: 32.

70 Dodge, trans. (1970).

71 Ibid.: 1027.

72 Ibid.: 710. All three of them are mentioned also by Ibn Sahl Rabban al-Tabarl, Siggel, trans. (1950).

73 These titles appear in Ibn al-Nadlm, Dodge, trans. (1970).

74 Chanakya was Chandragupta's minister the fragment of whose book on statecraft is preserved in Kautiliya's (third century A.D.) Arthasastra. But the Arabic text also draws

material from Susruta and Caraka. See the critical study of the Shanaq by Strauss (1934).

75 That physicians from the Persian academy were held in high esteem is illustrated in a delightful manner by the famous literary and philosophical figure al-Jahiz (d. 255/868) in his Kitab al-bukhala ("Book of the Misers"): "Once, when his [an Arab physician Asad's] practice of medicine was not much in demand, somebody asked him: … 'How is it that your practice is so little in demand?' He gave this answer: 'First, … I am a Muslim; and with the patients the belief is deep rooted … that Muslims are not good for medicine. Then, my name is Asad, but it should have been Sallba, Mara'il, Yuhanna or Blra: moreover my kunya is Abu'l Harith, but it should have been Abu 'Isa, Abu Zakariyya or Abu Ibrahim. I wear an upper garment made of cotton, but it should have been made of black silk. Finally, my way of speaking is Arabic, but it should be that of the people from Jundlshapur!'" (quoted by Meyerhof (1930): 402).

76 See Ibn al-Nadlm, Dodge, trans. (1970): 697; Ibn Abl Usaybi'ah, Muller, ed. (1884), 1: 138; Qiftl, Lippert, ed. (1903): 102.

77 See Ibn Nadlm, Dodge, trans. (1970): 698; Ibn Abl Usaybi'ah, op. cit., 1: 163, 204; Qiftl, op. cit.: 324.

78 Meyerhof (1937): 22.

79 See ibid: 23.

80 See Ibn Nadlm, Dodge, trans. (1970): 584, 695-6, 742; Ibn Abl Usaybi'ah, op. cit.: 175; Qiftl, op. cit.: 380.

81 A comprehensive account of al-Khwarazmi is given by Toomer, s. v., Dictionary of Scientific Biography: 358-65. Arabic sources include Ibn al-Nadlm, Dodge, trans. (1970): 652, 662, 665, 668; Qiftl, op. cit.: 286.

82
The authority on this subject is Kennedy. See, e.g., Kennedy (1969): 333ff.; (1970): 337ff.

83 The theorem asserts a metric relation between six segments on any complete quadrilateral, plane or spherical. Kennedy (1970): 337 points out that it had been possible in the pre-Islamic mathematics to compute the magnitudes of any solvable plane or, in principle, spherical figure by use of the table of chords and Menelaus' theorem. But that application of the theorem to spherical problems was, however, very difficult in practice.

84 Kennedy (1969): 334.

85 India, Sachau, ed. (1888), 1: 24.

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CHAPTER 5

Early kālam

M. Abdel Haleem

Kalām, or ʿilm al-kalam (the science of kalām), is a title of
that branch of knowledge in Islam that is usually translated as
"speculative theology". Literally, kalām means "speech",
"talk" or "words"; yatakallam ft means to talk about or
discuss a matter or topic. In an early usage of the word kalām
in this sense, the Prophet is reported to have come out and
found a group of Muslims yatakallamuna[1] fi'l-qadar i.e.
talking about, or discussing, predestination.[2] The opposite of
takallama ft is sakata ʿan – to keep silent about – such a
matter or topic. The word occurred in other traditions and
continued to be used in the same sense even when discussions
on theological matters had become more extensive and
specialized. A statement by Malik (d. 179/795) explains the
connection between such discussions and the word kalām in
its lexical meaning. He said: "Beware of innovations …;
those who talk about [yatakallamun ft] the names and
attributes of God, His Word, His Knowledge and Power, and
do not keep silent [yaskutun] about things about which the
Companions of the Prophet and their followers have kept
silence."[3] As a jurist, he also stated: "I do not like kalām

except in what involves 'amal (action), but as for kalām about God, silence is better than it."[4]

Kalām here means discussion on theological matters. As M. Abd al-Raziq has rightly observed, such discussions were called kalām before the science of kalām became independent and recorded in writing, and people who engaged in such discussions were also called mutakallimun. When books were written about these issues, the science which was written down was given the title that had been applied earlier to such discussions.[5] In Islamic sources a number of reasons were offered for giving such a title to the science of kalām. Taftazanl (d. 793/1390)[6] put together such reasons as follows:

1
Traditionally the title that was given to the discussions of any separate issue, was al-kaldm ft kathd wa kathd (an exposition of/a chapter or section on).

2 The question of kaldm Allah (the speech of God) was the most famous question and the one that gave rise to the most disputes.

3 The science of kaldm generates in one the power to talk about or discuss religious matters and impress one's arguments on one's rivals as logic does in the field of philosophy.

As regards the first reason, it is true that chapters in such early books as al-Ibdnah of al-Ash'ari (d. 324/935) and al-Mughm of Abd al-Jabbar (d. 415/1024) bear such titles but these works appeared much later than the name of kaldm as a science. The same can be said of the second reason, since the

title was well known before the discussions on kaldm Allah (the createdness or otherwise of the Qur'an). Similarly, the third suggestion refers to the stage when logic and Greek philosophy became well known and influential in the Islamic cultural milieu in the third/ ninth century, after the title of kaldm had become well established. Other suggestions were put forward[7] which can be explained away as post-dating the appearance of 'Urn al-kaldm as an established science in the second/ eighth century. Western scholars, on the other hand, argue for a non-Islamic origin of the term kaldm as being derived from the Greek dialexis used by the Church Fathers, or logos, directly or via Syriac,[8] but none of the arguments for such views appears to be conclusive. The term in Islamic culture predates any presumed contact with Christian, Greek or Syriac sources and in any case kaldm, as will be explained below, is not the only term used by Muslims for this science: six other terms were used. The most plausible explanation for the appearance of this term remains the original lexical meaning as used in the above-mentioned prophetic traditions.

J. van Ess considers that not every discussion on any religious question can be considered part of kaldm; rather kaldm requires a specific way of treating religious issues: it is a treatment where it is necessary to have an adversary in the discussion. Kaldm "means a procedure" where you have a discussion about a topic that usually occurs according to a certain structure by question and response, frequently built up in the form of dilemmas.[9] Van Ess cites a risdlah, ascribed to al-Hasan ibn Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyyah, an anti-Qadarite risdlah, which he dates at 73/692, to exemplify kaldm in this sense as a dialectic formula which begins by posing a question, in the form of a disjunction: whichever choice the adversary makes, he loses, and is trapped in a position which

is either manifestly untenable or identical with that of the questioner.

As to the question of dates, Michael Cook has convincingly argued that the ascription rests on the sole authority of the Zaydl Imam al-Hadl
(d. 298/910), that many of the arguments advanced by van Ess are questionable and the result could not be said to constitute proof, suggesting that it would be difficult to sustain a date later than the first half of the second/eighth century.[10] The persistence in using the dialectical formula for such a lengthy risdlah and the fact that the style of the text is so clearly different from the style of al-Hasan in his other Risdlat al-irjd' make it more difficult to accept the ascription to al-Hasan on the sole authority of al-Hadl.

On the basis of this risdlah, van Ess argues that the form was borrowed from Greek sources, while Cook, on the basis of a Syriac text, similar in form to that of the risdlah, argues that the origin for the risdlah was Syriac.

Without going here into the question of any relationship of Islamic culture to either Greek or Syriac, it is difficult to agree that Muslim writers had necessarily to resort to either source to become acquainted with such a formula, or that it did not exist in their culture. In fact we have a piece of argument dated much earlier than the dates suggested by either van Ess or Cook: that is the dialogue between Ibn ʻAbbas and some Kharijites who rebelled against ʻAlī.

On being sent by the Caliph All to argue with them, Ibn Abbas asked: "What do you have against All?" They answered "Three things: one, he set men as judges ft amr

Allah, while judgment is only for Allah; two, he fought but did not take captives or booty. If his enemies were believers it would not have been lawful for him to fight them, and if they had been unbelievers, he had the right to kill and take them captive. Three, he abdicated his position as Amir al-mu 'minin. If he was not Amir al-mu 'minin he must be Amir al-kdfirin."

Ibn Abbas asked: "If I cite from the Qur'an and Sunnah what refutes your argument, would you come back to him?" They replied "Why not?" To the first question he cited Qur'an 6: 95 and 4: 35 in which it is enjoined that arbiters be set up to decide on the price of a hare killed in the haram and in marital disputes, and put to them: "Do you consider giving men authority to decide in matters of the blood of Muslims and reconciliation better, or to decide on the price of a hare or a matter involving whether it is lawful for a man to have intercourse with his wife?" They conceded the point. As to the second point that All fought without taking captives or booty, Ibn Abbas asked the Kharijites "Would you take your mother[11] A'ishah captive? If you say she is not our 'mother' you would be unbelievers, so you see that you are cornered between two unlawful things. Have I answered your arguments over this?"

They said yes. "As to your objection that he abdicated the position of Amir al-mu 'minin, I can cite what the Prophet did at Hudaybiyah when the representative of the Quraysh did not accept 'All writing 'This is what has been agreed between the Messenger of Allah and …' to which Abu Sufyan and Suhayl objected 'If we had known you were a messenger of Allah we would not have fought you', at which the Prophet said to All, 'Wipe that out and write "This is what has been agreed

between Muhammad, son of Abdallah and Abu Sufyan and Suhayl." At this point, two thousand of the Kharijites changed their position and did not fight Ali.[12]

In this dialogue both the Kharijites and Ibn Abbas use the disjunction formula, at a time much earlier than that of the risalah van Ess and Cook cite to suggest a non-Muslim origin for the formula.

Van Ess' view that kalām must involve such dialectical structure does not agree with the Islamic view of kalām. The dialectical situation and disjunction formula are of course part of kalām but are not the only form it takes. Throughout the history of kalām theological writings with different characteristics have also been accepted as part of kalām.

As mentioned, kalām has not been the only title given to this science as an independent subject. As many as seven names in Arabic have been used for it, which is perhaps unknown in any other science, and may suggest that the reservation regarding kalām shown by such scholars as Malik continued afterwards.

1 One of the oldest titles was given by Abu Hanlfah (d. 150/767), in the second/eighth century, who named it 'Urn al-fiqh al-akbar. Fiqh is a Qur'anic word (9: 122) and this shows the relationship between kalām and fiqh. The adjective al-akbar shows the superiority of matters related to the principles of the faith over practical aspects of the SharVah.

2 Him al-kaldm: this is also one of the oldest names. Ja'far al-Sadiq (d. 148/765), Abu Hanlfah (d. 150/767), Malik (d. 179/795) and Shafi'l (d. 204/819) are said to have given their

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opinions on kalām and the mutakallimunP This title seems to have been the most common and enduring.

3 'Urn usul al-din: another early title which is based on the division of religious knowledge into usul and furu (roots and branches). This title was used by Ash'ari (d. 324/935) in his al-Ibanah 'an usul al-diyanah and by al-Baghdadl (d. 429/1037) in his Usui al-din. The faculties of theology in Al-Azhar University, for instance, are called kulliyyat usul al-din.

4 'Urn al-'aqa'id: a later title, dating perhaps from the fourth/tenth century. This name appears in the works of such writers as al-TahawI
(d._331/942), al-Ghazzall (d. 505/1111), al-TusI (d. 671/1272) and al-ljl (d. 756/1355).

5 'ilm al-nazar wa 'l-istidlal: this was mentioned by Taftazanl in his introduction to Sharh al-'aqa'idal-nasafiyyah. The title used to be given in early kalām books to the first introductory chapter, which discusses proofs and the methodology of 'ilm al-kalām. This can be seen in the Usulal-din of al-Baghdadl (d. 429/1037) and al-Mughnt of Abd al-Jabbar (d. 415/1024). Perhaps because of the importance of the methodology of kalām, the title was applied to the whole science.

6 'ilm al-tawhid wa'l-sifdt: so called probably because of the importance of the Unity and other Attributes of God. This appears in the introduction to Sharh al-'aqa'id al-nasafiyyah by Taftazanl.

7 'ilm al-tawhid: this being the most important article of faith in Islam. This title was used by Muhammad Abduh (d. 1323/ 1905) in his Risalat al-tawhid, and became more common amongst modern theologians.

As 'ilm al-kalām became an independent science, various definitions of this term were introduced; the following definitions, given at different times in the history of kalām, are often quoted. Amongst the earliest is that by Abu Hanifah (d. 150/767), who gave it the name al-fiqh al-akbar and stated: "fiqh in usul al-din is better than fiqh in furu al-ahkam. Fiqh is knowledge of the beliefs and practices which are permitted and which are obligatory in both. What relates to beliefs is called al-fiqh al-akbar and what relates to practices is simply al-fiqh."u Such distinctions influenced later Hanafl theologians such as al-Nasafl (d. 537/1142),[15] and the knowledge involved in both types of fiqh is that which is based on traditional (naqli) or rational ('aqlt) proofs.

Al-Farabl (d. 339/950) makes the distinction between kalām and fiqh and defines kalām in his Ihsa'al-'ulum as: "a science which enables a person to support specific beliefs and actions laid down by the Legislators of the religion and to refute all opinions contradicting them".[16] Al-Baydawl (d. 680/1281) and al-ljl (d. 756/1355) give the definition of kalām as: "a science which enables one to establish religious beliefs, by adducing arguments/proofs and banishing doubts". Ibn Khaldun (d. 807/1404) defines kalām as: "the science that involves arguing with rational proofs in defence of the articles of faith and refuting innovators who deviate from the beliefs of early Muslims and Muslim orthodoxy".[17] In the modern era, Muhammad Abduh (d. 1323/1905) gives the following definition:

The science that studies the Being and Attributes of God, the essential and the possible affirmations about Him, as well as the negations that are necessary to make relating to Him. It deals also with the apostles and the authenticity of their message and
treats of their essential and appropriate qualities and what is incompatibly associated with them.[18]

The earliest stage of kalām in Islam is surely to be found in the Qur'an itself. Kalām in its technical sense involves providing rational proofs to establish the articles of faith. This is, in fact, an essential feature of the way the Qur'an treats theological subjects. In the first verses that were revealed, we read: "Recite, in the name of your Lord, who created, Created man from clots of blood …" (96: 1—5). This shows the power that takes creation from one stage to another; later on the various stages of embryonic development are shown, from the germinal fluids, through the embryo, to the foetus and the infant, adult, degeneration by old age and death, to show that He who can do this can also take a person through the further stage of resurrection after death (22: 5—7, 23: 12—16).

Resurrection is dealt with on many occasions in the Qur'an. The following example has been discussed by the two Muslim philosophers, al-Kindl and Ibn Rushd who analysed the rational basis of the Qur'anic arguments for ressurrection in these verses:

Is man not aware that We created him from a little germ? Yet he is flagrantly contentious. He answers back with arguments, and forgets his own creation. He asks: "Who will give life to rotten bones?"

Say: "He who first brought them into being will give them life again: He has knowledge of every creation; He who gives you from the green tree a fire when you light your own fires with it."

Has He who created the heavens and the earth no power to create their like? That He surely has. He is the all-knowing Creator. When He decrees a thing, He has only to say: "Be," and it is. (36: 77-82)[19]

Without being a book of theology that provides a systematic analysis, the Qur'an dealt with all the issues that were discussed in kalām as fully developed later. Thus al-Qushayrl (d. 465/1072) says, "One is surprised by those who say there is no Him al-kalām in the Qur'an when the verses dealing with al-ahkam al-shar'iyyah are limited, while those that draw attention to principles of the faith far exceed them."[20] Similarly, al-RazI (d. 606/1209), a pre-eminent commentator on the Qur'an and mutakallim$_y$points out that discussion is widespread in the Qur'an on tawhid, prophet-hood and the hereafter. This is because the Prophet had to contend

with all manners of unbelievers, atheists, or those who deny the power and predetermination of God, and those who attributed a partner to God, be it from the celestial spheres, like the stars, or the lower spheres, like the Christians and the pagans, and those who denied prophethood altogether or those who disputed
the prophethood of Muhammad, like the Jews and the Christians, together with those who denied resurrection and so on. The Qur'an discussed the views of such groups, refuted and answered their claims.[21]

Accordingly he states:

Qur'anic verses dealing with al-ahkam al-shar'iyyah are fewer than six hundred, while the rest explain questions of the unity of God, prophethood and refutation of idol-worshippers and various other types of polytheists. … If you examine 'Urn al-kaldm you will find nothing in it other than discussions of these questions and refutations of doubts and counter-arguments.[22]

Likewise, Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728/1327) states that: "The Qur'an has established the principles of the faith, and also their arguments and proofs."[23] Ibn Rushd, a philosopher who wrote on the Qur'anic methods of proving the beliefs of the Islamic faith, states: "The whole Qur'an is an invitation to reflect and draw lessons and directs attention to the methods of reflection."[24]

Discussion on religious matters began very early in Islam. We have seen earlier reference to the Prophet coming out and finding a group of Muslims discussing qadar. In fact the polytheists themselves relied on qadar to justify their stand and the Qur'an directed the Prophet to answer them (6: 148; 16: 35), and although the Prophet did not encourage disputation over such matters as predestination, he answered all questions that were directed to him, unless they went beyond human knowledge, like the time of the Hour of Judgment.[25] On such matters he would direct the questioner to what is more useful. When he was asked by a Companion, "When is the hour of judgment?" he replied, "What have you prepared for it?"

He himself conducted theological discussions with non-Muslims. An example of this is the one he had with the delegation from Najran, headed by their chiefs, al-'Aqib and al-Sayyid. When he requested them to become Muslims and they refused, he commented:

"What prevents you from becoming Muslims is your claim that God had a son and your worship of the cross and eating the flesh of swine." They asked, "If Jesus was not the son of God, whose son is he then?" and they all argued with him about Jesus. He said, "Don't you know that there is no son who does not resemble his father?" They agreed. He asked them, "Don't you know that our Lord is living and does not die, while Jesus' life has come to an end?" They said, "Yes." He said, "Don't you know that our Lord is guardian over everything and protects and sustains living things?" They said, "Yes." "Does Jesus have power over any of this?" They said, "No." He said, "Our Lord has formed Jesus in the womb as He wished, and our Lord does not eat, drink, or excrete." They said "Yes." He said, "Don't you know that Jesus was borne by his mother as a woman bears a child, and she gave birth to him as any woman gives birth to a child. He was fed like a child and he used to feed, drink and excrete?" They said "Yes." So he said, "How could he then be as you claim?" to which they could not give an answer.[26]

Discussions on such matters as qadar, the Attributes of God, the nature of belief and unbelief, eschatology and the fate of sinners, continued during the times of the sahabah (Companions of the Prophet) and the tdbi'un (those who followed them), laying the foundations for the later issues of 'Urn al-kalām. What they refrained from was not the

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discussion of such issues but from going deep into them or forcing the issues.[27]

In order to have a clear picture of the nature of theological discussions in the era of early kalām it would be useful to show it in relation to subsequent eras. We find it suitable to adopt the following scheme in five stages.[28]

1 the beginning, which covers the first and the very early years of the second/eighth century;

2 recording and the emergence of various schools and sects of kalām. This occupies four centuries, approximately from the early years of the second to the end of the fifth/eleventh century;

3 evolution and mingling with philosophy, which lasts from the sixth/twelfth to the ninth/fifteenth century;

4 decadence and imitation, from the tenth/sixteenth to the end of the twelfth/eighteenth century,

5 the modern period, covering the last two centuries.

In the first stage, discussions dealt only with separate issues of kalām where differences of opinion showed themselves as tendencies that did not develop into "schools" until later. It was during the second stage that the various kalām schools emerged with their distinctive features, where all aspects of the science of kalām were discussed and written down.

During the early years of Islam, theological discussions revolved around a number of separate issues. We have seen

that discussion of the question of qadar appeared at the time of the Prophet. When the Prophet died, the problem of khildfah (succession) arose and the fitnah (dissent) at the time of 'Uthman and 'All witnessed the beginning of firaq (sects) with the appearance of the Shl'ah, Kharijites and Murji'ites. The discussions of the last two arose primarily as a result of their understanding of the texts. Some chose to adhere to the literal meaning of texts while others were inclined to ta'wil (interpretation) or taking a middle course.

The influence of the Qur'an on kaldm discussions was due to a number of factors. Firstly, it had discussed all the issues relating to belief in God, prophethood and eschatology, which were to become the main issues of kaldm, supporting its statements with rational arguments. Secondly, it discussed the beliefs and thoughts of other religions such as first paganism, and then Judaism and Christianity. Thirdly, it also called for nazar and tafkir (reflection and thought), making these an obligation in Islam.[29] Fourthly, the Qur'an contains verses known as muhkamdt (in precise language), and these the Qur'an calls "the essence of the Book", and others known as mutashdbihdt (ambiguous). The ta'wil (interpretation) of this latter category – taken in isolation or understood in the light of the former – was one of the distinguishing factors between sects and schools. Kaldm thus originated completely in the Islamic environment and foreign elements came only later as a result of mixing with other nations and also as a result of the translation of Greek texts into Arabic.

The emergence of the Kharijites gave rise to an early major issue of kaldm, namely the status and fate of murtakib al-kabirah: whether committing a grave sin makes a person a kdfir (infidel, to be condemned to Hell fire for ever) or not.

Here we find that the Kharijites take the extreme view of considering such a person as an infidel, interpreting in their own way Qur'anic verses that do not agree with this stand. At the opposite extreme, there were the Murji'ites who considered that sinners are still believers and that action is not part of the faith, to the extent that no sins would harm anyone who is a believer and no good deed would benefit an infidel. Again they based their view on Qur'anic verses that promise a good future for the believers and interpreted other verses that contain warnings and threats to suit this stand. Scholars of the sahabah and tdbiim stood up to both the sects basing their views on combining the two sets of Qur'anic verses, showing that a sinning believer remains a Muslim, and that his or her destiny is left with God, who may pardon him or her or give the deserved punishment, but not eternally in Hell.[30]

As mentioned earlier, during the Prophet's time the question of qadar gave rise to much discussion as to whether people have free will or are under compulsion. This gave rise to two groups. The Qadarites held that people had qudrdh (power) over their actions: some went to the extent of denying the pre-existent knowledge of God in order to remove any compulsion, saying that people perform all their actions without divine assistance. These are the early Qadarites, who should not be confused with the Mu'tazilites who recognized the pre-existent divine knowledge, even though they affirmed people's freedom and responsibility for their actions. The former group includes Ma'bad al-Juhanl (d. 80/699) and Ghaylan of Damascus (d. 150/767). At the opposite extreme of this argument there were the Jabriyyah, who affirmed the divine power and held that one is under compulsion to the extent that God creates

one's actions, good or bad, and one is like a feather in the breeze without any power of one's own. Amongst this group al-Jahm ibn Safwan (d. 128/745) is the most important representative. Some argued that the Umayyads encouraged the Jabriyyah for their own political reasons, but such conjecture is not borne out by the fact that Jahm, as well as Ma'bad, the leader of the Qadarites, rebelled against the Umayyads and were killed by them.

Both the upholders of jabr (compulsion) and tafwid (delegation of action and responsibility to man) relied on certain verses in the Qur'an explaining away others. Scholars of the sahabah and the tabi'un argued against both groups, confirming the pre-existent knowledge of God and negating compulsion at the same time, attributing to man power, will and actions with an attitude which takes the middle course between absolute jabr and absolute tafiuid. Such an explanation was given by Imam All, Ibn 'Umar and al-Hasan ibn All.[31]

Another issue which has resulted from the beginning in much discussion is the question of the Imamate which gave rise in particular to Shi'ism. In the early stage Shi'ism in general meant affection for, and loyalty to, the ahl al-bayt. This was enhanced by the catastrophe they met at the hands of the Umayyad authorities and particularly at the battle of Karbala, in which al-Husayn, the grandson of the Prophet, was killed, along with other members of the family (61/680). As a result of such events, we find armed rebellions by some and the beginning of such doctrines as the Hsmah (infallibility) of the Imams, ghaybah (occultation), raj'ah (return), the mahdiyyah (belief in the coming of the Mahdl as saviour of humanity), and the knowledge of the unseen and esoteric interpretation.

Some members of the family of the Prophet preferred engaging in the pursuit of knowledge and the education of followers rather than in politics, such as All Zayn al-Abidln (d. 114/732), Muhammad ibn All (Ibn al-Hanafiyyah) (d. 81/ 700), al-Baqir (d. 114/732) and Ja'far al-Sadiq (d. 148/765). These figures held a position of spiritual and intellectual imamah, combining the function of spiritual guide and faqih mujtahid. The only exception was Zayd who rebelled against the Umayyads and was killed in 125/742. Extreme views grew at the beginning of the second/eighth century, and were opposed by members of ahl al-bayt themselves such as al-Baqir and al-Sadiq.

In addition to the previously mentioned theological questions, by the time of the early Abbasids, other questions came to the fore such as the createdness or uncreatedness of the Qur'an, the Divine Attributes of the Word and other Attributes in general as regards their existence and connection with the Divine Essence and its Unity. In fact, by this time, all essential themes which were to constitute Him al-kalām had arisen.

As Him al-kalām grew and the different sects and schools appeared, and some mutakallimun began to adopt methods of argument that are
different in style from those of the Qur'an, some began to question whether it was lawful to engage in kalām discussions. When Abu Hanifah forbade his son to engage in debates on kalām, he said to him, "Why do you forbid for me what you engaged in yourself?" To which he replied, "When we engaged in that, we all fell silent, fearing that a speaker might err, whereas you engaged in these discussions, each

one of you wishing his companion to slip and fall into disbelief. Whoever wishes this falls into the same trap."[32]

Some considered it unlawful in view of some hadith that disapproved of it or because of such negative characteristics as the neglect of traditional proofs or the fact that some mutakallimun questioned the faith of opponents or because of the employment of Greek logic. This is seen in the reported disapproval of kalām by the leaders of Sunni schools of law as well as traditionists, such as Ibn Qutaybah and some reservations even by scholars of kalām such as al-Ghazzali in his al-Jam' al-'awamm 'an 'Urn al-kaldm, and then Suyuti in his Sawn al-mantiq wa'l-kaldm 'an fannay al-mantiq wa'l-kaldm.

On the other hand, there were supporters of kalām, some of whom went to the extent of making it an obligation on Muslims, relying on the fact that it supports the creed and stands against doubters and opponents. Al-Ash'ari wrote his treatise entitled Istihsdn al-khawd ft 'Urn al-kaldm, in which he refuted the opposite views and defended_his own. Support came also from many other scholars, including al-Amiri, al-Ghazzall, al-Subkl, Ibn Asakir and al-Bayadi,[33] who argued that the Prophet's objection was to discussions on the Essence of God and those that involve debating with the wrong motives or without knowledge or which would lead to acrimony, since the Qur'an itself is full of verses that deal with theological issues and produce rational arguments for them. The debate was finally resolved by the fact that numerous scholars, throughout the Islamic era, of various schools, came to engage in theological discussion and created this very important science in Islam for which theological

colleges are now well established in the main Sunni and Shi'i centres of learning.

In discussing the various stages and schools of kalām it is important to consider the type of arguments employed and the attitude of the mutakallimun to such arguments. In early kalām both traditional and rational arguments were given due weight. We find at first people like al-Hasan al-Basri, Ja'far al-Sadiq, Abu Hanifah and al-Thawri relying on both, even though the traditional proof comes first for them. When the Mu'tazilites came, they raised the status of 'aql (reason) almost making it equal to naql (tradition), as can be seen from statements of Wasil, who said: "Truth can be known from four sources: the Qur'an, agreed Hadith, rational argument, and ijmaT The rational tendency grew gradually until it gave 'aql a status which is above naql, even if they continued to use
them both, limiting the field in which naql can be used. This tendency reached its peak with Nazzam, but some moderation followed, at least theoretically, especially as witnessed in the works of 'Abd al-Jabbar and his followers who tried to go back to accepting the four sources as did Wasil. However, this equilibrium was practically neutralized by the concept of dawr (circularity in argument): since 'aql is our first means of establishing the truthfulness of the Prophet and the Qur'an, if one later puts naql above 'aql, one is undermining the very means which led to the acceptance of naql.

But this argument would have made better sense if the Qur'an had consisted only of a sacred text to be followed without questioning. However, the verses of the Qur'an are not merely sacred texts but can also be viewed as propositions which come with their rational proofs. Why should we not

rely on the rational proofs that occur in the Qur'an, even when they are seen to be more convincing, closer to the hearts of men, and less inclined to convolution and polemics, than the traditional arguments of kaldm?. Ibn Rushd, for instance, who was above all a philosopher, examined the Qur'anic methods, compared them to those of the mutakallimun and found them to be better, for both scholars and the general masses at the same time.[34] Ibn Taymiyyah also observed that religion consists of issues and proofs, as did Ghazzall and al-Juwaynl.[35]
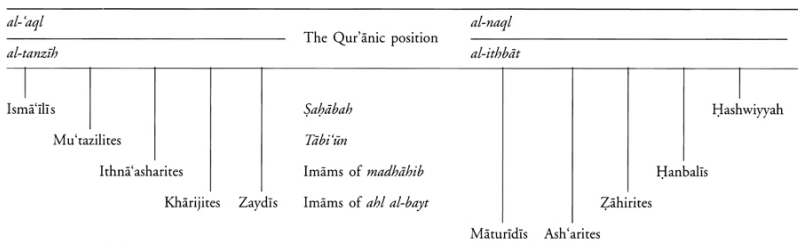
The Ash'arites began by taking a balanced view between naql and 'aql in the days of Ash'arl and BaqillanI, when they stated that there were five ways to knowledge: 'aql, Qur'an, Sunnah, ijma and qiyds. Al-Maturidl again recognized two sources, sani (Qur'an and Sunnah) and 'aql, but the scale tended to favour 'aql, when the concept of dawr infiltrated into Ash'arl kaldm, from al-Juwaynl onwards until it reached its peak with Razl. Al-Amidl tried to return to some balance, as did Abd al-Jabbar, but the concept of dawr had been too deeply rooted.[36] It was such developments that led Ibn Taymiyyah to write his book, al-Muwdfaqah ("harmony") or Dar ta'drud al-'aql wa'l-naql ("Rejection of the conflict between 'aql and naql") in which be criticized the methods of al-Razi, al-Amidl and others who put 'aql before naql.

As already mentioned, the earliest kaldm is to be found in the Qur'an itself which treated theological issues supported by rational proofs. It was chiefly their ways of understanding the Qur'an and the way their views related to the Qur'anic position that differentiated theological sects and schools. The early kaldm was closest to the Qur'anic position which was generally adopted in the discussions of the 'ulamd' of the

sahdbah (Companions of the Prophet); the tdbi'un (those who followed them), and their followers in the first three centuries, the Sunni schools as well as the Imams of ahl al-bayt, and whoever followed their lead without neglect or excess.

Table 1 was devised by H. M. al-Shafi'l,[37] who is a leading authority of our time on kaldm in the Arab world. It shows at a glance how the
Qur'anic middle position compares to other positions. Shafi'l selected ten schools which have their own distinctive features and together expressed various types of thoughts and methods within kaldm, which still survive for the most part to influence the intellectual and religious life of the Muslims up to the present.

Table 1

al-ʿaql						The Qurʾānic position			al-naql			
al-tanzīh									al-ithbāt			
Ismāʿīlīs						Ṣaḥābah						Ḥashwiyyah
	Muʿtazilites					Tābiʿūn						
		Ithnāʾasharites				Imāms of madhāhib				Ḥanbalīs		
			Khārijites	Zaydīs		Imāms of ahl al-bayt					Ẓāhirites	
							Māturīdīs	Ashʿarites				

The Qur'anic viewpoint, which could be called salafi, is placed in the middle, since it is the origin of all the schools of thought and is taken as the criterion against which each is measured. The basis of this horizontal arrangement is twofold: (1) the predominance of ithbat (taking the text at face value) or tashbih (anthropomorphism) on the right hand, and the predominance of tendency to ta 'wil (interpretation) and tanzih (transcendence) on the left hand; (2) tendency to

adhere to naql (proof from tradition) on the right hand and that of adhering to 'aql (rational proof) on the left hand. The diagram thus shows horizontally the extent of nearness or distance from the Qur'anic viewpoint which combines 'aql and naql and also ithbat and tanzih. The length of the vertical lines shows the variations between these vertical groups in their adherence to each of naql, ithbat or 'aql and tanzih. For instance the Zaydls are the nearest to salaf amongst the groups that tend towards 'aql and tanzih, and the least in going deep in that direction, whereas the Ismā'īlīs are the most committed to 'aql and most deeply devoted to philosophy to the extent of ta'til (stripping of all attributes) even though they give this the form of bdtin (esotericism) and ta'wil.

On the right hand side, the Maturidls are nearest to this Qur'anic middle position, followed by others up to the Hashwiyyah, who are at the same time the most committed to naql and ithbat.

The Qur'anic median position is characterized by the following features:

1 It takes the middle course between 'aql and naql, giving the highest authority to revelation, but this does not mean neglect of 'aql since the text of the revelation itself includes rational arguments which conform with it.

2 Lack of excessive ta wil, which is done only in accordance with the rules of the language and the usage of Shan'ah, negating, at the same time, meanings that involve anthropomorphism, thus achieving ithbat without tashbih and tanzih without ta'til.

3 Accepting sound traditional dalil (proofs), beginning with those from the Qur'an, followed by those from ijma then the mutawatir hadith, then accepting ah ad hadith whether sahih or hasan and rejecting the weak and forged hadith.

4 Adherence to the Shari'ah in its totality without raising practical furu to the status of the principles of the faith.

The development of theological terms also reflects the various stages
of development of 'Urn al-kalām. Again, early kalām was closest in Qur'anic terms. In a study on early Islamic theological and juristic terminology[38] I discussed Kitab al-hudud fi'l-usul by Abu'l-Hasan ibn Furak (d. 404/1015),[39] and a number of other works including al-Mubin ft shark ma'ni alfaz al-hukama wa'l-mutakallimun by Sayf al-Dln al-Amidl (d. 631/1233), which give some indication of the development of kalām terminology in their period. By usul Ibn Furak clearly means usul al-din (theology) and usul al-fiqh (jurisprudence). The relationship between the two types of usul was strong from the beginning. Abu Hanlfah's book al-Fiqh al-akbar is on kalām. The term usuliyyun was, moreover, used for scholars of both subjects. A continued tradition of combining the terminology of both subjects was observed even after kalām became strongly connected to philosophy,[40] and Ibn Furak's book is significant for combining the terms of kalām and usul al-fiqh. This was an early phase of kalām (al-kalām al-qadim) before it became connected with philosophy (al-kalām al-jadid). Early scholars such as Ibn Furak and other authors who followed his approach, such as Ibn Taymiyyah, seem to have wished to relate usul al-din to usiil al-fiqh, keeping away from the approach of Greek logic (Ibn Taymiyyah writing a refutation

of the latter), unlike other authors such as al-Ghazzall, al-Razi
and Naslr al-Dln al-Tusi.

The fact that al-Hudud is an example of the early kalām is
confirmed by the introductory terms which deal with al- 'Urn
and al-nazar etc. These are also to be seen in the works of
such early authors on kalām as al-Baqillanl and Abd al-Qahir
al-Baghdadl, whereas later works usually begin with more
philosophical terms like al-wujud wa'l-'adam or al-ashkdl
alar ba'ah, as we see in Tusi's al-Tajrid, or mix the earlier
terms of 'Urn, nazar, etc. with philosophical ones, as did
al-Razi in his Muhassal afkar al-mutaqaddimin
iva'l-muta'akhkhirin. It is, moreover, noticeable that most of
the terms Ibn Furak defined are of Qur'anic origin, e.g. Him
(1), nazar (6), kasb (19), ibtida and iradah (35, 36), rather than
from Greek philosophy. From number 58 to number 100, for
instance, (i.e. forty-three terms) there are only four terms that
can be said to be non-Qur'anic words (70, 73, 77, 90). Thus
Qur'anic words are not less than ninety per cent of the whole.
This contrasts sharply with al-Mubin by al-Amidl where the
percentage is clearly much lower. A comparison between
al-Hudud of Ibn Furak and al-Mubin of al-Amidl (which is on
philosophical and kalām terms) is interesting: the former has
133 definitions, 98 of which are kalām; the latter has 223
definitions. Out of the 98 on kalām in al-Hudud only 26
(twenty per cent) can be found in al-Mubin. Al-Amidl died
230 years after Ibn Furak, and both men were Sunni authors.
Our comparison here may serve as an indication of how far
"the new kalām" moved towards adopting philosophical
terminology.

NOTES

1 In another version yakhtasimun fi — disputing over qadar.

2 He also said, "Man takallama fi al-din bi ra'yihi fa qad ittahamah", meaning, "Whoever discusses religion, relying [solely] on his own opinion, has doubted it."

3 Y. H. Farghal, Nash'at al-ara wa'l-madhahib wa'l-firaq al-kalāmiyyah, 1 (Cairo, 1972): 36, 65; M. Abd al-Raziq, Tamhid Li tarikh al-falsafah al-islamiyyah (Cairo, 1966): 266.

4 Abd al-Raziq, op. cit.: 266-7; Shafi'l, al-Madkhaliladirasat 'ilm al-kalām, (Cairo, 1991): 28-9.

5 Op. cit.: 265.

6 Shark al-'aqaid al-nasafiyyah, ed. Nur Muhammad (Karachi, n.d.): 5.

7 See Shafi'l, op. cit.: 28.

8 M. Cook has summed up these positions in "The Origins of Kalām", Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, 43 (1980): 42-3.

9 See Anfange Muslimischer Theologie (Beirut, 1977): 55-6 (Arabic summary); The Cultural Context of Medieval Learning, ed. J. M. Murdoch and E. Dudley Sylla (Boston, 1975): 89, 105.

10 Op. cit.: 32.

11 As a wife of the Prophet, she is a "Mother of the Faithful".

12 Ibn Abd al-Barl, JdmV bayan al-cilm wa fadluh (Cairo, n.d.): 376-7.

13 See Shafi'l: 26.

14 K. A. al-Bayadl, Isharat al-maram min 'ibarat al-imam (Cairo, 1949): 28-9.

15 See TaftazanI, op. cit.: 4ff; Shafi'l, op. cit.: 15.

16 Fi Ihsa al-'ulum, ed. 'Uthman Amln (Cairo, 1968): 69-70.

17 Op. cit.: 458.

18 The Theology of Unity, trans. I. Musa'ad and K. Cragg (London, I960): 29.

19 See A. Mahmoud, The Creed of Islam, "V. The Resurrection" (London, 1976): 71-2 quoting Rasail al-Kindi alfalsafiyyah, ed. M. A. Abu Rldah; Manahij al-adillah fi 'aqaid al-millah, ed. M. Qasim (Cairo, 1969): 244-5.

20 Al-Bayadl, op. cit.: 36.

21 Al-Tafsir al-kabir, 15 vols, 2.1 (Beirut, 3rd ed., n.d.): 90.

22 Op. cit.: 88ff.

23 Mustafa Abd al-Raziq, op. cit.: 280-1.

24 Op. cit.: 149.

25 See Farghal, op. cit.: 37-43.

26 Ibn Kathlr, Tafsir al-qur'an al-'azim, 1 (Cairo, n.d.): 368; Farghal, op. cit.: 33.

27 Al-Bayadl, op. cip. 33.

28 Shafi'l, op. cit.: 53-4.

29 A. M. al-'Aqqad dedicated a volume to this theme, entitled al-Tafkir faridah isldmiyyah (Cairo, many editions).

30 A. S. Nashshar, Nash at al-fikr al-falsafi fi'l-islam, 1 (Cairo, 1965): 243-6.

31 Shafi'l, op. cit.: 65.

32 See Farghal, op. cit.: 79-87.

33 Shafi'l, op. cit.: 38.

34 See M. Qasim in his introduction to Manahij al-adillah fi 'aqa'id al-millah.

35 Op. cit.:48.

36
Shafi'l, op. cit. 137-61.

37 Op. cit.: 72-5.

38 M. Abdel Haleem, Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, 65(1) (1991): 5-41.

39 The first book on usul terminology to be written by a Sunni author. The first known work on kalām terminology was by Abu Hatim Ahmad ibn Hamdan al-RazI, an Ismā'īlī Shi'i author who died in 322/933, but it is different in that it is not on hudud per se, like Ibn Furak's work, which is still the first of its kind in this respect (op. cit.: 6).

40 Ibn Furak, op. cit.: 9.

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CHAPTER 6

The transmission of Greek philosophy to the Islamic world

Yegane Shayegan

❤❤❖❤❤

The question of the transmission of Greek philosophy and science to the Islamic world covers an extremely vast area: the last centuries of the Hellenistic world, the Sassanian Empire and its specific Christian church, and the Islamic period. In order to understand the question of transmission we cannot avoid referring to the first two cultures which constitute the backbone and the playground of this historical development. We will be concerned with the underlying forces which brought about changes in each period and opened the path for the actual transmission.

The subject of transmission is related to a great number of different academic fields: philosophy, history of philosophy, history of science, Classics, history of the Christian church, both Western and Eastern, Iranian, Syriac and Arabic studies – and the list can go on. The traditional culture which we call late Hellenism was a combination of many elements,

especially many contradictory elements, and in order to understand its transmission we first have to understand it. The comprehension of such a complicated period requires the collaboration of a variety of specialists such as Classicists, Arabists, church historians and researchers on gnosticism, etc. It is a task that can be undertaken only through joint work.

Scholars from different fields are already paying attention to each other's researches. The article of M. Tardieu (1986), a historian of gnosticism, is taken up in detail by I. Hadot (1990: 275—303), a Classicist. After a century and a half of research and studies in various fields many obscure matters still remain in the dark owing to scarcity of sources; for example we are still at odds as to the whereabouts of the last Athenian Neoplatonist philosophers after Justinian's edict of A.D. 529 whereby the
Academy at Athens was closed and its property was confiscated. It is difficult to imagine how philosophers could work in such a situation.

Greek philosophical and scientific thought was pushed eastwards, and the thesis of its transfer from Alexandria to Baghdad held by some medieval Islamic writers is perfectly plausible. However, their thesis should be accepted in general terms and not in detail, since a great number of their statements were based on hearsay transmitted to them in the form of an oral tradition from Nestorians and Jacobites. Oral tradition is not usually chronological and the very fact that information was exchanged in a non-chronological order is indicative of the existence of an oral tradition which E. G. Browne (1921: 114) refers to as "a living tradition".

I see the movement of Greek thought eastwards as based on two underlying forces: the Christianization of the Roman Empire, and the internationalization of the Sassanian Empire.

THE CHRISTIANIZATION OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

The question to be asked is the following: what do we mean by Christianization of the Roman Empire? The Hellenistic world was Christianized at a very slow pace, the process taking more than two hundred years. The Emperor Constantine granted formal toleration in 313 to the Christian religion and in 325 he summoned the first general Council at Nicaea. This latter's duty was to bring about discipline in the disputed Christian doctrine; it was in fact, the first attempt to canonize the Christian church, and many other councils were to follow in order to consolidate a unified doctrine. The pressure always came from the state. However, Christianity was not declared a state religion until the last quarter of the fourth century by the edict of the Emperor Gratian. The transformation of pagan into Christian culture continued well into the sixth century and was more or less ended with the edict of Justinian in 529.

This change, even though gradual, was a qualitative change, one that I shall call epistemic in the sense of change occurring in the general consciousness, and it struck at the very heart of the Western world view. This fundamental change brought about a linear and historical interpretation of time and replaced the cyclical view which had prevailed during the

Hellenistic period. I cannot elaborate this point further here but can point out that Philoponus in his Physics (456.17ff.) rejects the cyclical view and accepts the linear view of time. This change has been underestimated by historians of ideas who emphasize the epistemic change occurring in the seventeenth century with the advent of modern science.

What actually did occur in the change from the Hellenistic to the Christian world view was that all apocryphal interpretations of texts were banned, and this ban was not limited to the Scriptures; it also extended to gnostic texts; and Neoplatonist interpreters of Platonic dialogues did not escape the ban. It was in fact a ban on symbols and myths in exchange for the acceptance of the official dogma. This state of affairs led eventually to the divorce between creative imagination and rational thought which had also been developed by Neoplatonists. This is what I mean by an epistemic change. What could emperors who wished to establish law and order do other than attack disorder? The latter, having been created with the appearance of Christianity, was becoming unacceptable to the state authorities.

Constantine opted for Christianity out of political motives, but the real problem was that Christianity, as E. R. Hayes (1930: 35) suggests, was "in a certain sense a reformed Judaism". When separated from Judaic law it had no legal authority for dealing with regulations as in the case of Judaism and Islam which have the Halakhah and the Shartah respectively. Christianity claimed a Jewish origin as it came for the "salvation of the Jews" (St John, 4: 22). This very fact was a blessing in disguise for the future development of the Western world, but it certainly did not appear so during the

first four centuries of Christianity. Emperors were confronted with great difficulties since the new creed, which had no legal base, led to a great number of free interpretations. These latter problems did not just concern the gnostics but were within the church itself. There was anarchy and a constant struggle between a great number of sects such as Monophysites, Dyophysites, Tritheists and many others. In Alexandria the followers of three different patriarchs fought one another at the same time. The Western part of the Empire did not escape what came to be referred to as heresies. The majority of the bishops in fourth-century Spain were Priscillianists and emphasized the symbolic interpretation of the Trinity.

To resolve this disparity of doctrinal interpretations, the Bible was translated from Greek into Latin by St Jerome in the fourth century A.D. and Roman law was imposed by the state in order to replace the lack of Christian legal authority. Thus, Latin was replacing Greek which had represented early Christianity. As E. Stein (1949: 411) and A. Cameron (1967: 663) remark, Justinian's edict of A.D. 529 gave the monopoly of the study of law to three centres – Rome, Constantinople and Beirut – and banned it from Caesarea, Athens and Alexandria. These two latter were the most important centres for rhetoric. If Roman law was to bridge the gap resulting from the Christian lack of legality, it also had to replace Greek rhetoric, which had played the part of law in Greek pagan culture. In fact it was through rhetoric that people were trained for the bar in Greek culture. Greek rhetoric as a legal discipline received its first blow
at the end of the fourth century A.D. and with the gradual decline of Greek rhetoric the legitimacy of the Greek world was shaken. Since it is law that binds society together, a change in basic legality can affect the very structure of a

society. It is an irony of history, since this very Roman law that was now promulgated in a Christian world had penalized Christianity as a crime deserving death under Emperor Trajan (Lactantius, Instit.$_y$ 5.11, 12).

The fate of philosophers as well as their works followed that of rhetoric. Even before the closure of the Academy of Athens, troubles were already looming on the intellectual horizon of Alexandria. In A.D. 391 an edict was issued by Theodosius I forbidding pagan sacrifices. Groups of monks attacked and destroyed pagan temples in Alexandria. Many pagan scholarchs left Alexandria; among them were Olympius, a philosopher and a priest of the God Serapis, and Helladius and Ammonius, both grammarians and priests, the former of Zeus and the latter of the ape-god. Many had their salaries withdrawn and some were not allowed to teach. A tragic episode was the death of Hypatia, the pagan philosopher, who was lynched by a group of monks in 415 (Cameron (1967): 667-9). In the last quarter of the fifth century A.D., Ammonius (d. c. 517) was the head of the Alexandrian school of Neoplatonism, but there was a great deal of pressure on him exerted by the Christian authorities with respect to his pagan philosophical teachings. In fact he was attacked by two Christian scholarchs, Zacharias Scholasticus and Aeneas of Gaza, because of his doctrine of the eternity of the world.

The Alexandrian school underwent extreme transformations. According to a papyrus of the fifth century A.D. (Maspero (1914): 165-71), there was a Christian association called the Philiponoi whose main occupation was to organize fights against the pagan teachers and students and attack pagan temples. Severus, the future patriarch of Antioch, was a

member of this association. This fact demonstrates that the academic atmosphere was extremely tense. Under these circumstances, it is normal for a man like Ammonius to be forced to sign an agreement with Athanasius II in the 490s. This incident was reported by Damascius (d. c. 538) (Vita Isidori, ft. 316: 251, ed. Zintzen) who is rather harsh on Ammonius and charges him with financial motives. The result of the deal was no doubt financial, for otherwise Ammonius could not have taught since his salary depended on the municipal authorities.

Nevertheless Ammonius had to make some concessions in exchange. What were these concessions? This question was extremely important for it had far-reaching and determining effects on the future of philosophy. Ammonius turned away from Platonic commentaries and concentrated on Aristotle, not just on Aristotle's Organon but also on his Metaphysics. This is a clear indication that Ammonius did in fact make some concessions in exchange for financial gain in the deal with the Patriarch

Athanasius II. It is difficult to imagine how he could have acted otherwise under those circumstances. No commentaries on Plato by Ammonius have reached us, and it is possible that he never wrote any Platonic commentary. None the less, it was strange to have studied under Proclus and to have remained unaffected by the master's zeal for speculative metaphysics. Olympiodorus (b. c. A.D. 495/505, in Gorg., 198.8) reports that Ammonius lectured on the Gorgias, but no mention is made of the dialogues about which Neoplatonists were so keen on writing commentaries such as the Republic, Timaeus and Parmenides.

Ammonius had no other choice but to turn away from Platonic dialogues, which were controversial in their Proclean interpretations and were identified with pagan polytheism (cf. Mahdi, (1967): 234 n. 2 and Saffrey (1954): 400-1). The best possible action was to turn to Aristotle and Neoplatonize Aristotle. A twofold process took place in the Ammonian interpretation of Aristotle. As K. Verrycken (1990: 230) rightly remarks, "the Neoplatonisation of Aristotle's metaphysics is met by a corresponding Aristotelianisation of the Neoplatonic system". The legacy of Ammonius was the harmonization of Plato and Aristotle, a legacy that al-Farabi (d. 339/950) inherited from Ammonius. Simplicius (in Phys., 1360.28—31) refers to Ammonius' aim as that of harmonizing Aristotle with Plato. It is in this Ammonian form that Alexandrian philosophy was transmitted to the Islamic world in general and to al-Farabi in particular.

In order to understand the Alexandrian dilemma the following questions should be asked: what do we mean (1) by the Neoplatonization of Aristotle's metaphysics and (2) by the Aristotelianization of the Neoplatonic system? The former concerns a metaphysical question related to cosmology, and the latter refers to the ontological levels of being. According to Simplicius (in Phys., 1360.24—1363.24, in CaeL, 271. 13-21), Ammonius ascribed to the Aristotelian God not only final causality but also efficient causality. Aristotle's unmoved Mover is the final cause, it is the intelligible (noeton) which moves the intellect (nous) without being moved (Arist., in Metaph., 12.7.1072a26-7, 30-1). There is an ontological problem in Aristotle's explanation. If the unmoved Mover moves, then who bestows existence? For surely, if there is nothing, neither can there be motion. To be must be prior to to be in motion. Simplicius (in Phys.,

1361.31—4) reports that Alexander recognized an efficient causality with respect to heavenly motion but denied it to heavenly substance (in Phys., 1362.11-15). Simplicius (in Phys., 1363.9-10) defends Ammonius by arguing that if something receives its motion from outside it should also receive its existence from outside. This argument seems right out of Avicenna's misunderstood doctrine of the exteriority of existence. Final causality as the principle of motion (Arist., in Phys., 2.6.198a3) alone seems to be ontologically insufficient to Simplicius, Ammonius and Avicenna (Ibn Sina). In their view efficient causality must

also be the principle that brings substance (ousid) into existence (Simplicius, in Phys., 1363.2-8). We find an identical criticism of Aristotle and his commentators by Avicenna (1947: 23.21—24.4) in his commentary on book Lambda of Aristotle's Metaphysics (1072a23-6; Booth (1983): 109). Avicenna argues:

it is absurd to reach the first reality through motion and through the fact that it is a principle of motion and also require it to act as the principle of essences. These people offered nothing other than the proof that it is a mover not that it is a principle of being. I should be [hopelessly] incompetent [were I to admit] that motion should be the means of proving the first reality which is itself the principle of all being. Their turning the first principle into a principle for the motion of the heavenly sphere does not necessarily make it [also] a principle for the substance of the heavenly sphere.

The Avicennan argument, which is similar to that of Simplicius (in Phys., 1363.2-8), is at the very centre of his metaphysics, and his ontology originates from this very question. This demonstrates what transmission is all about

and how ideas are taken up and further developed. Transmission cannot be explained only through geography.

It should be added that the idea of coming to be through efficient causality in Ammonius had no connection with the Christian doctrine of creation ex nihilo. Neoplatonists, like their counterparts the Islamic philosophers, believed in the "eternity" of the world. The harmony of efficient and final causalities or the immanent and the transcendent were probably part of a genuine theory which also served to shield and preserve philosophy from ecclesiastical wrath.

As for the question of the Aristotelianization of the Neoplatonic system, the tripartite division of being was replaced by a gradual and hierarchical chain of being, each level containing both matter and form (Ammonius, in Cat., 35.18-36.4; Verrycken (1990b): 230). It was again in this form that the Aristotelian logico-ontology was transmitted to the Islamic world where it underwent still greater developments in the hands of al-Farabl, Avicenna and other Peripatetics who perpetuated the school's tradition. With Ammonius began a school whose philosophical theories, even though provoked by the persecution of a state-run religion, became very elaborate. In a sense one could say that the revival of Aristotelian exegesis in Islamic philosophy is indirectly indebted to the severity of the state Orthodox church.

After Ammonius the Alexandrian School went through a gradual process of Christianization. In A.D. 529, the very year of the closure of the Athenian Academy, Philoponus (d. c. 570) wrote his well-known treatise De aeternitate mundi contra Proclum, and a little later his

De aeternitate mundi contra Aristotelem which is preserved only in the Arabic version and is reported in De caelo of Simplicius. Philoponus used the occasion of Christian—pagan controversy in order to distance himself from the Neoplatonist doctrine of the eternity of the world. He then wrote theological works in which he held the Monophysite position, such as the Diaetetes (Arbiter) in 552, despite the fact that the Council of Chalcedon in 451 had rejected this doctrine according to which Christ had one nature not two (divine and human, as in the case of Dyophysites or Nestorians). Towards the end of his life in 567 he wrote De trinitate, in which he held a Tritheist view of Christology whereby Father, Son and Spirit were three substances consubstantial in nature. This led to a further split among the anti-Chalcedonians. Philoponus was charged with heresy and was anathematized in A.D. 680, that is, more than a hundred years after his death. As Sorabji (1987: 1) rightly remarks: "This had the ironical result that his ideas were first taken up in the Islamic world, not in Christendom".

Philoponus was greatly appreciated among the Jacobite—Monophysite community of Persia; Ammonius, on the other hand, was preferred among the Nestorians-Dyophysites. The philosophical as well as theological works of Philoponus were translated into Syriac, for example his Arbiter, a Monophysite treatise, was translated into Syriac, and edited by A. Sanda in 1930. But his Tritheist views had no echo in the Eastern world. The case of Philoponus is a clear example that even Christians were not immune from persecution in a state-run religion, that is, when their views were nonconformist or conflicted with the widely held exegesis. This religious state of affairs affected another area, the scientific, and the Western world was deprived of

Philoponus' scientific legacy. His dynamics was taken up by Avicenna, who developed it to such an extent that later it could serve as the foundation and ground for the seventeenth century Scientific Revolution. It passed into the Latin West through the eleventh-century A.D. translations and was carried through and further developed by John Buridan and others (Zimmerman (1987): 121—9; Shayegan (1986): 30-3).

As for his doctrine of the creation of the world, it was taken up by the Islamic theologians who for centuries fought against the philosophers on this issue. Later, their arguments returned to the Western Christian Scholastics. Philoponus should also be held responsible for the important change from the cyclical to the linear world view of time. As Chadwick (1987: 87) points out, "Philoponus dismisses the myth of eternal return and the cycle of unending time (cf. in Phys., 456.17ff). The material cosmos is in continual change. No individual once perished can ever come to live again." This is a crucial point regarding another aspect of the transmission which was taken up by Islamic theologians and produced some interest among the philosophers.

Philoponus was succeeded by Olympiodorus who probably was a pagan, but in order to guard himself against eventual Christian attacks and out of caution declared himself a monotheist (in Gorgiam, 32—3; cf. Westerink (1990): 331).

He was followed by three Christians: Elias, David and Stephanus. Alexandria somehow managed to survive by gradually shedding its pagan features and losing its philosophical vital force.

The fate of Athens, the cradle of Greek philosophy, was not different from that of Alexandria; however, being a private institution it suddenly came to an abrupt end in A.D. 529 by royal decree and its philosophers fled to the Persian Sassanian Empire. In the Western Empire, Boethius could translate only the Aristotelian Organon before his premature death in c. 524. His Orthodox-Catholic exegesis of Christology against Monophysites and Nestorians in Liber contra Eutychen et Nestorium (512) probably did not please the Ostrogoth King Theodoric, who was an Arian (Arianism had affinities with the Monophysite doctrine). The motives for his condemnation can be interpreted as politico-religious, as a Catholic martyr being persecuted by an Arian king (Sharpies (1990): 35).

The Christian doctrinal disagreement and confusions over Christology were not just restricted to the Eastern Empire. These historical elements seem rather confusing, but in reality contributed to the shaping of the destiny of people in the West by mixing the profane with the sacred, the state with religion. They did not have to obey and pay unconditional allegiance to the static, unchanging religious law as did their counterparts in the Islamic world.

The Islamic world inherited Greek thought and science with all its problems. The pagan-Christian controversy was discussed by philosophers and scientists alike such as al-Birunl (d. c. 449/1050), Avicenna (Nasr and Mohaghegh (1973): 13, 5Iff.) and al-Farabl in his lost treatise The Beginnings of Greek Philosophy, reported by Ibn Abl Usaybl'ah in his History of Physicians (cf. Meyerhof (1933): 114). This demonstrates that the recipients were aware of the transmission with all its sociopolitical implications. Al-Farabl, for example, perhaps out of caution and in order

not to undergo the fate of the Athenian and Alexandrian scholarchs, added a section of Islamic law, al-Shari'ah, to his commentary on the Laws of Plato.

THE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF THE SASSANIAN EMPIRE

We now turn to the part played by the Persian Empire in anticipating and preparing the way for the reception of Greek thought in the Islamic world.

In A.D. 529, when Justinian closed the Academy in Athens and confiscated its properties, seven pagan philosophers fled to Persia, to the court of the Sassanian King Chosroes Anushlrvan (d. 578). This must have been in c. 531. According to the historian Agathias, these philosophers were the following: "Damascius the Syrian, Simplicius the Cicilian, Eulamius the Phrygian, Priscianus the Lydian, Hermeias and Diogenes both from Phoenicia, Isidore of Gaza" (cf. Hadot (1990): 278 n. 15). They stayed between one and two years in Persia and settled most probably in Harran. They could not have returned to Athens as recent scholarship has suggested (Tardieu (1986): 1-44; (1987): 40-57; Frantz (1975): 29-38; Sorabji (1983): 199-200).

During their period of stay in Persia they could have envisaged the possibilities of teaching in Persian academies, whether secular and scientific as Jundishapur, Rayshahr or Shiz or Christian like Nisibis, Marv and Ctesiphon. Their decision must have depended on the language employed in these academies for educational purposes. The main language used for instruction was Syriac, even though Greek and Pahlavi were also used for translation of texts, and Persian in scientific centres (Denkard (1911), 1: 4l2.17ff). A Pahlavi post-Sassanian text declares that a great number of scientific and philosophical texts of Greek and Indian origin were incorporated into the Avesta during the reign of Shapur I (A.D. 241-72) (Zaehner (1955): 8). Syriac was the liturgical language of the Persian church later referred to as Nestorian after Nestorius, the patriarch of Constantinople, and also many Zoroastrian Persians who were converted to Christianity used Syriac for religious purposes.

Already during the Achaemenian Empire (558—330 B.C.) Aramaic was used throughout the multilingual territories as the lingua franca of the Empire from the Nile to the Indus. This tradition continued with Syriac during the Sassanian Empire (Panoussi (1968): 244 n. 24). Hajjl Khallfah (1833-58, 1: 69-70) says that the languages used in Persian academies were "Pehlevica …, Persica …, Syriaca" (cf. Chabot (1934): 9). We cannot refer to those who used the Syriac language as Syrians only. They were Assyrians, Chaldeo—Babylonians and Persians as well as Syrians who previously had used Aramaic as their means of communications and were now using Syriac as their liturgical Christian language. Aramaic is used in some parts of the Old Testament, portions of Ezra (4: 8-6, 18) and Daniel (2: 4b-7, 28) and had two main dialects, the Eastern and the Western.

The former spread into the Persian Empire and became Suraye, the name given by Eastern Aramaic writers to their language, which has produced both a pre-Christian and a Christian literature; the latter survived in the mountains of the present Lebanon and only fragments of its literature have been discovered. The Aramaic alphabet was even used for Pahlavi inscriptions of the Parthian Empire (248 B.C.-A.D. 226) and for Sassanian (226—632) inscriptions on rocks.

The transmission of Greek philosophical and scientific thought is more complex than just the coming together of Greek—Islamic civilizations via Nestorians. The Persian element was crucial for the flourishing of such a transmission; as Peters (1968: 42) rightly points out,

the flowering of Greek studies in Islam was something more complex than the mere encounter of the Arabs, newly thrusting from the desert, with Byzantine guardians of the Hellenic legacy. Nor is the question, how did Greek learning pass into Islam? The answer is, simply, through the Nestorians. On all sides there is evidence of an Iranian cultural synthesis which was, in the final analysis, to provide the soil from which Greek sciences were to bloom.

The synthesis of Greco-Persian culture does not only go back to the Seleucid period, but the interaction of these two cultures can be dated from the sixth century before Christ. This issue cannot be discussed here, and I shall limit myself to the statement that relations between the two cultures were close since the Achaemenian period (558 B.C.). It is obvious that after Alexander this mutual influence was felt at all levels of the populations from 330 to 248 B.C. and beyond.

It is generally accepted that the Sassanian monarchs were quite tolerant towards foreign ideas. The questions to be asked are the following: (1) Why were they tolerant to Greek paganism? (2) Why did they show tolerance towards Christianity? These two issues are completely separate and cannot be treated as proceeding from one single background, even though the outcome of both turned out to be the same: that is, tolerance on the religious level facilitated the development of Greek thought on Persian soil. One point, however, should be borne in mind, that Persian religious tolerance and intolerance were both grounded in politics. The persecution of natives such as Mani and Mazdak was a perfect example.

Concerning the first question, as mentioned above, the interaction between the two cultures was a millennium old. We have evidence of a letter of Tansar to the king of Tabaristan published in Persian by Darmesteter (1894: 185-250). Tansar was a herpdtdn herpdt, that is, a high Zoroastrian priest who wrote this letter at the request of Ardeshir (d. 248), the first Sassanian king, to the king of Tabaristan in the north of Persia, inviting him to join the newly united Empire. This letter was originally translated from Pahlavi by Ibn Muqaffa' (102/720-140/756) into Arabic and from Arabic into Persian in 607/1210 by Muhammad ibn al-Isfandyar. Al-Mas'udl (d. 345/956) in his Muruj al-dhahab (1865, 2: 161) mentions this Mobed Tansar and refers to him as belonging to the Platonic sect; he repeats his claim in his al-Tanbih wa'l-ishrdf (1894: 90—100). This seems a good example of Hellenized Magians and
it demonstrates that Neoplatonic influence had already existed in Persia; otherwise it could not be the common concern of the high priesthood. Events in the Seleucid period (330-248

B.C.) must have played a determining part in it, but this must not undermine the fact that Persia was not a cultural desert into which Seleucid kings brought fertility. Alexander burned all the books in Persia; so the Parthians and Sassanians had a hard time reconstructing even the Avestic tradition.

During the Parthian period coins were in the Greek alphabet, but the Parthian kings were concerned with their past; so they started searching for traditional texts which according to Pahlavi writings Alexander had destroyed. The second thorough search came during the reign of the Sassanian King Shapur I (A.D. 241—72). We have the evidence of Denkard (1911, 1: 412.17-21; cf. Chaumont (1988): 85) according to which Shapur I collected religious and scientific texts from other nations, from countries like India and the Byzantine Empire. There was an international atmosphere of learning which was both genuine and politically inclined. It was genuine, since one cannot underestimate the inclinations of a monarch such as Chosroes I for learning. In one of his edicts Chosroes recognizes the rational value of Aristotelian logic as a means of theological investigation, a phenomenon that can also be observed in Philoponus' theological writings and those of Syriac and Islamic theologians. Chosroes declares: "Those who say that it is possible to understand being through the revelation of Religion and also by analogy are to be deemed searchers (after truth)" (Zaehner (1955): 9). Procopius (Anecdote, 18.29) confirms the phiiosophico-theological interest of Chosroes I. Agathias (Hist., 2.2) describes him as possessing knowledge of Plato and Aristotle. Concerning Plato he seems to have known the Timaeus, Phaedo and Gorgias.

As to Aristotle, apart from Agathias' report, we have the evidence of a Syriac manuscript (British Museum, MS 14660) studied by Renan (1852: 311—18) whose title reads: Discourse Composed by Paul the Persian on Aristotle, the Philosophers Logical Works Addressed to the King Chosroes. Reinaud, working on Syriac philosophical manuscripts in the British Museum in the days of Queen Victoria, wrote that the court of Chosroes was "L'asile de la philosophic grecque expirante" (Renan (1852): 311). He added that both philosophers expelled from Greece by the edict of Justinian and Nestorians persecuted by the Orthodox church found refuge in Persia and brought about a great movement of Hellenistic ideas during the sixth century. He further remarked: "C'est assuremment un singulier phenomene que celui dun perse ecrivant en syriaque un traite de philosophic grecque a 1'usage d'un roi barbare".

To answer the second question, that is, the reason for the tolerance of the Sassanians towards Christianity, the answer should be sought in politics. Religious tolerance had always been the modus operandi
of Sassanian politics and was already apparent before them in the Achaemenian tradition of Cyrus (558—530 B.C.) when he conquered Babylonia. In the Babylonian inscriptions it is written that Cyrus regarded the God Marduk and his son Nabi as other names for Ahura Mazda and his son Atarsh (the sacred fire). But the theory is hardly tenable and it is evident that his position is not that of a religious leader but rather that of a wise politician. By liberating the Jews of Babylonia and by obtaining the name of "Shepherd of Jahweh" he further proves his sheer sense of imperial politics (Gray (1908): 70). This policy was followed by his son Cambyses (contrary to the claims of Herodotus, 3.16 and according to an Egyptian

text on an anaophoric statue in the Vatican; Petrie, History of Egypt, 3: 361—2) and Darius I, and became the established policy for the preservation and domination of the diversity of creeds within the Empire.

The Sassanian kings were no exception. Ardeshir, the first king of the Sassanian dynasty, followed the footsteps of Cyrus by perpetuating the perennial assimilation and transformation of myths and symbols of different cultures and religions. In a legendary historical Pahlavi novel, Karndmagh-e Ardeshir-e Pdbhaghdn, Ardeshir pursues the legend of Cyrus. He kills the dragon, Haftanbokht, as the Babylonian God Marduk had killed the monster Tiamat (Christensen (1944): 58. n. 5, 96). Cyrus had started this policy of using myths for political domination, and his legitimate heirs, the Sassanians, emulated him seven centuries later. The idea of having an international empire was the central policy of the Achaemenians, and of the Parthians to a lesser degree.

The Sassanians assimilated what they thought appropriate of Greek culture. The first two Sassanian kings, Ardeshir and Shapur I in the third century A.D., wrote their two first inscriptions on the rocks in Sassanian Pahlavi, Parthian Pahlavi and Greek. This was not entirely due to the availability of cheap Greek labour, as has been suggested, but was done in order to make a political point. However, the Sassanians had acted differently with the Nestorians and Monophysites, since these groups have myths which could not be replaced by those of the Zoroastrians. By refusing to accept the Orthodox doctrine and the laws it implied, Nestorians and Monophysites were left in a precarious legal position. The Sassanian king could only influence the legal

aspect of Christianity in order to make it acceptable to the High Zoroastrian priests and to Persian society at large.

Nestorians and Monophysites were successively losing their support from Constantinople through consecutive synods. The Nestorians lost state legitimacy after the second Synod of Ephesus in A.D. 449. This synod, which was called the Latrocinium or the "Synod of Brigands" by Pope Leo, ended the Cyril of Alexandria and Nestorian controversy which had begun in 428 and resulted in the extirpation of Nestorians. As for
Monophysites, their days were also numbered, and the important Council of Chalcedon in 451 was directed against them as well. Chalcedon marks an important time in Roman church history since the state officially opted for the Orthodox body of the church. The law was implemented in 489 when the Emperor Zeno finally closed the School of Edessa which was called the School of Persians. The Nestorian bishops and their students were expelled and migrated to Persia where they were joined by Barsauma, the patriarch of Nisibis who played a crucial part in the Persian church with the blessing of King Plruz. This event brought a split in Christianity by geographically determining two different Christologies. The Byzantine Empire became the homeland of the Orthodox church while the Sassanian Empire officially recognized Nestorianism.

Barsauma's acute sense of diplomacy was combined with the political shrewdness of Plruz, and the result was a Persianized church whose canons were not issued in Constantinople or Alexandria any more but in Beit Laput (Jundishapur), Ctesiphon and Nisibis. In these councils the vow of celibacy was limited to hermits, and marriage of Catholicoi, bishops

and priests was formally legalized. The legal aspect of Christianity was entrusted to royal decree and Catholicoi were appointed by Sassanian kings. This situation was satisfactory for the Sassanian dynasty, whose fundamental aim was the political integrity of their multinational empire. Modern church historians such as Labourt (1904: 43—7) acknowledge that the persecution of Christians had political causes especially after the establishment of Christianity as a state religion in the fourth-century Byzantine Empire when Persian Christians were not unjustly suspected of high treason.

The post-Chalcedonian era marked a new cultural flourishing in Persia with the closure of the School of Edessa. In addition to theology, the School of Edessa was well known for its Greek learning even by the second century A.D. In fact, it was the first Hellenistic and Syriac centre in the East (Georr (1948): 6). At the beginning the school's interest in Aristotelian logic was purely theological, for it had to explain and defend the Nestorian doctrine (Tkatsch (1928—32), 1: 58a). Edessa was also important for breaking the two churches (the Nestorian and the Orthodox) apart; it is owing to this very fact that Nestorians could freely indulge in Aristotelian translations and commentaries.

The School of Edessa was itself indebted to the School of Caesarea, whose philosophical tradition, however, was not long-lasting. From A.D. 363 in the School of Edessa Aristotle's works and Alexander of Aphrodisias' commentaries were studied. In the fifth century the Ammonian theory concerning harmony between Aristotle and Plato had already reached the shores of Edessa. The translators and commentators of Greek philosophy began

working when Hiba became the head of the school in 435. He had three collaborators: Probus, Mani and Cumi.

When the Emperor Zeno closed the School of Edessa in 489 and the Persian school returned to Persia, it added a new vitality to existing Greek philosophy and science in Persia itself. Nisibis being more restricted to theology, Greek philosophy and science found their way into other Syriac schools such as Marv and Jundishapur. This latter was created by Shapur I (d. c. 272) with the deportation of Roman, Greek and Syrian soldiers after Valerian's defeat. The deportation phenomenon was also a conscious policy of Shapur I for creating a multicultural society (Chaumont (1988): 56-89). All these events contributed to the later development of Greek science and philosophy inherited by the Islamic world.

The conclusion to be drawn is that political conflicts between two ambitious empires played a central role in the decline and resurrection of Greek pagan thought.

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CHAPTER 7

Sunni kalām and theological controversies

James Pavlin

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The issue of kalām is extensive and encompasses many subject matters. Accordingly, the orthodox reaction to kalām is complex and varied. In order to focus on the heart of the orthodox reaction, its methodology and goals, we need to focus on some of the major theological controversies in Islam. In general, these revolve around the nature of God and His Attributes. This topic includes concepts such as God's Speech, which relates to the belief in the uncreatedness of the Qur'an, and God's Will, which relates to the belief in the createdness of the world. An intricate part of these controversies is the methodology used to explain the nature of God. The mutakallimiln believe that the verses of the Qur'an related to God's Attributes need to be interpreted through argument based on logical proofs. This view takes the form of upholding the denial of a reality for the Attributes, as in the case of the Mu'tazilah, or of defending a restricted meaning of them, as in the case of the Ash'ariyyah. The traditionalists, on the other hand, attempt to discredit the use of kalām and to refute many of the conclusions of the Mu'tazilah and the

Ash'ariyyah. In this chapter we shall trace the differing beliefs connected to the Attributes of God in order to understand some of the various issues concerning the opposition to kalām in certain schools of orthodox Islamic thought.

The orthodox scholars of Islam, starting with the Companions of the Prophet, have maintained a belief in the clarity of the Qur'an based on the seventh verse of the third surah. This verse states that the Qur'an contains clear verses of legislation, which the believers follow, and obscure or allegorical verses, which the believers accept without questioning. The verse further states that only those who have deviation in their hearts and desire controversy attempt to interpret these allegorical verses. When we
look at the statements of the earliest orthodox scholars, we see that all information in the Qur'an and in the authentic hadith referring to the Attributes of God fall under the category of obscure or allegorical verses. This belief concerning the Attributes of God was clarified by a statement of Imam Malik ibn Anas (d. 179/795) when he responded to a question concerning how God rises above the Throne. He said that God's rising above the Throne is well known but how it occurs is not understandable, and the belief in it is obligatory, and asking questions about it is innovation (al-Saqa 1988).[1] Although Imam Malik was talking about God being above the Throne, his statement is valid for all of God's Attributes such as Speech, Knowledge, Mercy, Love, Seeing, Hearing or any others mentioned in the Qur'an and Hadith.

Some of the earliest theological controversies in Islam, which form a basis for the development of kalām, revolve around the interpretations of God's Attributes. The Muslim sources

trace these controversies back to Ja'd ibn Dirham and his student, Jahm ibn Safwan (d. 127/745), and to Wasil ibn Ata' (d. 130/748). In the orthodox literature, it is Jahm ibn Safwan who is seen as the actual founder of kalām, and the vague term Jahmiyyah is used to refer to all groups which use kalām. These early arguments included diverse issues such as God's speaking to Moses and the status of All, Mu'awiyah, and their followers, after the arbitration at the battle of Siffin. Eventually, these arguments developed into theological controversies concerning the meaning of tawhid (the oneness of God) and the nature of His Attributes, as well as the meaning of Iman (faith) and the definition of a believer. Although the reasons are not perfectly clear, the terms kalām and mutakallimun came to refer to those who engaged in any form of speculation concerning the Attributes of God.

A major impetus for the use of kalām came as the influence of Greek philosophy and logic made its way into Muslim thinking. As the use of kalām gained momentum during the reign of the Abbasid Caliph al-Ma'mun (d. 220/833), who openly supported the Mu'tazilah, a strong reaction arose amongst the traditional scholars against both the methods of kalām and many of the conclusions reached by the mutakallimun.

In the forefront of this reaction to the interpretation of these allegorical verses, which the orthodox scholars view as a denial of God's Attributes, were the Hadith scholars or traditionalists such as Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal (d. 245/855) and Muhammad ibn Isma'il al-Bukhari (d. 256/870). Ibn Hanbal led the attack against the claim of the Mu'tazilah that the Qur'an was created and not the eternal Attribute of God. Ibn Hanbal relied on the belief that God has an eternal

Attribute of Speech and that the Qur'an was a part of this. His evidence is the verses in the Qur'an which state that God spoke to Moses. His particular argument was that the words of the Qur'an which people utter or write are not

eternal, but that the Qur'an is part of God's eternal Attribute of Speech. This traditionalist attack against the mutakallimun was continued by Imam Ahmad's student, al-Bukharl, who put together what came to be regarded as the most authentic collection of Hadith in Islam.

In his commentary on the final book of al-Bukhari's collection, known as Kitab al-tawhid, Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalanl (d. 852/1456) tells us that one of the main purposes of the book is to refute the claims of the Mu'tazilah by collecting the authentic statements of the Prophet concerning the Attributes of God (al-Bukharl, (n.d.); Ibn Hajar (n.d.)).[2] Thus using verses of the Qur'an and authentic Hadith, the traditional scholars maintained the reality of God's Names and Attributes without questioning how they exist in Him. In this way, a complete picture of the nature of God was formulated. For example, it is confirmed that God has an Essence (Dhdt) and a Self (Nafi), that He has ninety-nine beautiful Names, that He interacts with His creation through actions and words, that He knows all things and wills all things into existence, and that He is beyond comprehension and is only known by the descriptions He has revealed. For the traditionalists, this was accepted based on the prohibition of asking how God's Attributes exist. However, the mutakallimun and the Muslim philosophers continued to speculate about the nature of God's Attributes. To varying degrees, Muslim scholars rose up to defend orthodoxy, and in the process many borrowed arguments from kaldm and philosophy to uphold the reality of the Divine Attributes.

One of the main arguments concerning kaldm revolves around the value of logic as a means of attaining truth. This is exemplified by a celebrated debate, which is reported to have taken place in Baghdad in the early fourth/tenth century, between the Christian logician Abu Bishr Matta bin Yunus (d. 328/940) and the Muslim philologist Abu Sa'ld al-Slrafl (d. 368/979). The heart of the controversy deals with the question of whether logic is a universal tool of expression or an instrument limited to the Greek language (Chejne (1984); Margoliouth (1905)).[3] Many of the traditional scholars maintain that logic is a product of the Greek language and has no place in Arabic nor any value to Islam. This attitude is carried to the extreme conclusion that logic leads to disbelief. This is expressed as whoever practises logic practises heresy (man tamantaqa tazandaqa). On the other hand, a belief was forming that logic is an important instrument or craft which supplies rules for right thinking and could be used in the attainment of truth. One such scholar who sought to use logic as a means to defend orthodox beliefs was Ibn Hazm al-AndalusI (d. 456/1064). Although regarded as a Zahiri and thus severely criticized by other Sunni scholars, Ibn Hazm's views concerning the evolution of sects were quoted by many traditional scholars. For example, Ibn Hajar refers to Ibn Hazm's famous al-Fisdl fi'l mildl wa'l-ahwd' wa'l-nihal in his introduction to al-Bukhari's Kitab al-tawhid. Of particular importance to our discussion is the fact that Ibn Hazm advocated the need for logic but maintained a subservient role for it in relation to revelation.

Firstly, Ibn Hazm claims that the "first sources of all human knowledge are the soundly used senses and the intuitions of reason, combined with a correct understanding of a language" (Hourani 1979).[4] Only when a student is capable of knowing

what is a sound proof as opposed to false argumentation can he or she achieve "the reality of things, and … discern falsehood without a shred of doubt" (Chejne 1984).[5] Now the student can proceed to defend the statements in the Qur'an without reverting to a circular argument. Ibn Hazm argues that one must believe in the revelation but be prepared to make a defence of it based on demonstrative proofs and sound argumentation. But in order to uphold this methodology, Ibn Hazm had to refute the opponents of logic. When confronted with the argument that the earliest generations of the Muslims neither dealt with nor had any need of logic, Ibn Hazm responds by stating that they had direct access to revelation and that their belief was not corrupted by false doctrines. He compares the use of logic with the need of books on grammar and lexicography. When the Arabic language began to be corrupted, the scholars produced books to maintain the purity of Arabic. Likewise, the later Muslims need logic to maintain a proper understanding of God's revelation to the Prophet. Thus for Ibn Hazm logic becomes a tool of revelation.

Ibn Hazm's main task was to refute what he saw as the extremes of the philosophers and the mutakallimun. In this case he had to show that logic could not replace revelation as the means to attaining truth, it could be used only to defend what God has revealed. He does this by maintaining the unique and incomparable nature of God and by rejecting any attempt to assign to God conclusions reached through logic about the perceivable world. For example, if one defines the relation between cause and effect as necessary based on observations in this world, one cannot project this relation on God. To say such things destroys the idea of tawhid because it establishes a necessary relation between God as Creator and His creation. It also infringes on God's absolute autonomy, on

His Will to do what He wants, when He wants. For Ibn Hazm there is an unbridgeable gap between what exists in time as God's creation and the eternality of God. Ibn Hazm refutes the accepted metaphysics of Aristotle as expressed by the Muslim philosophers. God is absolutely incomparable to any created thing. Therefore, one cannot speculate about God nor contradict the truths that He revealed in the Qur'an.

Another controversy which relates to the Attributes of God is the issue of free will. Here Ibn Hazm once again uses logic in defence of traditional positions. He argues against the Mu'tazilite claim that moral and ethical decisions must be based on reason, even at the expense of
statements in the Qur'an. That is, if reason dictates that a particular act is good or bad, then that determination must be valid absolutely, even if it restricts God's actions. But according to Ibn Hazm, the categories of good and bad, reward and punishment, are not necessary and do not confine God's actions. He argues that if God so wills, He could reward evil and punish good. Also, Ibn Hazm claims that left to its own devices, the human emotional soul (nafi) would counsel towards evil, and that there is no salvation through reason alone without the aid of revelation. Thus, in opposition to Mu'tazilite claims, Ibn Hazm holds that humanity is completely in need of God's favour to attain good behaviour and reward, and reason alone will leave us in doubt. Ibn Hazm does not hesitate to state that all things, i.e., each person's destiny, is dependent on God's Mercy. He rejects the Mu'tazilite doctrine of free will based on their interpretation of the Qur'anic verse that good comes from God and evil from humanity (6: 81). Ibn Hazm points out that God first states that all things come from Him. Thus any evil that befalls us comes from God, for "we deserve punishment for

the moral evil that appears to proceed from us as its subject"
(Hourani 1979).[6] God's actions are based on His Wisdom and
Justice which we are simply incapable of understanding.
Concerning the nature of good and evil, Ibn Hazm maintains
the complete autonomy of God and His Will and Power over
all things.

Ibn Hazm attempted to describe and define the human
condition in relation to what God has revealed and what
humanity has thought. For him, it had to occur through the
medium of Islam and logic. His stress on the interdependence
of all knowledge indicates his belief in the unity of all things
under God's Will and Guidance. The revelation of the Qur'an
and the Prophetic Sunnah supplies the guiding principles for
belief and moral behaviour. God tells us who He is, what our
purpose is, and what path we need to follow to return to Him.
Philosophy, that is, the study of the natural world and the
study of logical thinking, supplies us with an understanding of
God's creation and the rational faculties for benefiting from
what God has created. However, Ibn Hazm had an
antagonistic approach towards all of the major religious and
philosophical factions of his time, which led to his isolation in
the community of believers. The strict observance of the
Malikl school in Andalusia, combined with the fact that Ibn
Hazm did not travel outside of Andalusia, facilitated the
censuring of his writings and beliefs. Thus the kind of
synthesis towards which he strove was not realized until
al-Ghazzali (d. 505/1111) formulated similar ideas within the
acceptable limits of Sunni Islam. Yet Ibn Hazm's full
contribution to this intellectual movement is little appreciated
and deserves far more attention.

In contrast to Ibn Hazm, who was confined to the western Islamic lands, al-Ghazzali was an orthodox scholar who operated in the political
and intellectual heart of the Islamic world. After a long spiritual and intellectual voyage through philosophy and mysticism, al-Ghazzall eventually came to accept and defend orthodoxy as understood by the mainstream Ash'aris. Although not as fundamental in their interpretations of God's Attributes as the traditionalists, the Ash'aris defend the reality of the Divine Attributes partly through philosophical argumentation. Thus in order to defend orthodoxy, al-Ghazzall had to refute the Muslim philosophers who had developed a Neoplatonic concept of God as First Cause from which the universe emanates.

Similar to Aristotle's Unmoved Mover, the First Cause or the Uncaused Cause of the Muslim philosophers is seen as the only logical explanation to avoid an infinite regression of causes. Consistent with the idea of a perfect, absolute One which is the cause of all that exists, the Muslim philosophers developed a description of God which coincided with rigid philosophical definitions of what that One must be. This definition of the One began with al-Kindl (d. 259/873) who uses the term the True One (al-wdhid al-haqq) in reference to God. Al-Kindl claims that the True One could bear no multiplicity of any kind in its being and thus is devoid of any attributes. The One's existence is necessary and its perfect oneness is the cause of all that exists in this world. Al-Kindl maintains that the world is temporal and that all motion and time is caused by the True One (al-Kindl (1953); Ivry (1974)).[7] This attitude towards the temporality of the world was changed by the arguments of al-Farabl (d. 338/950), whose main contribution is the theory of emanation ifayd)

(al-Farabl 1985).[8] This step can be considered as a more complete absorption of Neoplatonic thought by the Muslim philosophers. Al-Farabl refers to God as the First Existent (al-mawjiid al-awwal) whose existence is necessary and devoid of any deficiency or multiplicity. He adopts an emanative scheme in which the First Existent causes the existence of an incorporeal Second which then begins to think about its essence and about the First. This produces a Third which continues the process until the existence of the sublunary world comes into being. Al-Farabl is very careful to state that the emanation of the Second and all that follows does not add anything to the First nor detract from it. Finally, Ibn Slna further specifies the philosophers' ideas concerning God by referring to God as the Necessity of Being (tvdjib al-wujud) (Ibn Slna (1981); Hourani (1972)).[9] Ibn Slna contrasts the necessity of existence with the possibility of existence (mumkin al-wujud) to show that the necessity of existence must be uncaused in order to avoid an infinite regression. Besides the now standard belief that the One has no multiplicity of any kind, Ibn Slna further refines the description of God by saying that "his quiddity is his individual nature" (Hourani 1972).[10] He argues that if God's existence were not His only true essence, then His existence would be an accident added to His reality. This contradicts the necessity of His existence

because any accident added to His reality would need a cause. Ibn Slna then developed a theory of emanation based on his concept of the necessity of existence.

Al-Ghazzall needed to criticize and refute these conclusions drawn by the philosophers. In his Tahdfut al-faldsifah, he seeks to defend the more orthodox views of Ash'arism by proving through philosophical demonstration that the beliefs

of the philosophers were not necessary and in fact often contradictory (Kamali (1963); al-Ghazzall, (1965)).[11] In his very lengthy first chapter on the question of the eternity or temporality of the world, al-Ghazzall offers many examples and arguments to support the view that the creation of the world in time is logical and reasonable. He argues that, by establishing the criteria which one must use for the terms and definitions concerning the discussion about the nature of God, philosophers are able to prove their opponents wrong because they are not working within the limits of accepted premises and axioms. This becomes clear when we look at one of al-Ghazzall's refutations of Ibn Slna concerning the creation of the world in time.

Al-Ghazzall accepted the necessity of God as the First Cause because an infinite regression is logically impossible. However, he claims that the necessity of God's existence as First Cause does not mean that His function as First Cause is necessarily eternal. Instead, he proposes that God possesses a Divine Will that is identical to His Essence. By means of this Will He was able to initiate the creation whenever He chose. The philosophers argue that a will and its object must necessarily exist together and that a separation between the wilier and the existence of its object necessitates a new determinant to the wilier which enables him or her to bring the object into existence at that specified time. In reference to God, this meant that He is not perfect in His Will but needs a new Attribute to achieve what He wills. This, of course, is intrinsically impossible. Al-Ghazzall points out that the philosophers are inconsistent in their use of definitions and terms concerning the nature of God and adds that they are equating God's Divine Will with human will. Their arguments apply only to human will, for God cannot be

compared to anything else, according to their own statements. As proof he points to their discussions about Divine Knowledge. They claim that God knows the universals without the existence of any plurality in His Knowledge. Yet, if one compares God's Knowledge with human knowledge, then one must say that plurality exists in God as it does in humans. The philosophers avoid this analogy by saying Divine Knowledge cannot be conceived in terms of temporal knowledge. Al-Ghazzall maintains that if God's Knowledge is unique then so must be His Will (Kamali 1963).[12] Thus, by changing the focus of the debate, al-Ghazzall is able to show the inconsistencies in the arguments of the philosophers.

Al-Ghazzall continues with this form of argumentation concerning God's knowledge of particulars. The philosophers reject the idea that God knows every individual thing for two reasons. Firstly, to know an individual thing means perceiving its specific qualities through sense perception. Since these attributes are not part of God's Essence, He could not perceive individuals. Secondly, the process of the knower knowing the known indicates multiplicity in actions and in the number of things known. Again, it could only be said that God is the One in which there is no plurality. Any hint of God acquiring something to His being through a dependent relation with what is other than Him has to be rejected. Thus Ibn Sina's theory of God's knowledge of particulars poses some difficult problems in that he seems to attempt a compromise between the philosophical and theological viewpoints on this topic. Perhaps in an attempt to placate the orthodox theologians, Ibn Slna uses a verse from the Qur'an to show that God knows all things, even the weight of an atom (Ibn Slna (1960); Marmura (1962)).[13] However, he qualifies this by saying that God knows the particulars in a

universal way. He expresses this with two phrases: God knows the particulars "in as much as they are universal" or "in a universal way" (Marmura 1962).[14] His explanation of these two phrases is based on the assumption that God is pure intellect. Thus the epistemological process which occurs in humans not only does not apply to God but is in fact completely reversed in Him.

Before he begins his criticism of Ibn Sina's theory, al-Ghazzall summarizes the orthodox view concerning the nature of God. He states that the Muslims consider the world to be temporal, only God and His Attributes are eternal and everything other than Him was created by Him through His Will. Thus everything is necessarily known to Him because the object of the will must be known to the wilier. Once it is confirmed that He is the knowing Wilier, then it must be accepted that He is necessarily living, for every living being knows other than itself. Thus in this way the Muslims know that God knows the universe because He created it through His Will (al-Ghazzall (1965); Kamali (1963)).[15] But the philosophers can have no such certainty because of their belief in the eternity of the world. Thus al-Ghazzall challenges them to prove that God can know other than Himself while remaining consistent with their assumptions.

In his criticism of Ibn Slna, al-Ghazzall focuses on the issue of God's Will and Knowledge. He claims that if Ibn Slna remains faithful to his belief that God has no will and that emanation is a necessary act, then he would have to accept that God has no knowledge of the other. Al-Ghazzall bases his claim on the argument that knowledge of an action is necessary only in the case of voluntary actions (al-Ghazzall (1965); Kamali (1963)).[16] So if one claims that the universe

necessarily emanates from God without His Will or Choice, as light comes from the sun, then

it requires no knowledge on the part of God. Al-Ghazzall similarly rejects the claim that because God's Knowledge is His Essence it is the cause of all that exists, thus indicating that God knows the effects of which He is the cause. Again he states that Ibn Slna is being inconsistent with the beliefs of other philosophers and with what he himself claims about the emanation of the universe. Even if it is granted that God knows what He is the cause of, all philosophers agree that His Act is one and from Him comes only one, i.e., the First Intelligence. All else flows from the First Intelligence and only indirectly comes from God through intermediaries. It is not necessary that God knows other than the First Intelligence. If the emanation is a necessary act, then knowledge of the effects is not required by God (al-Ghazzall (1965), Kamali (1963)).[17] Even for a voluntary act knowledge is needed only for the first movement, not for the indirect effects. According to al-Ghazzall, all of the demonstrations and proofs presented by the philosophers are based on unprovable premises. A general theory must first be adopted, and then one can present proofs. However, all the terms must be clearly defined in order for the demonstrations to work. The internal logic of a system is not in itself proof of the correctness of that system. Muslim philosophers adopted the theories and definitions from the Greek philosophers and then attempted to mould Islamic beliefs into a Greek philosophical framework. Al-Ghazzall accepted the basic tenets of orthodox Islamic beliefs and then showed that these beliefs cannot be disproved philosophically.

Ibn Hazm and al-Ghazzall made conscious attempts to use logical argumentation to defend orthodox beliefs. In the

process, however, they drifted away from the traditionalist approach towards discussing the Attributes of God. For the Hadith scholars, the issue was far more fundamental: Revelation is supreme, and reason must be subjugated to it. In opposition to the arguments of al-Ghazzall and others, traditionalists continued to argue for the complete acceptence of God's revelation without resorting to any form of kaldm. However, even the traditionalists were developing more sophisticated arguments to support their basic belief in the attributes without questioning how they exist. Two scholars of the later classical period of Islam deserve our attention for their rigorous defence of traditionalism. They are Muwaffaq al-Din ibn Qudamah (d. 620/1223) and TaqI al-Din ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728/1328). Although each approached the topic of kaldm and the Attributes of God from a common Hanbalite backround, we shall focus on specific aspects of each to form an overall view of the traditionalists' beliefs.

In his famous refutation of kaldm$_y$ Tahrim al-nazar ft kutub ahl al-kaldm (translated as the Censure of Speculative Theology), Ibn Qudamah lists nine points why kaldm must be avoided (Ibn Qudamah 1962).[18] Firstly, he starts with the seventh verse of the third surah and states that
God links the follower of allegorical interpretation (ta'wil) with those who seek trouble and go astray. Thus God has made such interpretations unlawful. Ibn Qudamah takes this to be a prohibition against kalām., for he relates kalām to ta'wil. His second point continues in this line of prohibition by stating that if allegorical interpretation were allowable, then the Prophet would have prescribed it. But it is well known that the Prophet never engaged in it, and if it were of benefit to the Muslims he would have mentioned it. The prohibition continues in his third point in which ibn Qudamah

states that the pious predecessors of the Muslim ummah regarded these Qur'anic verses without allegorical interpretation and without divesting God of His Attributes. This refers to the fact that, if ta 'wil were of any benefit, the Companions of the Prophet would have surely spoken of it. Skipping to his fifth point, which fits in with the general prohibitions, we must mention that Ibn Qudamah states that kalām is an innovation (bid'ah) and is thus opposed to the Sunnah of the Prophet. Here he quotes some well-known hadlth about remaining faithful to the Prophet's Sunnah. In the remaining points, Ibn Qudamah attempts to give reasons for this prohibition based on other verses of the Qur'an and examples from the Sunnah.

Ibn Qudamah's fourth point states that kalām is tantamount to passing judgment on God in matters that the interpreter does not know. The mutakallimun cannot possibly know what God intends by these verses. Even if the language admits of one meaning, it does not necessarily limit it to that meaning alone. Thus the interpreter might choose a meaning which God does not intend and would thus be speaking of God out of ignorance, which God has forbidden in silrah 7: 33. His sixth point is that allegorical interpretation is mere foolishness and meddlesomeness that has no practical results. According to him, a Muslim has no need to know the true meaning of God's Attributes for no course of action or rule of law is dependent on them. God has enjoined belief in His angels, His books and His prophets, but the details of these matters are not known. Thus we should simply believe in what has been revealed (2: 136) and not be immoderate and meddlesome (38: 86). Ibn Qudamah's seventh point is similar in that he says it is mere arrogance to permit oneself to speak falsely of God. He explains that if allegorical interpretation

were obligatory, it would be so for every Muslim even if one does not understand the proofs for it. Thus people would have to speak out of ignorance on the topic of God's Attributes, which we know is forbidden. By insisting on the use of kalām, the mutakallimun would have people speaking out of ignorance. His eighth point is that kalām is the use of ijtihad (private opinion) concerning the unknown matters in the Qur'an and Sunnah; and this is not allowable even if one happens to be correct. Ibn Qudamah states that Abu Bakr even refused to comment on the term abba (herbage) in surah 80: 31 because he did not want

to say something about the Book of God which he did not know. And finally in his ninth point, Ibn Qudamah states that the mutakallimun are guilty of attributing to God what He has not attributed to Himself and denying Him what He has attributed to Himself. This they do when they say that one Attribute actually means something else. For example, they say that istawd does not mean "raised above" (the Throne) but that it means istawld ("gained mastery over").

In this review of Ibn Qudamah's arguments against kaldm, we see a fairly well developed summary of the traditionalist opposition to the mutakallimun. It can be classified as a negative argument because it focuses on the outright prohibition against kaldm without speaking directly about the Attributes of God. In the case of Ibn Taymiyyah, we shall see how he approaches the discussion of God's Attributes in a positive argument. He explains how they are properly understood within the boundaries of the Arabic language and within the guidelines of the Qur'an and Sunnah.

Ibn Taymiyyah starts with the basic points established by Ibn Qudamah but views them as complete and sufficient to

explain the nature of God's Attributes. That is, he understands the Qur'an and Sunnah to contain all that one needs to know about God and to explain His Attributes plainly and clearly without resorting to any type of philosophical argument. He does not view the issue of the Attributes of God as a separate theological problem but rather includes it in his overall approach to understanding the Qur'an. Thus he deals with this issue in a treatise entitled Muqaddimat al-tafsir ("Introduction to Qur'anic Explanation") as a problem of applying the proper methodology of understanding the Qur'an (Ibn Taymiyyah 1966).[19] The basis of Ibn Taymiyyah's approach to the tafsir (explanation) of any verse in the Qur'an is to refer to other verses and to authentic hadith. Using surah 16: 44, in which God states that the Prophet was sent to explain clearly (tubayyin) what was revealed to people, Ibn Taymiyyah asserts that the Prophet explained the meanings of the Qur'an and its terms. That is, in order to fulfil his mission as prophet and messenger, the Prophet had to clarify all the proper and allowable meanings of the Qur'an and not hold back any information. Thus there is no secret or hidden knowledge for an elite group such as the philosophers. In order to explain God's Attributes, one has to turn to the Qur'an and understand its language.

According to Ibn Taymiyyah, the first thing one should know is that God makes use of synonyms to explain one thing by applying various names to it. This is how one must understand the beautiful Names of God mentioned in the Qur'an. Just as there are various names for the Prophet and for the Qur'an, there are various Names for God. Ibn Taymiyyah states that if one supplicates by use of one of God's Names this is not in opposition to a supplication

through another of His Names. As proof he quotes surah 17: 110 which states: "Say! Invoke God or invoke the Most-Merciful [al-Rahman], whichever you invoke, it is He who has the most beautiful names." From this Ibn Taymiyyah concludes that each Name of God indicates one and the same Essence. That is, whichever name God uses in the Qur'an refers to Him. Then he states that each Name indicates an Attribute included in that Name. Thus, for example, the Name All-Knowing refers to Essence and Knowledge, All-Powerful refers to Essence and Power, and All-Merciful refers to Essence and Mercy. In this way Ibn Taymiyyah links all of God's Names and their respective Attributes to one and the same essence. As a counterargument he points out the inherent contradiction of those who deny that His Names are an indication of His Attributes. He quotes as an example those who say that God is not living and He is not without life. Now resorting to logic, Ibn Taymiyyah states that they are negating both terms of a contradiction. Thus, he claims, it is a matter of necessity that each name refers to God's Essence and to one of His Attributes.

To prove this point, Ibn Taymiyyah uses other examples to show that one essence can have various names and attributes. The first example is based on surah 20: 123: "whoever turns away from My remembrance [man a'rad 'an dhiknY'. He states that remembrance (dhikr) could refer either to what God has revealed or to what a worshipper does by way of prayer and supplication. Taken in the context of the whole verse, dhikr becomes a synonym for God's guidance and revelation. Thus the essence is all that God revealed and the names and attributes are remembrance and guidance. In other words, the Essence of what God has revealed can be referred

to as God's remembrance, His guidance, His book or His word; each term referring to one and the same Essence.

Returning to the immediate issue of God's Attributes, Ibn Taymiyyah states that whoever is questioning a particular Attribute in a Name should realize that it corresponds to a denotation of the specifically named thing; that is, Names of God such as the Holy One, Peace and the Upholder of Faith, are synonyms for God. They are Names referring to God's one Essence and to Attributes of that Essence. As for probing into the meaning of the nature of a particular Attribute, Ibn Taymiyyah relies on the methods of the traditionalists. Referring to the Companions of the Prophet and the earlier generations of Muslims, he states that none of them explained an Attribute by indicating the Essence of it, even if it is an Attribute unlike any other. Thus the Holy One is the Forgiving One and the Merciful One, i.e., they are one and the same thing.

In his discussion of God's Attributes, Ibn Taymiyyah attempts to give greater depth of explanation to the traditionalist view of the nature of God. His main tool for this is the Arabic language. He sees Arabic as the unique vehicle of revelation, and thus all of its nuances must be understand properly and clearly. In addition to the Arabic language itself, one must read and understand the verses of the Qur'an within their
natural setting, i.e., the Qur'an must be interpreted by the Qur'an. The examples, parables and linguistic usages of the Qur'an must be analysed for their rules and principles, which in turn must be applied in a consistent and uniform manner. In this way, Ibn Taymiyyah does not reject the rational faculties

of the mind ('aql), but uses them in submission to revelation in order to explain revelation.

NOTES

1 Ahmad HijazI al-Saqa, in his introduction to Ibn Taymiyyah Sihhah usul madhhab ahl al-madinah (Cairo, 1988).

2 Al-Bukharl (n.d.); Ibn Hajar (n.d.).

3 Chejne (1984): 60. A translation of the debate appears in Margoliouth (1905).

4 Hourani (1979): 143.

5 Chejne (1984): 62.

6 Hourani (1979): 150.

7 Ya'qub ibn Ishaq al-Kindl, "Fl al-falsafat al-ula", in Rasa'il al-Kindi al-falsafiyyah, ed. M. A. Abu Rldah (Cairo, 1953): 98-126; Ivry (1974).

8 Al-Farabl (1985): 89.

9 Ibn Slna (1981): 16; Hourani (1972): 77.

10 Hourani (1972): 78.

11 Kamali (1963); Al-Ghazzall (1965).

12 Kamali (1963): 19-20.

13 Ibn Slna (1960): 359; Marmura (1962): 304; Qur'an, 10: 61; 34: 3.

14 Marmura (1962): 300.

15 Tahafut al-falasifah, p. 198; Kamali (1963): 143.

16 Tahafut al-falasifah, p. 200; Kamali (1963): 146.

17 Tahafut al-falasifah, p. 201; Kamali (1963): 147.

18 Ibn Qudamah (1962): 20-3.

19 Ibn Taymiyyah (1966): 329-76.

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CHAPTER 8

Twelve-Imām Shi'ite theological and philosophical thought

Abbas Muhajirani

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TWELVE-IMĀM SHĪ'AH MUSLIMS

The term shi'ah is not an invented or a new one. It has been mentioned in the Qur'an in four places. Two of them (28: 15; 37: 83) are:

so he found therein two men fighting, one being of his party [shi'ah] and the other of his foes, and he who was of his party cried out to him for help against him who was of his enemies.

of his persuasion verily was Abraham.

According to the dictionary, the word shi'ah in its plural form means: followers, partisans, a group of people showing

unanimity over an issue or a faith which they support and defend. Soon, however, the term became synonymous with the followers of Imam All ibn Abl Talib. "This word has taken the connotation of the partisans of the Commander of the Faithful (All) by way of following and belief in his Imamate after the Messenger without separation, and non-recognition of his predecessors who assumed the office of caliphate (vice-gerency and successorship)" (Shaykh al-Mufld, 1993a). In his Muqaddimah, Ibn Khaldun gives this definition:

According to jurists and speculative theologians, both contemporary and past, shi'ah is a term that describes the followers of All, his sons (May Allah be pleased with them) and their school of thought [madhhah]. They [followers of Imam All] are unanimous in this regard that the Imamate is not a public office which can
be left to the discretion of the ummah [Muslim community], i.e., it is not a matter for them to choose who will become Imam. It is the pillar of religion and the foundation of Islam. It is not within the prerogative of an Apostle to neglect it or delegate [the responsibility] of choosing the Imam to the ummah. It is a must that he [the Prophet] appoint the Imam, who should be infallible and morally perfect.

(1958: 196)

Quoting from al-Zinah, a work by Abu Hatim Sahl ibn Muhammad al-Sijistani (d. 206/820), Hajjl Khallfah, in his book Kashf al-zunun, has written the following:

During the lifetime of the Messenger of God, the term "sbi'ab" was the title of four of the Companions: Salman

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al-FarsI, Abu Dharr al-Ghifarl, al-Miqdad ibn Amr, and Ammar ibn Yasir. After the Prophet Muhammad's death, a number of distinguished Companions rallied around All ibn Abi Talib and were identified with him. [Also,] a group of muhdjirun (Meccans) and ansdr (Madanites) from among the Companions did not come forward to pledge allegiance to Abu Bakr. They sided with All ibn Abi Talib. Among them were: al-Abbas ibn Abd al-Muttalib, al-Fadl ibn al-Abbas, al-Zubayr ibn al Awwam, Khalid ibn Sa'ld, al-Miqdad ibn Amr, Salman al-FarsI, and Abu Dharr al-Ghifari.

(al-Ya'qubl, Tarikh, 2: 124)

Those Companions and others who followed in their footsteps believed that the Imamate was an extension of prophethood, and that All was the most knowledgeable authority, among the Companions, concerning the Qur'an and the ways of righteousness. Thus, they resorted to All for guidance in matters of religion which needed a ruling or interpretation. They heard the Prophet say in favour of All: "I am the city of knowledge, and All is its gate. And I am the house of wisdom and All is its door (on the authority of al-Hakim in al-Mustadrak, al-Tabaranl in al-Kabir, and Abu Nu'aym in al-Hilyah)."

ISLAMIC PHILOSOPHICAL MOVEMENTS

It was expected that Muslims would take to philosophical and intellectual reasoning during the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.s.)[1], for the seed of philosophical reasoning in the universal sense of the term was sown in the Noble Qur'an and nurtured by the Blessed Prophet through his sayings and general guidance. In the Qur'an there is a plethora of verses dealing with and urging human beings to ponder the creation
of humanity, the universe, the heavens and the earth, and view the phenomena of existence with a critical mind and understanding in order to reach satisfaction as to the wisdom of the Almighty. (See for example verses 16: 164; 3: 190; and 4: 53.) Also, in other verses the command is not to follow doubt in matters of faith, urging people to pursue knowledge and that which will make them firm in belief (17: 36.) On the authority of exegetes, it has been related that when the last ten verses of chapter 3, al-'Imrdn, were revealed, the Prophet recited them and said, "Lo! to him who read them and did not ponder them."

As a consequence of the encouragement of intellection and reasoning, and the pursuit of knowledge in matters relating to faith and the universe, there have sprung up many denominations, sects and schools of thought in Islam. This is so not only in matters of faith but also in religious rituals and

norms of worship. However, there have not been great differences in rulings on prayer, fasting, pilgrimage and other ritual practices of the faith. This is clearly manifested in the way Muslims, irrespective of their persuasions, and despite the lapse of fourteen centuries since the advent of Islam, go about all these acts of worship and devotion in almost the same way.

It is worth noting that, during his lifetime, Muhammad (s.a.w.a.s) told his Companions on more than one occasion that differences among his followers were inevitable. His famous reference to the Muslims dividing into more than seventy groups will suffice in this respect. He said, "My ummah [Muslim community] will divide into seventy-three denominations."

Right from the outset of intellectual and juridical dispute, the Shf ah sided with All and after him with his sons. In their opinion, the evidence for favouring All is overwhelming, not least because of the numerous prophetic traditions urging the following of All. Of the many hadith, the following one is unequivocal: "The parallel of my household is that of the Ark of Noah. He who got on board was delivered and he who lagged behind was drowned." Many of the leaders and those who dabble in religion have done so without knowledge, but rather through speculation and doubt. In order to attain firm belief and conclusive conviction, therefore, it is imperative to resort to those who have acquired knowledge in religion and the ways of spiritual prosperity. Once when Imam Muhammad al-Baqir was asked about the meaning of the verse, "Then let man look to his food" (80: 24), he said, "It is his knowledge and where he acquired it from" (al-Kulyanl (n.d.), 1:5).

SHI'ITE INTELLECTUAL PROWESS

The intellectual and gnostic aspects of the personality of Imam All had a great impact on the formation of Shi'ite intellectual and philosophical thought and their openness to intellectual discourse. As evidence of this unique quality of the Imam, one needs not go further than the collections of his sermons, letters and sayings which were compiled by al-Sharif al-Radl (d. 406/1015) entitled Nahj al-balaghah ("Path of Eloquence"). The book has been commented on and annotated by many writers and 'ulama both of bygone generations and contemporary ones. Shaykh Muhammad Abduh (d. 1905), the former Rector of al-Azhar and a towering figure of reform and modernity in Islam, was one of those textual editors and critics who wrote a commentary on it. Describing his state of mind when he was reading it, he wrote in his introduction (Nahj al-balaghah: 4),

Sometimes I used to see that a luminous intellect, unlike human bodily creation, was detached from the Divine … and supplanted in the human spirit. Thus, the darkness of nature was plucked off and it was raised to the realm of the aura of the Most Brilliant Light.

The influence of All and his philosophical heritage was vouchsafed only to be manifested in the Imams of his descent, especially at the hands of three of them, namely: Imam Muhammad al-Baqir (d. 115/732), Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (d. 148/765) and Imam All al-Rida (d. 203/818), who taught their disciples free philosophical debate, polemics, wisdom and

goodly exhortation. However, the ruling establishments, which were anti-Shl'ah in the main, did their best to conceal Shi'ite philosophical and scientific achievements for centuries.

IMāMITE FUNDAMENTALS OF RELIGION

The basis of religion is that part of belief which deals with the doctrinal aspects of the tenets of Islam. Discernment and proof are central parts of reaching a firm belief, and it is not acceptable to emulate others, without a proof, in this matter. It is incumbent on every Muslim to seek knowledge leading to a firm conviction, albeit through a simple proof. Al-ShahrastanI (1975, 1: 51) has said:

Religion is divided into two categories: knowledge and obedience. Knowledge is the origin and obedience is the branch. Origins or fundamentals are the subject of kalām science (speculative theology.) The branches are the domain of jurisprudence. Some
scholars have said: Everything that is logical (or rational) and can be proven to be so through pondering and deduction is of the fundamentals. And everything that is opined through analogy and theological legal judgement is of the branches.

According to Imamite Shi'ite Muslims, the fundamentals of religion are five: Oneness of God, Justice, Prophethood,

Imamate and Day of Judgment. These five fundamentals are of a philosophical and speculative or theological nature.

As for the theologians, the Ash'arites do not consider Justice and Imamate as part of the fundamentals of religion. The Mu'tazilites do not recognize the Imamate as one of the fundamentals. It is in fact grossly inaccurate to equate the ImamI Shl'ah and the Mu'tazilites as one denomination. More than one of the 'ulama has discussed the differences between the two, among them being Shaykh al-Mufld (d. 1022/1614) in his book Awail al-maqdl. According to the Mu'tazilites, the fundamentals of religion are Oneness of God, Justice, Reward and Punishment, the station between the two stations and enjoining good and forbidding evil.

PROMISE AND THREAT AND THE POSITION BETWEEN THE TWO STATIONS

It is worth pondering these two phrases in order to know what they really mean. In his book al-Intisdr, Abu'l-Hasan al-Khayyat says: "No one can warrant to be called a Mu'tazilite unless he believes in the five fundamentals: Oneness of God, Divine Justice, Promise and Threat, the Position between the Two Stations, and Enjoining Good and Forbidding Evil." The Ash'arites say:

No one from among those setting their face towards Mecca [i.e. Muslims] can be rendered an unbeliever for a sin he committed even though it be a cardinal one such as fornication/adultery. Neither is a sinner of this sort condemned to fire, nor is an obedient monotheist sent to paradise. It is up to Allah to send them wherever He likes. If He wills it, He may chastise or forgive them. As the reports from the Messenger of God have it, Allah will extricate a group of monotheists from hell fire. We have no right to maintain that it is incumbent on Allah to reward the pious and punish the transgressor. Rather it is all in His Hands. If He so wishes, He will have mercy on them and enter them into paradise or condemn them to hell fire.

(Al-Ash'arl (1980): 279)

However, the Mu'tazilites maintain:

Threats shall definitely be carried out. The transgressor will be punished. No one will be exempt; that is in compliance with the reports from the Creator. For when the source of reports is Allah, and especially when they are of a general nature such as, "And most surely the wicked are in burning fire (82: 14), so he who has done an atom's weight of good shall see it. And he who has done an atom's weight of evil shall see it (7: 99)." It is inconceivable not to treat such reports as applicable to all who fall within such a category.

(Al-Ash'arl (1980): 279)

The meaning, therefore, of promise and threat is the duty of rewarding the pious as Allah has promised and the necessity of punishing the transgressors as Allah has threatened.

As for "the position between the two stations", the first to espouse it was Wasil ibn Ata'. He maintained that one who has committed a major sin is neither a believer nor an unbeliever; rather in the middle ground between faith and unbelief:

Those who say prayers [the faithful] and commit major sins are labelled as such by a number of people [proponents of schools of thought]. The Kharijites used to charge them with unbelief and polytheism. The Murji'ites hold that they are believers. The followers of al-Hasan [al-Basri – the Ash'arites] level the charge of hypocrisy against them. Wasil, however, holds that they are godless [i.e.] neither believers, nor unbelievers or hypocrites.

(Al-Sharif al-Murtada 1: 114)

The Shi'ah tried to take up a position in the middle, between the Mu'tazilites and the Ash'arites. God ought to carry out His promises, but He is not forced to do so. He should carry out His promises because this is in accordance with justice and fairness, and to go against such principles would be repugnant. Yet He does not have to act in accordance with those principles, in the sense that he is obliged in more than a moral sense to do so.

ONENESS OF GOD (AL-TAWHLD)

Monotheism or unity of God is the foundation of Islam. The Noble Quran has dealt with this subject in hundreds of verses. It covers all facts of referring to Allah as the One and only God – He has no peers, no match and no partners, He is Eternal and none is like Him. He is
the only One worthy of worship and He is second to none. Muslims are unanimous in their agreement on this matter of faith.

ONENESS OF THE ESSENCE AND THE ATTRIBUTES

Oneness (tawhid) is of two kinds. Firstly, Allah the Exalted, is One in His Essence and in the necessity of His Existence. He is Self-existing. He is beyond all matter and potentially not composed of anything. He does not branch out into other beings, be it in existence, notionally, or realistically. Secondly, Allah's Attributes are of the same nature as His Essence. Scholars of speculative theology and rational philosophy say that the Attributes of Allah are of two types, positive and negative. Some of the positive Attributes are Everlasting Life, Omniscience, Omnipotence and Eternity. So

it is said that Allah is Ever-living, Omniscient, Omnipotent, and Eternal, Just, All-hearing, All-knowing.

As for the negative Attributes, they assert that Allah is far above all limitations. These Attributes are also called the Attributes of Majesty or Dignity which negate the possibility of Him being created, i.e. they prove He is Self-existing, far above things like composition, corporeality, occupying a place, poverty, incarnation. So it is said, Allah has no body, no form, and no imperfection. He is not composed of anything. He cannot be described as incarnate. In summary, He is far above any of the attributes of any contingent being. The Shi'ite belief in tawhid is of the purest form. It deems Allah to be far above any anthropomorphic elements of the concept of Deity which may encroach upon His Lofty Divinity such as polytheism and corporeality. His Divine Will is free from oppression and monstrosity; and there are no partners with Him in His Eternal Being.

THE IMĀMITE SHI'ITE VIEW

Shf ah Muslims believe that Allah's Attributes are identical to His Essence. It is impossible for God to have any Attribute which is additional to His Being in any way.

The discussion of His Attributes has also entered the domain of Islamic philosophy. Shi'ite philosophers have discussed it extensively. The philosopher Sadr al-Dln ShlrazI (1964: 54) has said:

His Attributes are verily His Essence (i.e. inseparable), not as the followers of Abu'l-Hasan al-Ash'arl maintain in that their numerousness in existence calls for a corresponding number of
eternals, and not as the Mu'tazilites maintain by rejecting their origin but accepting their vestiges, and render the Essence as proxy, but through those firm in knowledge who maintain that His Existence is His very Essence, which is the confirmation of His Attributes of Perfection [kamdliyyah] and the manifestation of those Attributes of Beauty [jamdliyyah] and Majesty [jaldliyyah].

Shi'ite and Mu'tazilite speculative theologians benefited a great deal from the views of Imam All on tawhid. This is what he said in the first sermon of his Nahj al-baldghah:

The foremost act in religion is the acknowledgement of Him. The perfection of acknowledging Him is believing in Him; the perfection of believing in Him is acknowledging His oneness; the perfection of acknowledging His oneness is pledging loyalty to Him and the perfection of pledging loyalty to Him is denying [in the human sense] Attributes pertaining to Him, because of the qualities of His creation that could be attributed to humans. Every one of them is a proof that it is different from that to which it is attributed and everything to which something is attributed is different from the attribute. Thus, whoever assigns attributes to Allah recognizes His like, and who recognizes His like regards Him as dual, and who recognizes Him as dual recognizes parts of Him, and who recognizes parts of Him has mistaken Him.

ALLAH IS IMMATERIAL

The Imamites and Mu'tazilites agree that Allah's Essence is above corporeality. Accordingly, He cannot be confined to space or time. However, Hanbalites, Ash'arites, and Karamites are of the view that Allah can be limited to the station of His loftiness which is adjacent to the uppermost part of the Throne. They based this belief on the esoteric meaning of certain verses such as: "The Beneficent God is firm in power" (20: 5) and "Nay, both His hands are spread out" (5: 64). Consequently, in his Maqdldt al-isldmiyyin, al-Ash'arl said, "Allah is on His Throne. He has two hands but not as property; He has eyes but not as manner; and has a face as He said, And there will endure forever the Face of thy Lord, the Lord of glory and honour' (60: 27)" (1980: 295).

All ibn Abl Talib, the exemplar for Shi'ah Muslims, made a glaring statement which refuted the view of corporeality of Allah and puts Him above those qualities that could be attributed to His creation:

Those who claim to be equitable to Thee did not do Thee justice when they equated Thee with their idols, falsely assigned to Thee that which could befit Thy creation, and abstractly assumed that Thou art composed of parts in the same way as material things.

(Nahj al-balaghah: 144)

HISHāM IBN AL-ḤAKAM

Some authors of books dealing with denominations, sects and schools of thought accused Hisham ibn al-Hakam (d. 198/ 812), who is considered one of the great speculative theologians, a towering figure of his time and the most famous of Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq's disciples, of upholding the view of the corporeality of God. Al-Jahiz, al-Nazzam and al-Ash'arl went to extremes in attributing this idea to him, quoting him as saying, "Allah is a body like other material beings".

However, research has proved that such an accusation does not hold. It was precipitated by envy; his opponents, who could not put up with the veracity and strength of his arguments, wanted to tarnish his reputation, especially the Mu'tazilites, whose claims he refuted in his polemics against their teachings. In Hisham's biography in Mujam rijal al-hadlth ("Biographies of Transmitters of Traditions"), Imam Abu'l-Qasim al-Khoei (d. 1992) referred to the stories about Hisham (vol. 18) and concluded:

I believe that the stories accusing Hisham of holding the view on corporeality [of God] are all concocted. This has stemmed from envy as evidenced by the statement of [Imam] Abu'l-Hasan al-Rida who said in his favour "May Allah have mercy on Hisham for he was a good person, to whom justice was not done by his people out of envy."

His opponents allege that Hisham described the Lord, the Most High, as of seven ashbar (a measure equivalent to the expanse of an open hand between the tips of the little finger

and the thumb). This is not worthy of anyone who is even of mediocre knowledge and experience, let alone Hisham, of whose character and knowledge his teacher and Imam Ja'far ibn Muhammad al-Sadiq said, "O Hisham! You are still supported by the Holy Spirit."

Despite Hisham's young age, Imam al-Sadiq used to give him precedence over all his companions. Moreover, if Hisham had uttered such words, it does not follow that his doctrine was corporeality. The alleged words are akin to those said by philosophers and speculative theologians in the context of their treatises and debates, that Allah is "a thing [shay'] like other things".

Also, the quotation is taken out of context. The passage which is claimed to have been reproduced from Hisham's work does not prove that he believed in the corporeality of God, for what is said by way of argument or counter-argument in a debate and as a simile does not necessarily represent real belief or the views of the person advancing the argument. Hisham's debate was with al-'Allaf; he said, "You say that the Creator knows everything through His knowledge, and that His knowledge is unlike the knowledge of all other scholars (His creation). Then why do you similarly not say that He is a body unlike the bodies of His creation?" (al-Musawi (1986): 482).

In conclusion, Imamite Shi'ah Muslims put Allah above all that which may befit and/or constrain material things such as corporeality, space or time and composition. They interpret verses such as 10: 48 and 5: 20 whose outer meaning belies their inner one giving the impression that Allah has a face, a hand, or moves from one place to the other into meanings

which are in harmony with sound reason; paramount in all this is the preservation of the integrity of the Sovereign Lord from any shortcomings worthy of likeness and potentiality. In reference to this same quotation, Sadr al-Dln ShlrazI, the famous philosopher, wrote a treatise on the ambiguous verses of the Qur'an and how the different Sunni, the Imamite schools of thought, as well as gnostics and mystics have dealt with such verses.

VISION AND PERCEPTIONS

Is it possible that one can see Allah, the Exalted, with one's naked eyes in this world or the hereafter? In their belief that it is possible to see God, the Ash'arites relied on the patent meaning of some verses of the Noble Qur'an. Ash'ari states, "Allah, the Most High, can be seen with eyesight on the Day of Judgment as the full moon can be seen. The believers can see Him but not the unbelievers because they will be denied the privilege of seeing Him" (1980: 292).

There is a general consensus among the Imamites, however, that it is impossible to see Allah either in this world or in the next. It is impossible to perceive God for it is against logic: what is not a body, or incarnate, or occupying a space or time, a counterpart or perceived as such cannot be seen. It is equally implausible to see the Creator through eyesight. Reason bears witness to this fact and the Qur'an attests to it, as do the traditions which have reached us through an unbroken chain from the Imams of Guidance of the Progeny

of the Prophet. The generality of Imamites and the majority of
their speculative theologians hold this view. In his
monumental book, al-Kdfl, al-Kulaynl has recorded twelve
traditions from the Imams in which they have stated
unequivocally the impossibility of seeing Allah here or in the
Hereafter. The philosopher Sadr al-Dln ShlrazI expounded
these narrations exquisitely and eloquently, concluding that
perfect intellects separated from matter can see Allah through
intellectual perception not through physical eyesight. He
vigorously refuted the views of al-Ghazzall who, in his book
al-IqtisddfiWtiqdd, holds that it is possible to see God
(al-Kulaynl (n.d.): 258)!

Pivotal to the Ash'arites' proof of the possibility of seeing
God is this deduction: Allah is self-existent, and since this is
the case then any existing being can be seen, for what
confirms seeing is existence. It has been related that the
believers can see Him in the Hereafter (al-Shahrastanl (1975):
131). "The Imamites' and Adlites' proofs of the impossibility
of seeing God revolve around the fact that the permissibility
of seeing the Creator should necessitate that He be a body or
physical entity occupying a space and can be identified. It
then implies that He be limited and with a limit" (al-Kulaynl).

DIVINE WISDOM

Wisdom is one of the Attributes of God. The Lord has
described Himself as Wise, one of His Names being "The
Wise" which is mentioned in some one hundred verses in the
Noble Qur'an. One of these verses is, "Alif Lam Rd, [this is]
a book, whose verses are made decisive, then are they made

plain, from the Wise, All-Aware" (11: 1). Wisdom is the quality of the knowledge of God of all things, and the perfect creation thereof. "And you see the mountains, you think them to be solid, yet they pass away as the passing away of the cloud, the handiwork of Allah Who has made everything thoroughly; surely He is Aware of what you do" (27: 88).

Allah's possession of wisdom necessarily means that His actions are not in vain, that anything which may be characterized as repugnant cannot emanate from Him, and that whatever He does or acts upon is absolutely good and proper. Scholastic and philosophical writings on this subject and that of Allah's Justice abound. These can be found under the topic "Right and Wrong – matters of common sense". From this branched out another enquiry into Divine Justice which in turn gave rise to the discussion about reward and punishment according to action, and our worship of Allah, and also the topic of decree and destiny. These philosophical questions are all interrelated.

THE IMĀMITES' VIEW

Since the Imamites believe in the independence of the intellect in perceiving what is good and what is evil, it follows that one can be absolutely certain that what Allah has ordained is good and what He has forbidden is repugnant. To give an example, the intellect has judged lying as a vile trait; and also that Allah does not commit that which is improper. The Mu'tazilites are of the same view as the Imamites. The contention that the intellect has jurisdiction over what it perceives as good or evil necessitates knowing Allah, putting

Him above irresponsibility, the obligation of sending Apostles, inappropriateness of punishment without justification, and humanity having free will in actions.

DIVINE JUSTICE

Justice is one of the Attributes of God and one of His Sublime Names. He is neither tyrannical nor is He prone to whim which may precipitate Him to be unjust in judgment. He has made it clear in more than one passage of the Noble Qur'an that He is devoid of oppression: "Surely Allah does not do injustice to the weight of an atom" (4: 40); "Surely Allah does not do injustice to men" (10: 44); "and your Lord does not deal unjustly with anyone" (18: 49).

As a consequence to the dictum that Allah is Just, a number of serious questions arise as we have mentioned earlier, among which is human free will and the fact that Allah is incapable of injustice. Shaykh al-Mufld, an outstanding Imamite theologian, has said (1993: 57):

Allah is Just, gracious. He created men to worship Him and forbade them to disobey Him. He did not charge anyone with any obligation beyond their ability. His creation is far from frivolity and His action is free from impropriety. He has remained above sharing his servants' actions and rose above coercing them to do any deed. He does not chastise anyone except when they have sinned and does not chide any bondsman or bondswoman except when they do a horrid deed. He does not do injustice, not even an atom's weight.

Allamah al-Hilll argued that the following principles are prerequisites to Allah's Wisdom and Justice.

1 He does not commit evil deeds.

2 He acts with purpose and wisdom and all His actions are proper.

3 He cherishes devotion and hates transgression.

4
He does not commission anyone with that which is beyond his ability.

5 He does not judge only that which is just, but all actions. Accordingly, His bondsmen should accept His judgment, bitter or sweet as the case may be.

As for the Ash'arites, they contend that there is no creator save Allah. The misdeeds of people are created by Allah. The intellect has no power over things, in that it does not need to differentiate between what is good and what is evil. He does not make His servants suffer aimlessly and without purpose. He does whatever He wants and judges as He pleases. If He wishes to leave His bondsmen in hell fire for eternity, He is the One to be obeyed as He is the Sovereign. Rebellion has no effect on His actions. Rather, He is the absolute Creator (al-Ash'ari (1980); al-Shahrastanl (1975)).

PREDESTINATION

The question of human actions and how they emanate is one of the oldest philosophical issues which has reached its peak in Islamic philosophical thought. Muslim scholars and followers of various Islamic schools of thought have multifarious views on the subject.

There is not much difference between the view of the Najjarites, Darurites and Ash'arites, on the one hand and the theory of the Jahmites, although the Ash'arites tried to distance themselves from being followers of predestination. They maintain that their belief in the doctrine of human predestination is as follows: "There is no creator except Allah and human deeds and misdeeds are God-given. People are therefore, incapable of effecting any one of them" (al-Ash'ari (1963), 1: 291). Imam Fakhr al-Dln al-Razi, an Ash'arite theologian, said, "Man's actions are commissioned according to Allah's decree and destiny, over which men have no choice, and there is not in existence anything other than predestination" (1924, 2: 517). In defence of the unity of creation and demonstration of the principle that "there is no creator in existence except Allah", the Ash'arites believed in predestination.

The Mu'tazilites, however, who are called the exponents of Justice and Oneness, say that we are capable of acting freely. We are the creators of our actions be they good or evil, and, according to the course of action taken, we deserve reward or punishment in the next world.

What led the Mu'tazilites to hold the view that we are independent and have power over and free will in our actions is their belief in the principle of justice. However, the claim that our actions are created by Allah goes against the grain of justice, for if Allah creates our misdeeds,

and then He punishes us for them, this amounts to injustice, and Allah is not unjust. "Whoever does good, it is for his own soul; and whoever does evil, it is against it; and your Lord is not in the least unjust to men" (41: 46).

THE IMĀMITES' VIEW ON COMMISSIONING ACTIONS

In the discussion of fundamentals of religion, we have already said that monotheism is the cornerstone of Islam and the most important of the fundamentals of belief by all Muslim schools. Believing in the oneness of God consists of believing in the Essence of the Creator in that He is one, none is like Him and He has neither partner nor peer. And He is only One (ahad) in that He is not composed of parts whether outwardly or inwardly and that He is above any corporeality.

Belief in the unity of the Attributes of Allah means that His Attributes such as Everlasting Life, Omniscience and Omnipotence are the same as His Essence. He is Everlasting in Essence, Omniscient in Essence, and Omnipotent in Essence. Believing in the unity of creation and actions means that there is no creator in the domain of existence apart from

Allah, and that all things in the universe are His creation. Among those is humanity, which is Allah's creation, not only its being but its actions also in a precise philosophical sense.

The verses which pronounce that there is no creator save Allah are many. Here is one of them: "That is Allah, your Lord, there is no god but He; the Creator of all things" (6: 102). (See also 13: 16, 35: 3 and 40: 62.)

Out of their belief in the doctrine of unity of actions, al-tawhfd al-af'dli, the Ash'arites say there is no creator in existence save Allah. Human beings and what actions may emanate from them are a creation of God, and they have neither choice in nor power over their actions. Justice is one of the Attributes of Allah. Thus, He is Wise in what He does and He is not capable of evil deeds and injustice. It is not befitting for Him to chastise us for actions in which we have no choice.

Believing in Divine Justice, the Mu'tazilites resorted to the doctrine of delegation of authority or empowerment (tafiuid) and said that Allah created us and imbued us with power and intellect and entrusted us with all our affairs. We are therefore completely independent in what we do, and Allah has no influence on our actions. This claim warrants the denial of the unity of creation, i.e. tawhid based on reason and tradition, al-'aql wa'l-naql, and entrusts us with the commissioning of actions.

Between the Ash'arites' predestination and the Mu'tazilites' delegation, the Imamite Shi'ah hold the middle between the two extremes. Theirs is called "the position between the two positions", al-amr bayn al-amrayn. Reports indicate that the

person who coined this phrase was Imam Ja'far ibn Muhammad al-Sadiq (d. 148/765), who said, "It is neither predestination nor delegation but a position between the two positions" (al-Kulaynl (n.d.), Decree and Destiny section, hadith no. 13).

The following conversation between Imam al-Sadiq and a man has been related:

"May I be made your ransom! Has Allah coerced his bondsmen to sin?" Imam al-Sadiq replied, "Allah is more just than to make them commit misdeeds then chastise them for what they have done." The man asked, "Has he empowered them with their actions?" The Imam said, "If He had delegated it to them, He would have not confined them to enjoining good and forbidding evil." The man further asked, "Is there a station or a position between the two?" The Imam said, "Yes, wider than [the space] between the heaven and the earth."

(al-Kulaynl (n.d.), Determinism and Destiny section, hadith no. 11)

What is gleaned from the reports related from the Imamite Shi'ite Imams, on which the Shi'ah have a consensus, is that our actions are of our own making after Allah has infused in us the ability to commit or avoid the act. Good and evil are done by our free will, i.e., we have a choice in doing either of them or forsaking the same. Allah, the Most High, urges His servants to do good deeds and to refrain from misdeeds. Imamite philosophical and theological activity in the matters of justice, predestination, delegation, and free will was so prolific that Shi'ite thinkers wrote hundreds of books and

treatises on these subjects. Among those who compiled well-known books dealing with these issues are al-Shaykh al-Mufld, Allamah al-Hilll, Naslr al-Dln al-TusI and Sadr al-Dln Shlrazl. The last wrote a tractate on the subject of predestination in action. He says in the introduction: "He, may He be exalted, is far removed from doing any evil deeds and goes about His Kingdom at will." In this statement, he referred to "the station between the two stations". He then discussed the views of the Mu'tazilites and the Ash'arites and added:

Their claim that there are partners with Allah in the creation [of action] is unsustainable for there is no doubt that it is more preposterous than rendering idols as intercessors with Allah. Furthermore, what makes their contention untenable is the fact
that what the King of kings willed to be in His Kingdom is not available in it, but what He is averse to can be found in it. This is an absurd shortcoming in rulership and sovereignty. He is far above that.

In his refutation of the Ash'arites' theory on this matter, he had this to say:

There is no doubt that this contention debars one from practising wisdom …, detaches the intellect from discharging its duties, does not lend credence to the Creator, and shuts off the gateways of reasoning. Also, in what they maintained is the admissibility of the Creator being unjust so that it is quite rationally permissible that He may chastise the prophets, honour the unbelievers in the Hereafter, take a wife, a son, a partner, and so forth of scandalous deeds which stem from invalidation of wisdom and reason; and consequent to the

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invalidation of the latter is the incapacitation of the reports or traditions, for their authentication is done through reason. "Glory be to the Creator and exalted be He in high exaltation above what the unjust say."

He then discusses his philosophical and theological viewpoint in great detail and precision, substantiating it with a statement by Imam All, the summary of which is:

There is no affair but His. By the same token there is no action save His. There is no rule but Allah's. There is neither strength nor power except in Allah, the Sublime, the Great. It means every power comes from His Exaltedness and Greatness. He moves between the different stations and acts accordingly. Also, despite His uniqueness and glorification above that of all beings, neither the earth nor the heavens are devoid of Him. As the Imam of believers in unity, All, said, "He is with everything but without drawing a parallel, not like anything without cessation." Since this is the case, it then follows that attributing the realization of action to man is correct in the same way that existence is attributed to him.

It follows that people are the agents of all actions emanating from them in a real sense, not metaphorically. Nevertheless, their actions are also actions of God without any deficiency (Mulla Sadra (n.d.): 371).

Thus, the question of justice as espoused by Imamites has remained untainted, respected, original and without a blemish on the doctrine of unity of creation. Our actions have two dimensions. The first is commissioning the action of our own volition. The second is the creation of that

action by Allah's Will with which He imbued us, giving us the power to commission the action. Imamite Shl'ah Muslims adhere to all these matters. They, therefore, have made Divine Justice one of the five fundamentals of religion.

ALLAH'S SPEECH

Among the questions on which Islamic schools differ is the issue of "Allah's Speech". Among the positive Attributes of God is "Speech". Accordingly, it is said that the Torah, the Gospels and the Qur'an are the Word of Allah. The dispute between the Mu'tazilites, Sunni jurists, and the Ash'arites erupted over this question as to whether His Speech is created or eternal. The Ash'arites hold that "Speaking is a positive Attribute. Allah's Speech is spiritual unlike love and hate. The Qur'an is the Word of God and it is not created. He who alleges that it is created is an unbeliever condemned to hell fire" (al-Ash'ari 1980).

THE IMĀMITES' VIEW OF GOD'S SPEECH

The Imamite Shi'ah are agreed that God's Speech is created like other creations. He is a speaker in the sense that He creates speech in some organism or body such as Allah's speech to Moses through the tree.

The Mu'tazilites too maintain that God's Speech is created and novel. On the other hand, the Imamite Shi'ah study

Divine Speech in a wider context which embraces the entire universe – earth and heaven, the manifest and the hidden. The Imamite philosopher Sadr al-Dln ShlrazI (1964: the fourth mash'ar) states:

His speech, be He exalted, is not like the Ash'arites' claim "as a spiritual Attribute which is independent of His Essence". Nor is it an expression of sounds and words that convey a meaning. Otherwise, every speech could be God's speech. It is merely a creation of consummate words, and the revelation of perfect signs in the form of expressions and utterances. Allah says, "… and His Word which He communicated to Mariam (Mary)". In a tradition [hadith] it is related thus: "I seek refuge in all the perfect Words of Allah from the evil deeds of His creation."

Everything that purports a meaning of the speaker is His Words. The entire existential world is His Speech. He spoke through creating and composing it. In the following lines of Imam 'All, one can detect a reference to this meaning: "Exalted is He, His Speech is of His own
creation, the like of which did not exist before. Had it been eternal it would have meant there were a second god" (Nahj al-baldghah, sermon no. 228).

DECREE AND DESTINY

The philosophical revival, care accorded to the study of philosophy and resorting to it have been more characteristic of Shi'ite circles than of the adherents of other Islamic schools of thought. This comes as no surprise, for their Imam,

'All ibn Abi Talib, was the first in Islam to speak in philosophical terms. He discussed matters pertaining to the universe in a philosophical and discursive manner. Ibn Abi'l-Hadid has said:

As for theosophy and dealing with matters of divinity, it was not an Arab art. Nothing of the sort had been circulated among their distinguished figures or those of lower ranks. This art was the exclusive preserve of Greece whose sages were its only expounders. The first one among Arabs to deal with it was All. That is why you find exquisite discussions on unity and justice related from him scattered among his sermons and axioms. You cannot find among the words of the Companions or the second generation of Muslims [tdbi'un] a single word of this kind; they neither thought of it, nor did they understand it even if they were to be taught.

(Nahj al-baldghah, 2: 128)

DECREE

The first philosophical discussion in Islam which could be traced back to the lifetime of the Prophet is that of decree (qadar) which reached serious proportions in the first half of the first century of the hijrah.

In a number of passages, the Qur'an announced that Allah has decreed certain things of His servants that are made absolute. The Prophet confirmed the question of decree and destiny in his sayings. Among his most famous words on "decree" is: "The Pen has gone dry as of the creation. Your Lord has

finished with men as to who will go to paradise and who will go to hell fire" (al-Jazari n.d.). Since the Companions of the Prophet were not at ease in understanding the issue of decree, he said:

There is not a single soul without it being decreed by Allah for a place in either heaven or hell, and decreed to be either happy or
unhappy. A man then retorted, "O Messenger of Allah! Are not we better off if we were to stick to our lot and forsake our work?" The Messenger of God replied, "Nay, work. Everything is made easy. As for the happy ones, their course of action shall be facilitated towards the people of happiness. As regards the unhappy ones, their actions shall be within easy reach in the direction of wretchedness."

Imam All was the first to answer questions of a philosophical and theological nature which were lingering in the minds of the people. He used to urge people to ask him. One day, he addressed the people thus: "O Men! Ask me before you miss me. I am more conversant with the gateways of heaven than those of earth" (Nahj al-balaghah, 3: 215). None among the Companions or the 'ulama dared to make such a statement except All ibn Abl Talib, who in the sermon quoted above said, "Our affair is difficult and perceived as such. No one can shoulder it save men whose hearts Allah has tried with resilience in faith. Our talk can be comprehended only by those with truthful intentions and sedate reflective minds."

Ali is the first to prove human choice in actions, through the belief in decree and destiny. Historians have recorded that when All returned from the Battle of Siffln, an elderly man asked him, "Tell us about our expedition in Sham [Syria].

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Was it according to Allah's decree and destiny?" All replied, "We do not set a foot nor do we descend on a valley [wddi] except with Allah's decree and destiny." The elderly man commented, "I trust in Allah for my toil. I do not contemplate any reward." All said,

Woe to you! You take it as a final and unavoidable destiny [according to which we are bound to act]. If it were so there would have been no question of reward and punishment and there would have been no sense in Allah's promises and warnings. [On the other hand] Allah, the Glorified, has ordered His servants to act by free will and has cautioned them against [evil-doing]. He has placed easy obligations on them, not heavy ones. He gives them much [reward] in return for little [action]. He is disobeyed not because He is overpowered. He is obeyed but not under duress. He did not send prophets just for pleasure.

(Nahj al-baldghah: 78)

Imamite Shi'ite philosophers have shown great interest in the question of decree and destiny and examined it thoroughly. They have no rivals amongst the 'ulamd' of other Islamic schools of thought. It would suffice to mention the valuable works of the philosopher Sadr al-Din Shirazi in his commentary on Usui al-kdfi, his treatise on decree and destiny, and his monumental work, al-Asfdr. We should also allude to a number of theologians, exegetes and philosophers who excelled in these disciplines during the eleventh/ seventeenth to the fourteenth/twentieth century such as Mulla Muhsin Fayd KashanI (d. 1093/1680) and Abd Allah Zunuzi, and among contemporaries the philosopher and exegete Allamah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'l in his

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Qur'anic commentary al-Mizdn and his philosophical work Nihdyat al-hikmah.

PROPHETHOOD AND PROPHETS

The philosophers of Islam, whose leader is Ibn Slna (Avicenna), argue that the necessity of sending prophets hinges upon Divine Providence. Ibn Slna (1960, section 6) defines Divine Providence thus:

It must be known that Providence is the reality through which the Originator is aware of his person and of the state of existence in the system of goodness, and the causation of his person in goodness and perfection in so far as it is possible. He is satisfied with it in the same manner. The system of goodness must be understood in the most effective way possible. There emanates from it a comprehensible system and goodness in the most effective way possible which overflows into a perfect manageable system according to the circumstance. This is the meaning of Providence.

According to this premise, since human beings, in their dealings with their fellow human beings, need a code of practice and justice, and there has to be an equitable legislator from among them sent by Allah, the most Exalted, the need for such a person is more pressing than the need for the growing of hair on the eyebrows. "It is inconceivable that Divine Providence necessitates those benefits and does not necessitate the latter ones which are its foundation" (al-Shifd

Ildhiyydt). Imam al-RazI, Khwajah Nasir al-Dln al-TusI and the author of al-Asfdr are of the same opinion.

However, theologians stuck to the principle of graciousness (lutf) saying that we cannot understand what may benefit us and be detrimental to us in our conduct towards our Lord and His Supreme Perfect Being. Since this is the case, it was incumbent on Allah, out of His mercy and benevolence, to send a Messenger to guide us as a harbinger and warner. Being gracious to us is a quality of Allah's Absolute Perfection. He is the Kind, the Knowing and the Generous, not miserly with His creatures. On the other hand, the theologians espoused, as a proof of the prophet-hood of the messengers, their performance of miracles whereby they challenged the people to whom they were sent.

INFALLIBILITY OF THE PROPHETS

The Imamites hold that the Lord is above polytheism, injustice and is incapable of evil deeds and creating sins, then punishing us for committing them. By the same measure, they consider prophets above committing disobedience, lying, meanness of character and baseness of conduct both outwardly and inwardly. They believe in the impeccability ('ismah) of prophets throughout their lifetime:

All apostles of God were inerrant concerning wrong deeds prior to prophethood and after it, and all misdemeanours which the doer may take lightly. And Muhammad is a prophet

who did not infringe upon the command of Allah, the Most High, from his birth until his death. He did not sin either on purpose or through forgetfulness. This has been proclaimed in the Qur'an and attested by successive reports from members of the Household of Muhammad. It is the belief of the generality of Imamites. All the Mu'tazilites, however, are diametrically opposed to this view.

(al-Mufld 1993a)

THE IMĀMATE

The Imamate was the first issue on which the Islamic ummah (community) differed after the death of the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.a.s.) and, because of this dispute, bloody wars between Muslims ensued. In any case, the Imamite Shl'ah Muslims believe:

The Imamate is a divine position, for the spiritual and temporal leadership of Muslims. It is a grace from Allah bestowed on His bondsmen, making it second to prophethood. The Imam is appointed by Allah through the prophet. He must be inerrant with respect to grave wrongdoings and petty misdemeanours. There must be, at all times, an impeccable Imam who is the proof of Allah to mankind. His presence is the safeguard of complete religious interests. He must be knowledgeable in all religious sciences. The appointment of the Imam by Allah is an act of grace from Him towards His bondsmen. And the graciousness of sending the prophet and appointing the Imam are incumbent upon Allah. The Imamites are of the view that the inerrant Imams are the best

among their contemporaries of different times and in all fields, in knowledge and intellectual capacity. They do not know the unseen, but they know the intentions of people through a process of inspiration imbued by Allah.

(al-Mufld 1993a)

Commenting on al-Baqarah, chapter 2, verse 124, Allamah Tabata-ba'l in his Qur'anic commentary, al-Mizdn, has deduced seven fundamental points which may throw light on the issue of Imamate. These are:

1 The Imamate is Allah's prerogative.

2 The Imam must be immune against sin and error by Divine Providence.

3 As long as there are people on the earth, it will not be without a true Imam.

4 The Imam must be supported by Allah, the Exalted.

5 The actions of people are not veiled from the Imam.

6 The Imam must be knowledgeable in all that the people need in their daily life as well as the provision for the hereafter.

7 It is impossible that anyone could surpass him in sublime qualities.

Imamite theologians and philosophers have presented documented evidence, as well as rational proof, on the need

of people for a competent authority (hujjati), and that the earth shall never be void of such an authority, be it an apostle and messenger or an infallible Imam.

Al-Kulaynl, in his compendium of the Hadith, al-Kdfi, collected all traditions related from the Prophet and his pure progeny on the subject of the Imamate and the need for a competent authority. Also, the great philosopher Sadr al-Din Shirazi, in his philosophical exposition of Usui al-kdfi, discussed the rational arguments for the necessity of the existence of the Imam at all times.

The function of the Imam is not confined to him being a teacher, interpreter and ultimate guide in religion. It transcends those areas into esoteric practices resulting in benefits to people, although these may not be tangible. He has unseen spiritual proximity to humanity. The Imam is, therefore, at one and the same time, a master and a friend in the journey of the spirit, guiding and initiating us into the inner truth of religion. His similitude, when unseen, is that of the sun which, though hidden behind the clouds, yet has effects which are felt. The Imam is the most perfect person, both in knowledge and in practice, whether he is seen or unseen.

THE IMĀMS OF TWELVER SHĪ'AH MUSLIMS

The Imamites have agreed that Imamate after Muhammad (s.a.w.a.s.) is the exclusive preserve of the "Banu Hashim". All ibn Abl Talib is the first Imam, then his son al-Hasan ibn All, then his second son al-Husayn ibn All, the sons of al-Hasan being excluded, then All ibn al-Husayn, then Muhammad ibn All al-Baqir, then Ja'far ibn Muhammad al-Sadiq, then Musa ibn Ja'far al-Kazim, then All ibn Musa al-Rida, then

Muhammad ibn 'All al-Jawad, then 'All ibn Muhammad al-Naql, then al-Hasan ibn All al-Askarl. Then the Imamate was vouchsafed to Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Mahdi, who is in occultation (al-ghaybah). The Imamites believe that the Prophet made All his deputy during his lifetime and designated him to be the Imam after him. The Imamate of al-Hasan, al-Husayn and All ibn al-Husayn was also designated by the Prophet. And after that, every Imam designated the Imam who followed him up to the twelfth Imam (may Allah hasten his reappearance). All these Imams are inerrant and of impeccable character, innate probity and endowed with filial piety.

RESURRECTION

Resurrection is one of the five fundamentals of religion in which the Imamites believe. It is one of the philosophical and theological issues dealing with the "feasibility or otherwise of bringing back to life that which had perished". The question also deals with the issue of whether or not "the human soul is immortal". The discussion which stems from this subject, therefore, concerns the truth about the human body – what is it? Or, what does it consist of?

The Imamite Shf ah Muslims believe in what the Noble Qur'an spelt out regarding resurrection in that it will be a bodily one and in a new (form of) creation and that resurrection will be of both body and soul: "Paradise will be the abode of perpetual comfort. Those who reside in it will face neither hardship nor fatigue. They will enjoy food, drink, scenery and marriage. Hell will be the abode of those who disregard Allah. No one is going to stay in it for good except the unbelievers" (al-Mufld, Tashih al-i'tiqdd).

As for the philosophers, they differed over the question of resurrection as to whether it will be in body and soul or in the soul alone. The Shaykh (master) of Islamic philosophers, Ibn Slna, who was of a Shi'ite persuasion, believed in bodily resurrection by way of traditional evidence and religious dictates, although he could not demonstrate it rationally. In two books, al-Shifa and al-Ishdrdt, he tried to prove that reward and punishment would be meted out to both the body and soul. He wrote an epistle on resurrection and conditions of the soul. In the seventh section of chapter 9 of his book al-Shifd he wrote:

It must be known that proof of resurrection can be derived from religious knowledge. However, there is no other way to proving its occurrence than that of the Shari'ah and the acknowledgment of Prophetic tradition; it is that of bodily resurrection. Good and evil aspects of the body are well known; they do not need to be

delved into, in that the true Shari'ah, brought to us by our Prophet and master, Muhammad (s.a.w.a.s.), explained both the states of the body – happiness and wretchedness. As for happiness or wretchedness of the soul, it is proved both rationally and through logical deduction and traditional evidence as acknowledged by prophethood.

The philosopher Sadr al-Dln ShlrazI discussed the argument for bodily resurrection in his two books al-Asfdr and al-Mabda' wa'l-ma'ad. He also discussed the subject in his book Shark al-hidayah, with a slight variation in argument. However, he too eventually resorted to acknowledging traditional evidence produced by the Islamic religion. To this effect he wrote, "The truth upheld by us is that the crux of the matter pertaining to the acknowledgment of and belief in the question of resurrection is that which has been proved by the Holy Book, and the Sunnah, and all that which is reached at in the body of religious teaching. It is true in the full sense of the literal meaning" (1976: 407).

It is noteworthy that, while acknowledging the veracity of bodily resurrection as reported by the Shari'ah, ShlrazI maintained that this did not require interpretation and inferring meanings from utterances other than their literal meaning. Thus he wrote (1976), "It is a matter of fact that bodies in the hereafter shall be bereft of many of their necessary manifestations. The body in the hereafter shall be a

shadow of the soul, a reflection and an image of it". The Imamite Shl'ah Muslims have other views and tenets relating to bada' (revocation of a decree), the truth about belief and Islam, rafah (return) and intercession. These are extensively discussed in their theological and philosophical books, but are outside the scope of this chapter.

Translated by N. al-Khafaji and Oliver Leaman

NOTES

1 An acronym of "Sallalldbu 'alayhi wa'ald dlihi wa sallam", meaning "May Allah's blessings be upon him and his Household."

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CHAPTER 9

Ismā'īlī philosophy

Azim Nanji

❧⚬❀❀⚬❧

Isma'llism belongs to the Shi'ah branch of Islam, and, in common with various Muslim interpretive communities, has been concerned with developing an intellectual discourse to elucidate foundational Qur'anic and Islamic beliefs and principles. Ismā'īlī philosophy grew out of an attempt at discursive reflection aimed at an explanation of the haqaiq or truths grounded in revelation but intelligible to human reason, which was regarded as a gift of God. The appropriate use of the intellect in the service of exegesis was thus regarded as both necessary and legitimate.[1]

One of the terms of self-description used in the Qur'an is Umm al-kitab.[2] Literally, the "Mother of the Book", the concept is also by extension the archetypal ground of all knowledge and revelation. Shi'i and Ismā'īlī intellectual self-expression have thus sought throughout history to represent themselves as the quest for truth in a continuing conversation with this transcendent text, the source of all revelation.

This conversation was further enhanced by the additional interaction with other intellectual traditions encountered by Muslims in the course of the expansion and growth of the world of Islam. In addition to Jews and Christians, there were Zoroastrians, Hindus and others, some of whom were accorded the status of "People of the Book", and who also included in their heritage residual philosophical traditions of classical antiquity in the Near East. The access to tools of inquiry afforded particularly by the philosophical heritage of works in Greek and Syriac was adopted willingly by many Muslims. The reflective process engendered by the interaction of the two allowed Isma'llis to articulate a distinctive philosophical stance. During this early period one finds, therefore, among Muslims a shared intellectual climate, a commonality of issues and a plurality of discourses. This "exchange" took place also within a common linguistic framework, namely Arabic and, later, Persian.

It would, however, be misleading to label Ismā'īlī and other Muslim philosophical stances, as has been done by some scholars in the past, simplistically as manifestations of "Ismā'īlī/Muslim Neoplatonism", "Isma'ill/Muslim gnosticism", etc. While elements of these philosophical and spiritual schools were certainly appropriated, and common features may be evident in the expression and development of Ismā'īlī as well as other ideas, it must be noted that they were applied within very different historical and intellectual contexts and that such ideas came to be quite dramatically transformed in their meaning, purpose and significance in Islamic philosophy.[3]

In view of the bias towards Isma'ilism that developed among certain schools of Islamic thought, it has been designated by

several pejorative names in the past. By those who were hostile to it or opposed its philosophical and intellectual stance, the Ismāʾīlīs were regarded as heretical, legends were fabricated about them and their teachings and it was implied that they had strayed from the true path. Such a dogmatic posture, adopted primarily by some heresiographers and polemicists, tended to marginalize Ismāʾīlī and in general, the Shi'i contribution to intellectual life in Islam. Unfortunately, early Western scholarship on Islamic philosophy inherited some of these biases and tended to project a negative image of Isma'ilism, perceiving its philosophical contribution as having been derived from sources and tendencies "alien" to Islam. Recent scholarship, based on a more judicious analysis of primary sources, provides a balanced perspective. Indeed, scholars of Islamic thought, such as Muhsin Mahdi, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Wilferd Madelung, Henry Corbin, M. Hodgson, W Ivanow and S. Stern have tried to show how Ismāʾīlī thought has been in constant interaction with and to a certain extent influenced well-known currents of Islamic philosophy and theology.[4] Their views represent a consensus that it is inappropriate to treat Isma'ilism as a marginal school of Islamic thought; rather it constitutes a significant philosophical branch, among others, in Islamic philosophy.

Early Ismāʾīlī philosophical works dating back to the Fatimid period (fourth/tenth to sixth/twelfth century) are in Arabic; Nasir-i Khusraw (d. 471/1078) was the only Ismāʾīlī writer of the period to write in Persian. The Arabic tradition was continued in Yemen and India by the Must'alls and in Syria by the Nizarls. In Persia and in Central Asia, the tradition was preserved and elaborated in Persian. Elsewhere among the Ismāʾīlīs, local oral languages and literatures played an

important part, though no strictly philosophical writings were developed in these languages.[5]

There has, as a result, been considerable diversity of thought and intellectual development in Isma'ilism throughout history. While more of the Arabic and Persian literature of the past has become available, much still remains to be properly edited – let alone carefully studied. The
following exposition of main trends in Ismāʾīlī philosophy is meant to outline the general features that represent a shared tradition and common thematic concerns.

Language and Meaning: The Stance of Ismāʿīlī Philosophy

Among the tools of interpretation of Scripture that are associated particularly with Shi'i and Ismāʾīlī philosophy is that of ta wil. The application of this Qurʾanic term, which connotes "going back to the first/the beginning", marks the effort in Ismāʾīlī thought of creating a philosophical and hermeneutical discourse that establishes the intellectual discipline for approaching revelation and creates a bridge between philosophy and religion. Its meaning in the Shi'i context must not therefore be confused with its usage in Sunni kaldm.

As set forth in Ismāʾīlī writings, the purpose and goal of ta'wil is to arrive at an "original" understanding of Scripture by going beyond the formal, literal meaning of the text, not limiting the total significance nor rejecting entirely the

validity of such a formal reading, but affirming that the ultimate significance and totality of meaning of any text could only be grasped by the application of ta 'wil. Such hermeneutics, in their view, complemented tafsir, the mode of formal interpretation in Islamic thought, and did not reflect a dichotomized way of viewing Scripture. Rather, it attested to the divine use of language in multiple ways, particularly as exemplified in the Qur'anic verses that employ symbolic and figurative language. Philosophy as conceived in Ismā'īlī thought thus seeks to extend the meaning of religion and revelation to identity the visible and the apparent (zahir) and also to penetrate to the roots, to retrieve and disclose that which is interior or hidden (batin). Ultimately, this discovery engages both the intellect ('aql) and the spirit (ruh), functioning in an integral manner to illuminate and disclose truths (haqdtq).[6]

In his works al-Risdlat al-durriyah and Rabat al-'aql the Fatimid philosopher Hamid al-Dln al-Kirmanl (d. c. 412/1021) juxtaposes a discussion of speech and language to his exposition of the concept of God and tawhid? He argues that languages grow out of words which are composed of letters which allow words to signify specific meanings. But words as well as languages are contingent and relative. Since God is not contingent but absolute, language, by its very nature, cannot appropriately define Him in a non-contingent way and take account of that which makes God different from all that is contingent. Thus language in itself fails to define God as befitting His glory. Language, however, is a beginning, because it is the foremost tool for signifying and representing the possibility of what God is. The fact of being human and possessed of an

intellect compels one to speak of and inquire about the agent from whom existentiation (or origination) comes forth. Thus when one speaks of God, one does not necessarily describe Him as He is, but one has affirmed that He is indeed the originator of all that we employ to understand and describe His creation.

The appropriate mode of language which serves us best in this task is, according to al-Kirmanl, symbolic language. Such language, which employs analogy, metaphor and symbols, allows one to make distinctions and to establish differences in ways that a literal reading of language does not permit. Ta 'wily additionally understood as a hermeneutic and symbolic process, has the capacity to relate meaning to its beginnings – for that not only is the root sense of the word ta 'wil itself but also expresses the religious purpose for which such a process is to be employed – as an intellectual and spiritual journey to understanding God and His creation. This understanding starts as the deciphering of words used in the Qur'an, where God is indeed referred to as the "Sublime Symbol" (30: 27), thus legitimating the use of symbolic language. Such language employs a special system of signs, the ultimate meaning of which can be "unveiled" by the proper application of ta 'wil.

Articulating Transcendence: The Concept of Unity

Early Muslim reflection on tawhid, the Qur'anic concept of the oneness and unity of God, sought to clarify the distinction

between a transcendental Creator and a contingent, created and pluralistic universe.

This process of conceptual clarification among various Muslim groups was related to the presence of other monotheistic traditions such as Judaism and Christianity as well as a developing awareness of the philosophical understanding of a divine reality available in the Hellenistic influences on these monotheistic traditions. The creation of a philosophical vocabulary to understand divinity took place concurrently with the rise of legal and traditionalist modes of interpretation among Muslims who were seeking to articulate the relevance of monotheistic faith to Muslim lives in more immediate terms as affecting praxis. Some of them perceived the quest for what they saw as a theoretical understanding of God as having dubious values in the practice of the truth. It is against this background that Ismāʾīlī thinkers began their intellectual formulations of the uniqueness of God.

Among al-Kirmanf s predecessors, one of the best-known thinkers of the Fatimid period is Abu Yaʾqub al-Sijistanl (d. c. 361/971).[8] His works, building on previous writings, enable us to see the formulation of a position in the context of the larger debate in the fourth/tenth century
among Muslim theologians and philosophers. While discounting those outside the pale of monotheistic faith, whose beliefs, according to him, are polytheistic or anthropomorphic, he classifies others under several broad categories – those who ascribe to God the attributes He ascribes to Himself in the Book, but who do not wish to speculate unduly about these attributes; and those who argue in favour of speculation and wish to negate the attribution of human-like qualities to God and therefore maintain that God

can neither be defined, described, characterized, nor seen, nor be anywhere. He concludes that none of these positions allows one to accord to God the correct worship due to Him, nor do they allow for the articulation of transcendence in an appropriate manner. He states: "Whoever removes from his Creator descriptions, definitions and characteristics falls into a hidden anthropomorphism, just as one who describes Him and characterizes Him falls into overt anthropomorphism."[9]

In particular, he seeks to refute those who follow the Mu'tazilite position by pushing it to what he regards as its logical conclusion. Like al-Ash'arl, he points to the problem of separating essential and descriptive attributes and argues that the ascribing of essential attributes, by perpetuating a duality between essence and attribute, would also lead to a plurality of eternal attributes. He argues further that the negation of specific attributes (knowledge, power, life, etc.) cannot be maintained, since human beings also have a share in such attributes. If these were to be denied, the negation would be incomplete, since the denial takes account only of characteristics of material creations (makhluqdt) and not of spiritual entities. If one is to adopt the path of negation, he argues, then it must be a complete negation, denying that God has either material attributes or spiritual ones, thereby rendering Him beyond existence (ays) and non-existence (lays).

In formulating such a sweeping concept of tawhid, Sijistani assumes three possible relations between God and His Creation: God can resemble His Creation entirely, in part, or not at all. In order to affirm the total distinction implied in tawhid, the third relation is the most appropriate, involving a total distinction from all forms of creation. Basing himself on

a Qur'anic verse, "To Him belong the Creation [al-khalq] and the Command [al-amr]" (7: 54), he divides all originated beings into (1) those that can be located in time and space, i.e., those that are formed (makhluqdt), and (2) those that were originated through the act of command, all at once (dafatan wdhidatan), and which are beyond time and space and are created (mubda'dt). The former possess attributes, while the latter are entirely self-subsistent. The establishing and articulation of true transcendence (tanzih) must therefore deny both:

There does not exist a tanzih more brilliant and more noble than the one by which we establish the tanzih of our Mubdi'

[Originator] by using these words in which two negations, negation and a negation of negation [nafyun wa-nafyu nafyin], oppose each other.[10]

Thus, the first negation disassociates God from all that can possess attributes, and the second from all who are "attributeless". He is careful to avoid suggesting that even that which is without attributes, defined and non-defined, is God – in his schema God is beyond both, rendering Him absolutely unknowable and without any predicates.

Such a concept of tawhid immediately presents two problems for a Muslim: the first concerns how one might worship such a God; and the second, if He indeed so transcends His creation, how is it that it comes into existence? The "grammar of divinity" affirming distinction now leads in Isma'ill thought to the "ladder of meaning" by which transcendence manifested through creation becomes "knowable".

Manifesting Transcendence: Knowledge of the Cosmos

Among the most serious charges laid against a doctrine of "creationism" – i.e., the assumption of a Creator as the ultimate cause, through a special act of creation – is that it assumes in the form of a complex deity the very thing that one wishes to explain, organized complexity. It is this relationship between Creator and creation, and the transformation that is implied in the former by the very occurrence of change, that constitutes the greatest intellectual knot that a religious philosophy must tackle.

It has been argued that Isma'ill cosmology, particularly as expressed in the work of al-Sijistanl, integrates a manifestational cosmology (analogous to some aspects of Stoic thought) within an adapted Neoplatonic framework to create an alternative synthesis. The starting point of such a synthesis is the doctrine of ibda (derived from Qur'an 2: 117). In its verbal form it is taken to mean "eternal existentiation" to explain the notion in the Qur'an of God's timeless command (Kun "Be!"). Ibda therefore connotes not a specific act of creation but the dialogical mode through which a relationship between God and His creation can be affirmed – it articulates the process of beginning and sets the stage for developing a philosophy of the manifestation of transcendence in creation. By making creation emerge as a result of a process of origination, Sijistanl hopes to maintain his distinction between God and creation by making amr, God's eternal expression of His Will, the ultimate point of

origin. In this sense, to quote Corbin: "la philosophic premiere de l'ismaelisme n'est une metaphysique ni de Yens, ni de Yesse, mais de Yesto[11] It can
be said to express the distinction between God and creation even more sharply than the schema of emanationism associated with Plotinus, and, as with other Muslim ontological formulations, does not confuse the act of being with the state of being.

Al-Kirmanl attempts to distance the Isma'ill view from a purely emanationist outlook and to resolve what he regards as the ambiguities in Sijistanf s formulation by arguing that the process of emanation and its source cannot, strictly speaking, be differentiated. He cites as an analogy the light emanating from the sun, which, issuing from the fountain of the sun, partakes of the essence out of which it emanates, since at the point of emanation it is no different from the essence of the sun, its source. They are thus linked, though not identical, by being together in existence; and they could not logically be conceived of, one without the other. Such mutuality cannot be associated with God, for to conceive of existence as emanating from Him necessitates multiplicity in its source, which is its very essence. For al-Kirmanl, then, the only absolute way in which creation and tawhid can be distinguished is through a much sharper definition of that which is originated through ibda namely the First Existent or the First Intellect. He states: "It did not exist, then it came into existence via ibdd and ikhtim, neither from a thing, nor upon a thing, nor in a thing, nor by a thing, nor for a thing and nor with a thing."[12]

Like the number one, it contains all other numbers, which depend on it for their existence. Yet it is independent and

separate from them, and it is the source and the cause of all plurality. In order to establish the singularity of the First Intellect, he refers to what the ancient sages (hukamd') have said: "From the First Existent, which is the First Cause, nothing comes into existence but a single existence … or the Prime Mover moves only one, even though by it many are moved."[13]

Having used the arguments of the ancients for the purpose of validating his point, al-Kirmanl is nevertheless quick to separate himself from the view that all these attributes can then be applied to God, for that would compromise his insistence on absolute transcendence. They can only apply to the First Intellect, which in his scheme now becomes the Source, that which is inherently the synthesis of the One and many (jdmi' IVl-wahdah wa'l-kathrah). At this stage, anterior to time and space, the two qualities were in the First Intellect, but they comprise the dual dimension that relates the First Intellect to tawhid, as well as to the role by which its generative capacity can be manifested. With respect to God, the First Intellect exists to sanctify Him. Such sanctification (taqdis) on the part of the First Intellect reflects the nobler aspect of its dual dimension, where it is an affirmation of its own createdness and distinction from God. On the other hand, the sanctification generates a state of happiness and contentment within it, which produces actual and

potential intellects, which in turn become the causes for the creation of the subsequent spiritual and material realms. Al-KirmanI distinguishes in the First Intellect between multiplicity and diversity. Though the forms within the Intellect can be said to be multiple, they do not yet possess this aspect, since no diversity or differentiation exists within the Intellect. His analogy for the actual intellect is the

Qur'anic symbol of the "Pen", and of the potential intellect, the "Tablet", which represent form and matter$_y$ respectively.

In attempting to resolve the problem of explaining the First Intellect's dual capacity for form and multiplicity, SijistanI argues for a distinction between the concepts of multiplicity (kathrah) and diversity (tafdwut). Extending the analogy of the Pen, which contains all the subsequent forms of expression in writing – letters, words and names – before they appear in this differentiated form, he tries to argue that they are all one within the Pen. Also, this singularity does not resemble any of the expressed forms as they appear subsequently in written form. Thus, each letter, prior to its manifestation, cannot be distinguished from the rest of the letters "pre-existing" inside the Pen.

More interestingly, as Mohamed Alibhai shows in his analysis of Sijistanl's epistemology,[14] he illustrates the role of the intellect by using the analogy of a seed, out of which the cosmos, in its spiritual as well as material form, develops. This metaphor, drawn from biology, suggests a process where the intellect is manifested in the natural domain and participates in time. Such a view of creation seems to imply that the process of generation and development involves the Intellect's participation as a "vital" principle in the cosmos progressively manifesting itself in both material and spiritual forms. The process by which this generation takes place is called inbidth. Al-KirmanI, for example, employs two similes to illustrate this process, one from the natural order, one relating to human relations: the reflection of the sun in a mirror, and the blush on the cheek of the lover at the sight of the beloved. Inbi'dth, manifestation, thus is contrasted with fayd, or emanation. The former, like the image of the sun in a

mirror or a pool of water, is mere representation; it is from something and being figurative can permit one to retrace it to the original. Such symbolism is particularly suited to evoking the sense of religiosity so central to the Islamic affirmation of the distinction between God and creation. The rest of the intellects are manifested, one from the other, leading to the creation of the spheres, stars and the material world, including human beings.

In sum the process of creation can be said to take place at several levels. Ibdarepresents the initial level, inbidth, the secondary level – one transcends history, the other creates it. The spiritual and material realms are not dichotomous, since in the Ismāʾīlī formulation matter and spirit are united under a higher genus and each realm possesses its own
hierarchy. Though they require linguistic and rational categories for definition, they represent elements of a whole, and a true understanding of God must also take account of His creation. Such a synthesis is crucial to how the human intellect eventually relates to creation and how it ultimately becomes the instrument for penetrating through history the mystery of the unknowable God implied in the formulation of tawhid.

At the philosophical level, for al-Kirmanl, an understanding of tawhid requires the believers to recognize that they must in some way "deconstruct" the First Intellect, divesting it of divinity. Ibda and then inbi'dth reflect the "descending" arc of a circle, where God's command creates the First Intellect, which is then manifested through successive existents down to the human intellect. The action of the believers can be seen to be the ascending arc, where each unit leading up to the First Intellect is divested of divinity until the process is

completed on reaching the One itself. It is in this particular context that he cites a tradition of the Prophet: "The believer is the muwdhhid [literally, maker of the One] and God is muwdhhid"[15] — the believer, because he or she divests the First Intellect of divinity, and God, because He originated the First Intellect as the symbol of the One. It is possible for the human intellect to comprehend this because God provides assistance to the human intellect through His "dual" messengers, making accessible the tools formalized in religious language and ritual, which go hand in hand with the intellectual and spiritual capacity for reflection and knowledge.

When al-Mu'ayyad fi'l-Dln al-ShlrazI (d. 470/1077) interprets the Qur'anic verse "God created the heavens and earth in six days" (7: 54), he is concerned to show that the "days" stand figuratively for the six major cycles of prophecy, each of which represents a journey to God.[16] Their existence in time is not a function of priority or primacy; they merely succeed each other, like day and night. The believers in each of these cycles of prophecy are recipients of knowledge which assists in understanding tawhid. In Sijistani there is an elaboration of the two types of prophecy. The first relates to the human intellect, the second to human history embodied in the messages communicated through the various prophets. These messengers come to confirm that which the human intellect already knows, and human beings appropriately, by the acceptance of the message, corroborate the validity of each historical messenger. The actual intellect thus corroborates that which the potential intellect brings to it.

Human history, as conceived in Isma'llism, operates cyclically. According to this typological view, the epoch of

the great prophets mirrors the cosmological paradigm, unfolding to recover the equilibrium and harmony inherent in the divine pattern of creation. Prophets and, after them, their appointed successors, the Imams, have as their collective goal the establishment of a just society. The essence of governing in such a

society is not mere juridical order but rather an integrated vision of equilibrium where individuals mature intellectually and spiritually, through right action and knowledge. The function of the Prophet is to initiate the cycle for human society and of the Imam to complement and interpret the teaching to sustain the just order at the social and individual levels. The metaphors of Isma'ill thought evoke a qiyamah (from the Qur'an)[17] not simply as the ultimate day of judgment or resurrection but also as the constantly recurring moment in history, which connects the cosmic, natural order with the social world and with the individual's pursuit of personal salvation.

As Nasir-i-Khusraw, the best known of the Isma'ill writers in Persian, states in a passage paraphrased by Corbin:

Time is eternity measured by the movements of the heavens, whose name is day, night, month, year. Eternity is Time not measured, having neither beginning nor end…. The cause of Time is the Soul of the World … ; it is not in time, for time is in the horizon of the soul as its instrument, as the duration of the living mortal who is "the shadow of the soul", while eternity is the duration of the living immortal – that is to say of the Intelligence and of the Soul.[18]

This synthesis of time as cycle and time as arrow, to borrow a phrase from the scientist Stephen Jay Gould, lies at the heart of an Isma'ill philosophy of active engagement in the world.

NOTES

1 This chapter synthesizes material from some of my previously published works, in particular, "Transcendence and Distinction: Metaphoric Process in Isma'ill Muslim Thought", in God and Creation, ed. David B. Burrell and Bernard McGinn (Notre Dame, 1990): 304-15; "Isma'llism" in Islamic Spirituality: Foundations, ed. S. H. Nasr (New York, 1987): 179-98, and "Toward a Hermeneutic of Qur'anic and Other Narratives in Isma'ill Thought", in Approaches to Islam and Religious Studies, ed. R. C. Martin (Tucson, 1985): 164—73. I am grateful to Professor Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Dr Aziz Esmail for their valuable comments and suggestions.

2 The title Umm al-kitab is also used for a work that is attributed to the early period of Shi'ism in its Persian form. It has been an important esoteric text among Ismā'īlīs of Central Asia. See Pio Fillipani-Ronconi, Umm al-kitab, Introduzione, traduzione e note (Naples, 1966).

3 Muhsin Mahdi makes the point generally, in a recent review article devoted to Richard Walzer's study of al-Farabl, "Al-Farabi's Imperfect State", Journal of the American Oriental Society, 110(4): 691-726.

4 The most important reference source for Isma'ill literature and of secondary studies of modern scholarship is Ismail Poonawala, Biobibliography of Ismalli
Literature (Malibu, 1977). For the historical development of Western Studies, see Farhad Daftary, The Ismallis (Cambridge, 1990): 1-132, who also refers to the efforts of modern Ismā'īlī scholars.

5 Daftary: 232-49.

6 Nanji, "Isma'llism": 184—6.

7 This section on Kirmanl's thought based on his writings is drawn from Faquirmohamed Hunzai, The Concept of Tawhid in the Thought of Hamid al-Din al-Kirmani (Ph.D. dissertation, McGill University, 1986).

8 For al-Sijistanl, see Paul Walker, Early Philosophical Shiism: the Ismaili Neoplatonism of Abu Ya'qub al-Sijistani (Cambridge and New York, 1993) and Mohamed Alibhai, Abu Ya'qub al-Sijistani and "Kitab Sullam al-Najdt": a Study in Islamic Neoplatonism (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1983). For a broader view of the relationship between Neoplatonic and Muslim thought, see Neoplatonism and Islamic Thought, ed. Parviz Morewedge (Albany, 1992).

9 SijistanI, al-Maqalid, trans. Hunzai, in The Concept of Tawhid: 69.

10 Ibid.: 70.

11 Henry Corbin, Ndsir-e-Khosraw: Kitab jdmVal-hikmatayn (Paris, 1983): "Etude Preliminaire", 45.

12 KirmanI, Rdhat aWaql, trans. Hunzai: 165.

13 Ibid.: 166.

14 I am grateful to Mohamed A. Alibhai for sharing with me his paper "The Transformation of Spiritual Substance into Bodily Substance in Ismaili Neoplatonism", in Neoplatonism and Islamic Thought, ed. Parviz Morewedge (Albany, 1992): 167-77.

15 Hunzai, Kirmdni: 151.

16 For a further discussion, see Nanji, "Toward a Hermeneutic": 167-8.

17 For a discussion of the ta'wil of the Qur'anic concept of Resurrection, see Nasir al-Din TusI, Tasawwurat, ed. and trans. W. Ivanow (Leiden, 1950): 66-71.

18 Corbin, Cyclical Time and Isma'ili Gnosis, trans. R. Mannheim and J. Morris (London, 1983): 33.

CHAPTER 10

Islamic humanism in the fourth/tenth century

Oliver Leaman

A group of thinkers who lead up to Ibn Miskawayh are frequently called "Islamic humanists", a list which generally includes Abu Hayyan al-Tawhldl (d. 399/1009), his teacher Abu Sulayman al-Sijistanl (d. 371/981) and many other minor characters of the period. The reason why this label is applied has much to do with the character of the thought produced by these thinkers, which appears to be far more audacious and frank than much of the work of their predecessors or successors. They seem to downgrade the importance of religion, even Islam, without denying its significance, and perceive their task as consisting in the analysis of human being qua human being, as opposed to qua Muslim. There is much in their work which suggests that they give a significance to pure reason which is not found in many of the faldsifah. These thinkers worked at a time of immense self-confidence in the culture of the Islamic world, with Baghdad as the effective centre of a vast civilization comprising a variety of courts with their attendant officials and patrons of learning. The latter half of the fourth/tenth

century under the control of the Buyid (Buwayhid) dynasty was perhaps the high point of what might be called "humanism", since then there was an impressive mingling of a large variety of scholars sharing an interest in the "ancient sciences" and a common language in which to discuss it, despite the diversity of their backgrounds and religious allegiances. Some commentators on this period such as Netton (1992) have described the leading school of philosophy as "Farabist", and the influence of al-Farabl is clearly of enormous significance here. He surely set the agenda of the period, and it is interesting to note the chain of transmission (one might even say isnad) which links him with the period being analysed here.

Al-Farabl's distinguished pupil, the Jacobite Christian Abu Zak-ariyya' Yahya ibn 'Adi (d. 374/984), did much to institute the process of commentary, translation and enquiry which came to dominate philosophical life. It is worth recalling that al-Farabi himself was the pupil of the Nestorian Yuhanna ibn Haylan and was dependent for his work on Plato and Aristotle on the Syriac-speaking Christians whose most famous representative was the Nestorian Matta ibn Yunus. Ibn Adi was followed by the Nestorian Abu'l-Khayr al-Hasan ibn Suwar ibn al-Khammar, the Jacobite Abu All 'Isa ibn Ishaq ibn Zur'ah and many distinguished Muslims, especially Muhammad ibn Ishaq al-Warraq (Ibn al-Nadlm), 'Isa ibn All, al-Sijistanl and al-Tawhldl. Ibn Miskawayh is perhaps the most distinguished product of this school barring al-Farabi himself, but what is to be noted here is how cosmopolitan the cultural atmosphere of the time came to be. That atmosphere consisted of the thought of Muslims, Christians, Jews and pagans, and, perhaps even more significantly, of those within a religious group regardless of doctrinal differences. The

leading point of agreement was that the "ancient sciences" (al-'ulum al-awd'il) are the property of all humanity, and no particular religious or cultural group can claim exclusive ownership of them. Hence the description of this group of thinkers as "humanists", and of those of them who were Muslims as "Islamic humanists".

One might wonder how accurate this description is, though. As Kraemer (1986a) shows, a very wide gamut of theoretical ideas is compatible with "humanism", and there seem to be marked differences on occasion between the Greek idea of what human beings are and that current among the faldsifah. There are certainly important differences between the notions of the universality of unaided reason and the role of religion in the Classical and Islamic cultural milieu, but also sometimes interesting resemblances. Perhaps the closest they come is on the topic of education. The Arabic adab is certainly equivalent to the Greek paideia, and represents what is necessary to produce an elegant, courteous, refined and cultured individual. In fact, the sort of individual who would fit in well with court life of the time, when the vast bureaucracy of the empire required a host of civil servants, secretaries, scribes and courtiers. One might wonder what scope for religion survives in this description of education. One might expect that Islamic "humanists" would stress the importance of religion in the upbringing of the cultured individual, and they do, of course, but often with less whole-hearted enthusiasm for the religion of Islam than the class of 'ulama. Islam seems to come into the picture because it is the religion of the time. Although some commentators on this period such as Netton (1992) will go a long way to emphasize the common adherence of the philosophers in a theory of salvation which stems from al-Farabi but which is at

the very least compatible with Islam, it is difficult to argue that the specifics of Islam

play much part in their work. As good Aristotelians they divide up the sciences into practical and theoretical, and into the former category go activities such as jurisprudence (fiqh) and theology (kaldm), which strengthens the impression that the form of education at issue is hardly different at all from its Greek model apart from the nature of the religious commitment which is represented within it and the literary tradition upon which it is based.

We have to look here not just at particular doctrines as they were propounded by the "humanists" in the Islamic world but also at the sort of literature they produced. One of the characteristic literary forms of this period was the construction of wisdom literature. This consists of a selection of aphorisms, arguments, anecdotes, biographical comments and comments on natural phenomena which generally have a firm basis in ancient Greece. The form is often to represent a series of sayings by scholars and savants from the earliest days of Greek and Persian culture and extending up to relatively contemporary thinkers. One of the points of such literature was to display the nature of life as an adib (phronimos) by showing what sort of lifestyle and thoughts such an individual might be expected to acquire. How better to represent this form of life than through often vivid and witty illustrations of those in the past who enjoyed it? We do not know now precisely how these texts were used, but there is a good deal of evidence that they were popular across a wide gamut of the social structure and much quoted by those who regarded themselves as educated (Gutas 1975). One assumes that the more serious treatment of these texts involved analysing and explaining the meanings of the

quotations and showing how relevant they are to contemporary life and thought. No doubt they were also found to be attractive to those just looking for a pithy saying or inspiring expression. The important aspect to note about this form of writing is that it linked contemporary life in the Islamic world with Classical civilization as an apparently seamless web based on the idea of a perennial wisdom, one of the books of Ibn Miskawayh bearing the title Jdwiddn khirdd (literally philosophia perennis). The description "humanist" then seems to be highly appropriate.

We should distinguish between this form of "humanism" and the very radical approach of thinkers such as Ibn al-Rawandl (d. c. 245/910) and Abu Bakr al-RazI (d. 313/925). The latter in particular did not try to show that contemporary thought followed on quite naturally from classical thought, but on the contrary that the former was inferior to the latter. Al-RazI seems to regard religion as a malign influence, which can be challenged only by the use of reason, and the unbridled use of reason at that. Religion is not just a way of explaining truths to those incapable of understanding them theoretically, as with most of the faldsifah, but is actually an institution which can communicate falsehoods, and some of
its leading figures are on a par with magicians and imposters. Some have argued that what we are presented with here is a form of "humanism" which differs in degree rather than in kind from that most commonly found in Islamic philosophy, or that al-RazI is a franker author than are most of his peers. Arguing thus is to misunderstand the difference between al-RazI and the more moderate Islamic philosophers. While the latter produced work which is certainly far from a simple repetition and acknowledgment of the truth of Islam as formulated by legal authorities, they had a good argument for

their position, namely that it is not the role of philosophers to establish religious truths. Those truths have to be established by other means and then they can be examined from a rational point of view. In the case of Islam, it can be seen that religious doctrines are entirely reconcilable with philosophy, after one has learnt to understand those doctrines in the right sort of way, or so the faldsifah argued. Whether this was their real view we cannot tell, but have to rely on their writings and the consistency of their arguments. Al-RazI is clearly arguing in a different way, that reason and religion are irreconcilable, and that the latter is of less value in understanding the world and ourselves than is the former.

This does little to resolve the issue of whether it is right to call this group of thinkers stemming from al-Farabl and Yahya ibn Adi "Islamic humanists", where this label is applied to the Muslim thinkers ending up with Miskawayh. One way of tackling the question is to wonder what difference the religion of Islam makes to their actual arguments. What we need here are some examples of arguments which would not work within a different religious context, where the form of the argument as compared with the matter is irretrievably tied up with the principles of a particular religion. We do not find such examples in their writings, though, and it would be surprising if we could. Since the tradition of philosophy following on from al-Farabl emphasizes the subordinate role of religion with respect to philosophy from a theoretical point of view, the nature of a particular religion cannot really be expected to shape the nature of a particular philosophy. What distinguishes the Muslim adib from the Greek phronimos does not appear to be great. Although Von Grunebaum claims that "the basic difference between the Greek paideia and the Islamic educational ideal is that the Greek is ever aware of the

state, the Muslim of the service of God" (1964: 86), one might be sceptical of the significance of the contrast. Muslims' religious obligations draw them nearer to the community of which they are a part. Their religious practices define their activity within that community and express their relationships with others, and within such a society it is clear that religion has a significant role to play. In different kinds of society religion might be less important, or even of no importance whatsoever. Again, in societies with different religions it would be important to carry out

the obligations as specified by those religions if one were to fit in smoothly and be able to carry out the normal civil functions which are so helpful to a peaceful existence. Not only is one's life likely to be more comfortable if one carries out one's conventional duties, it will also make possible the elevation of one's thought to higher levels of abstraction. Like Aristotle, the faldsifah seemed to think that the secondary and social virtues are a necessary step on the route to the primary and intellectual virtues, although it is always unclear what the precise nature of the relationship between the different sorts of virtues is taken to be.

What are these higher levels of abstraction? They are often given a religious description and related to salvation or coming closer to God. As our thinking becomes more and more purified of those issues which arise in the world of generation and corruption we are able to think in ways which approach the Divine. Given the sort of Neoplatonic scheme of emanation so popular with all al-Farabl's followers, it is easy to think of thought as capable of moving up a scale of different levels until it becomes identical with the most abstract level of which we as human beings are capable. Now, it is beyond doubt that this model of the perfectibility of

thought is far from primarily a religious idea, but arose within a philosophical context which had as its aim the reconciliation of particular Platonic with Aristotelian ideas. Neoplatonism is actually perfectly suited to religious employment, since it provides an account of the link between this world and its creator which can be made to fit quite nicely into a whole variety of religious contexts.

Neoplatonism also suggests an account of how we might through our own efforts ascend along the scale of reality until we manage to perfect ourselves in so far as we are capable. This sort of intellectual development is surely in principle available to all humanity, although it might also be argued that Muslims are more likely to avail themselves of it given the excellence of their particular religion. The latter is often held to be the best expression of philosophical truths in language which anyone can follow, and al-Farabl and his followers could argue that Muslims had an advantage over non-Muslims in that their religion is the most skilfully organized from a political point of view. What the Islamic "humanists" would have to accept, though, is that Classical thinkers were capable of perfecting their thinking along the appropriate lines even without the assistance of the revelation of God in a directly Islamic sort of way although they believed that the origin of philosophy itself was divine and came from earlier revelations. What has changed over the many centuries since ancient Greece is that religions have arisen which are capable of making more perspicuous the route to perfection, especially for the sections of the community who are only able to follow this route part of the way, but the essential nature of that theoretical perfection has remained unchanged.

This is even clearer when we examine the many ethical treatises which the Islamic "humanists" produced. These works take the Aristotelian notion of practical reasoning to its logical conclusion, and they are largely practical in their suggestions and prescriptions. They present a moral psychology and methodology which is intended to assist individuals to carry out their duties in the most efficient and productive manner, while permitting them the intellectual space to perfect their theoretical capacities. Much advice is proffered, and that advice is in line with the particular lifestyle which the individual author is recommending. Here we find a mixture of influences from Arabic, Persian, Islamic and Classical cultures and particularly Sufism presented in such a way as to enable readers to develop in themselves the appropriate dispositions to follow an ethics of virtue. At first sight these treatises appear to be rather banal, historically interesting perhaps as the reflection of a particular model of perfection within a certain historical context, but disappointing in their lack of philosophical sophistication and excess of syncretistic reasoning. What we have here is an illustration of how one ought to live if one adheres to a set of philosophical principles largely stemming from a wide variety of Greek and ancient Persian thought. We find here a loose combination of Platonic, Aristotelian, Pythagorean and Stoic ideas, not to mention the important influence of Galen and a wide variety of Pre-socratic thinkers along with pre-Islamic Persian thought, with more contemporary writers in Arabic appearing as well. It seems to be a mixture of ideas and arguments, a list of other people's observations, and sometimes rather unexciting advice as to how one should conduct oneself. Sometimes the language is rather poetic, and at other times it is prosaic and dull, but the focus of the argument is firmly on the practice of the reader, on showing

readers how they should behave and think if they are to fit into the role of educated participants in the community.

Since today in the West this sort of writing is not classified as philosophical, it is tempting to reject it as real philosophy and classify it with literature as a mainly literary form of production with little if any philosophical interest. This would be a shame, though, since these ethical treatises do contain an attempt at presenting in practical form a theoretical position. The latter may be made up of a large variety of philosophical ingredients, but they do on the whole make up a reasonable thesis with sensible implications for practical life. Readers are then able to think about how they might set about changing their lives in order to take account of the sort of end which they themselves can attain, a long and tortuous process, no doubt, but one which is surely aided by philosophical reflection on the processes involved. In this respect we should remember how close the Islamic philosophers were to their Greek forebears in both time and inclination. We tend not to spend much time on the practical illustrations which the Greek philosophers spent so much

effort on elaborating, preferring to concentrate upon the entirely conceptual issues which they produced. Yet there is surely some mileage to be extracted from explaining clearly what the practical implications of following a certain end might be, and the Islamic "humanists" put a great deal of effort in this direction. It is this emphasis upon practice and example that contributed to the popularity of their writings, which without doubt outstripped in readership the main works of the major falasifah many times over. It has been suggested that it is acceptable to call them "Islamic" in the sense that they were operating within the conditions and presuppositions of Islamic culture, but it should not be inferred from this that

they allowed their religion to intrude frequently into their arguments. In fact, they tend to use examples from Islam to illustrate points which they had already described using examples from Greek writings. Islam is then treated as yet another piece of the jigsaw which is useful in contributing to the whole pattern, but it is far from being the key to the pattern itself, while providing the general matrix for such types of "humanistic" writing.

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II

Early Islamic philosophers in the East

CHAPTER 11

Al-Kindī

Felix Klein-Franke

❧·❦·❧

Abu Yusuf Ya'qub ibn Ishaq al-Kindi[1] is generally held to
have been the first Muslim philosopher. This does not mean,
however, that the Muslims prior to al-Kindi had no
cognizance at all of Greek philosophical ideas. On the
contrary, some philosophical knowledge, though fragmentary,
can be attributed to the early Mu'tazill kaldm. Some of their
main representatives – Abu'l-Hudhayl al-'Allaf[2] and
al-Nazzam[3] – developed a theology built on certain Greek
philosophical elements. Thus the theologian Abu'l-Hasan
al-Ash'ari[4] named Aristotle as the source of some of
Abul-Hudhayls doctrines,[5] and al-Baghdadi[6] blamed
al-Nazzam for having borrowed from Greek philosophers the
idea of matter being infinitely divisible.[7] The impact of Greek
philosophy upon early Mu'tazill kaldm is evident and has
been stated also by early Muslim theologians and
heresiographers. But this impact remained rather marginal;
for none of the early Mu'tazill theologians ever elaborated an
encyclopedic system of Greek philosophy as this was out of
the range of their interests. It was al-Kindi who pursued this
aim and who may therefore rightly be called the first Muslim
philosopher, whereas the representatives of Mu'tazill kaldm

were theologians and no philosophers. This fact alone puts al-Kindl in some opposition to the Mu'tazilah with whom he should not be identified.[8]

Ibn al-Nadim[9] listed some 260 titles of al-KindT's, an enormous scientific bibliography, even if many of the works may have been of small extent. Al-Kindi's treatises encompass the whole Classical encyclopedia of sciences: philosophy, logic, arithmetic, spherics, music, astronomy, geometry, cosmology, medicine, astrology, etc., according to Ibn al-Nadlm's arrangement. Ibn al-Nadlm's bibliographical list reveals al-Kindl's predilection for natural science. Only few manuscripts, approximately ten per cent of all his literary output, have come to light and been edited up to now. It seems that the vast majority of the manuscripts have been lost.

It is hardly surprising that later Muslim philosophers rarely quote from any of al-Kindl's philosophical treatises. Both facts – the loss of the bulk of his manuscripts and the lack of reference to him by later authors -need an explanation. Some books may have been lost already during the reign of the caliph al-Mutawakkil[10] who fought vehemently against the rationalizing tendencies of his time and confiscated for a while al-Kindl's library. The famous eighth/ fourteenth-century historian Ibn Khaldun[11] adds further proof to the lack of manuscripts when he says: "We have not found any information concerning [al-Kindl's] book [called al-Jafr], and we have not seen anyone who has seen it. Perhaps it was lost with those books which Hulagu, the ruler of the Tatars threw into the Tigris when the Tatars took possession of Baghdad and killed the last caliph, al-Musta'sim."[12] The obscurity of al-Kindl's language, due to the lack of an Arabic

philosophical terminology, rendered his writings hard of access and made them obsolete while al-Farabl's philosophical ceuvre eventually overshadowed them. Abu Sulayman al-Sijistanl al-Mantiql[13] recorded the ruler of Sijistan, Ja'far ibn Babuyah, as having criticized al-Kindl because of his bad language.[14]

It is, nevertheless, the merit of al-Kindl to have made access to Greek philosophy and science possible and to have established from rare and obscure sources the foundation of philosophy in Islam, partly continued and enlarged later on by al-Farabl.[15]

Al-Kindl enjoyed the confidence and support of the seventh and eighth Abbasid caliphs, al-Ma'mun[16] and his brother and successor. To al-Mu'tasim[17] he dedicated his On First Philosophy, and some other treatises to the caliph's son Ahmad with whose education he was entrusted. Unlike his contemporary Hunayn ibn Ishaq,[18] al-Kindl knew neither Greek nor Syriac. He therefore commissioned or adopted translations, e.g. those made by Ibn Na'ima, Eustathius (Astat) and Ibn al-Bitriq.[19] The old translations, commissioned or used by al-Kindl, still lack the high philological standards set later on by Hunayn ibn Ishaq. But it was al-Kindl who broke new ground in a fertile soil and introduced into the Arab-speaking world the first translations of Greek philosophy. He was above all interested in gathering and translating works of Plato and Aristotle, both of whom he mentioned by name. But under the cover of these two philosophers other pseudepigraphic works became known, e.g. Porphyry's paraphrase of part of Plotinus' Enneads known as Aristotle's Theology. Al-Kindl, however, had a good grasp of the genuine works of Aristotle. He

commissioned a translation of Aristotle's Metaphysics and commented upon some of Aristotle's logical writings, such as Categoriae_yDe interpretatione_y Analytica posteriora and Analytica priora – and also on De caelo, as we are informed by Ibn al-Nadlm. He had before him even the otherwise lost Aristotelian dialogue Eudemus, a fragment of which he transmitted.[20]

Al-Kindi was eager to introduce Greek philosophy and science to his Arabic-speaking "co-linguists" (ahl lisdnina), as he often stressed,[21] and opposed the orthodox mutakallimun who rejected foreign knowledge.[22] As long as he enjoyed the caliphs' protection he was free to do so and did not feel compelled to defend his philosophical stand as was the case with so many later scientists who came under pressure at the hand of the orthodox legalists. As long as al-Kindi clung to tenets held by late Greek Neoplatonists, mostly Christians, who believed in one God who had created the world out of nothing, he was in apparent harmony with the divine law of Islam. But as soon as he adopted pagan philosophical doctrines, especially those of Aristotle, he openly deviated from the revealed truth of Islam. His view adduced in the name of Aristotle – that one should gratefully accept any contribution to truth, wherever it comes from, even from Greek philosophy[23] – is incompatible with the exclusive postulate of Islam as the sole mediator of truth.

Al-Kindl's own philosophical stand reflects the doctrines he found in Greek Classical and, above all, Neoplatonic sources. His treatise On Definitions and Descriptions of Things[24] may be accepted on the whole as the base of his own views. He supposedly extracted the definitions from Greek literature with the intention of giving a summary of Greek philosophy

in definitions. As I have shown elsewhere,[25] many of these definitions are literal borrowings from Aristotle. Al-Kindl's diligence in collecting definitions from Aristotelian works and his predilection for Aristotle cannot be ignored even where he extracted from spurious sources which were at the time attributed to Aristotle. The lemmata and their arrangement correspond to a Neoplatonic source. God is referred to in the first definition as the "First Cause", similar to Plotinus' "First Agent", an expression al-Kindi has likewise made use of,[26] or to his "the One is the cause of the cause".[27] The subsequent definitions in al-Kindl's treatise are arranged in an order that distinguishes between the upper world and the lower world. The former is marked by the definitions of Intellect, Nature and Soul, followed by definitions that mark the lower world beginning with the definitions of Body (firm), Creation (ibda'), Matter (hayuld'), Form (surah), etc. Thus al-Kindi conceived an upper world of uncreated spiritual beings and a lower world of created corporeal beings. The Soul is an uncreated, spiritual being, whereas Matter, Time and Place are finite, created and corporeal. Creation (ibda) in this Muslim context is Creation from nothing in time.[28] Both worlds, the upper and the lower one, go finally back to one and the same source which is the common cause of everything. From this final source which is the Godhead everything proceeds subsequently by hypostases.

In his treatise On Definitions and Descriptions of Things al-Kindi explained the world through emanation, a system that later was adopted and enlarged also by al-Farabi.[29] The Muslim orthodox, however, were
on the whole irritated by the attempt to explain creation as an incessant outflow from the ultimate source, an argument that

could not be upheld by scriptural evidence. They were especially offended by extolling Intellect to immediate proximity to God as His first hypostasis. Emanating from the Uppermost Cause, everything passes through, and develops from, the reflexion of the first intellect. Thus the intellect was to replace the angels as the mediator of divine truth. Al-Farabi took the sharp edge off the doctrine of emanation by equating the Active Intellect with the Angel Gabriel and by explaining prophecy as the result of the Soul's faculty of imagination. Nevertheless, emanation could not explain the divine act of creation in a way acceptable to the orthodox community of the faithful. "It should be known," said Ibn Khaldun, "that the [opinion] the [philosophers] hold is wrong in all its aspects. They refer all exis-tentia to the first intellect and are satisfied with [the theory of the first intellect] in their progress toward the Necessary One [the Deity]. This means that they disregard all the degrees of divine creation beyond the [first intellect]."[30]

Al-Kindl did not intend to explain the "progress toward the Necessary One", i.e. the way of attaining knowledge of God, as an intellectual progress. On the contrary, towards the end of his On First Philosophy he made it clear beyond all doubt that God cannot be comprehended by intellect.[31] According to al-Kindl the philosopher is unable to make any positive statement concerning God. All he is able to state is in the negative: that "He is no element, no genus, no species, no individual person, no part (of something), no attribute, no contingent accident".[32] Thus al-Kindl's philosophy leads to a negative theology, i.e. where God is described only in negative terms. In this he followed Plotinus[33] who taught: "We state, what is not; what is, we do not state."[34] If the intellect is unable to lead people to knowledge of God in

positive terms, philosophy is not superior to theology. On its "progress towards the Necessary One" philosophy reaches up to the intellect, but does not go "beyond the intellect", to use again Ibn Khaldun's words.[35]

What is "beyond the intellect"? For the Muslim faithful it is the world of the angels. They are God's messengers and are the mediators between humans and God. It is the Angel Gabriel, as the Muslim faithful say – and not the intellect, as the philosophers have it – who conveyed the divine revelation to the Prophet. The angelic essence is of "pure perception and absolute intellection".[36] Al-Kindl does not speak of angels. According to him the intellect is in immediate proximity with God.

The longest text of al-Kindfs treatises that have come down to our time is his On First Philosophy (only the first part of this treatise has been preserved). This is another name for metaphysics. Aristotle had called metaphysics the "first philosophy".[37] Al-Kindl, adopting this name, explained its meaning in the following way:

Knowledge of the first cause has truthfully been called "First Philosophy", since all the rest of philosophy is contained in its knowledge. The first cause is, therefore, the first in nobility, the first in genus, the first in rank with respect to that knowledge which is most certain; and the first in time, since it is the cause of time.[38]

The first cause is, therefore, explorable and it is the intellect that transmits "most certain knowledge" of it. The aim of writing this treatise was to establish "the proof of His Divinity and the explanation of His Unity", as al-Kindi declared in the

introduction.[39] In spite of the intellectual certainty which can be attained of the Deity, al-Kindi admits at the end of his treatise that the intellect is able to describe God only in negative terms.

God's unity stood at the very centre of the Mu'tazill doctrine so that the Mu'tazilah were called accordingly "the people [who made] the confession of [God's] unity [the basis of their creed]" (ahl al-tawhid). Supported by the evidence of Mu'tazill themes like God's unity in al-Kindi's philosophical writings, al-Kindi was held to be "the philosopher of the Mu'tazilite theology".[40] Later research, however, made it evident that this statement, linking al-Kindi peremptorily with the Mu'tazilah, could not be upheld. Against some sporadic similarities, significant philosophical differences between al-Kindi and the Mu'tazilah were brought to light by further research.[41] One point of dissent was the structure of matter. Most of the Mu'tazilah were of the opinion that matter consisted of small and indivisible particles, i.e. atoms. They were led to this opinion by supposing that everything created is finite in spatial and temporal extension. Hence they concluded that the divisibility of matter must also be finite. So they assumed the existence of atoms. Al-Kindi, however, denied the atomistic structure of matter, a topic he elaborated in his treatise On the Falsity of the Statement of Whoever Thinks that a Body Exists that is Indivisible.,[42] He adopted Aristotle's view of the continuous structure of matter. This difference of opinion had a great impact on many parts of the physical sciences. The Mu'tazilah accepted the discontinuity of matter and believed in the existence of a vacuum, denied by Aristotle. Contrary to the Mu'tazilah, however, al-Kindi conceived matter as being continuous and of unintermittent structure, but not of infinite extension. The universe is a finite

body, a statement that al-Kindi expounded in a separate treatise.[43] By its finiteness the universe is separated from the immaterial, upper world of the spiritual beings.

Right after the introduction of his treatise On Allah s Unity and the Finiteness of the Body of the Universe[44] al-Kindi stated six primary propositions which can rationally be comprehended "without mediation" (ghayr mutawassii). Al-Kindi referred obviously to those propositions "that cannot be proved syllogistically by means of a middle term".[45] Propositions of this kind convey knowledge that cannot be proved (anapodeiktos), i.e. that is achieved a priori ('Urn awwal, 'ilm badihf). As an example of a proposition that conveys primary knowledge al-Kindl stated that, if one joins two finite bodies one with the other, the new body is again finite. It is, however, impossible to disjoin a certain, finite part from a body which is held to be infinite. This is to prove that the corporeal world is finite. In the same way al-Kindl proved that time is finite. For you cannot pass a certain amount of time and suppose that the rest of time is infinite and eternal.[46] Likewise al-Kindl proved that the world cannot be eternal and that it is created in time (muhdath).[47]

Al-Kindl's arguments go ultimately back to the late School of Alexandria. John Philoponus (Arabic Yahya al-Nahwi) used them in his refutation On the Eternity of the World against Proelus.[48] He wrote his book in the year 529 against the Neoplatonic philosopher Proelus.[49] Philoponus' refutation On the Eternity of the World against Proelus was translated into Arabic[50] and furnished al-Kindl with some philosophical arguments which were current among Christian philosophers in late Hellenistic Alexandria. This has been attested by a recently found text of John Philoponus in an early Arabic

translation.[51] Al-Kindl has been influenced to a great extent also by Proelus. Traces of his Institutio theologica, almost literally the same, have been identified in al-Kindl's On First Philosophy?[52] They attest to al-Kindl's efforts at harmonizing the Aristotelian and the Neoplatonic systems of philosophy within the religious climate of Islam.

Al-Kindl s predilection for Aristotle's philosophy, witnessed already in his treatise On Definitions and Descriptions of Things, is most strikingly felt also in his On First Philosophy. In writing this treatise al-Kindl lavishly quoted from Aristotle's Metaphysics?[53] But it seems that the subject matter used by al-Kindl differed from the text now generally accepted. Book Alpha elatton allegedly written by Pasicles of Rhodes, a nephew of Eudemus, was apparently missing, but appears in Abd al-Latif ibn Yusuf al-Baghdadl's[54] paraphrase of Aristotle's Metaphysics, although in a reversed order, i.e. preceding book Alpha.[55] Although al-Kindl elaborated many of the ideas that go back to Aristotle's Metaphysics, his On First Philosophy is not a mere paraphrase of this book. For he relied extensively also upon other books of Aristotle. Thus many of al-Kindf s conceptions reflect ideas expressed by Aristotle in his Physics, De anima and Categoriae, to name only those books most quoted.[56] As well as giving a summary of Aristotle's Metaphysics he supplemented his On First Philosophy by drawing upon other writings of Aristotle.

The knowledge of the true nature of things, the foremost aim of philosophy, was not confined to the world of senses. For al-Kindl philosophy included also knowledge of the divinity.[57] This led to the merging of physics and metaphysics, science and theology. For later

Muslim generations this amalgamation became offensive. The faithful accused the philosophers of valuing intellectual speculation higher than the revered tradition and establishing the articles of faith as correct through reasoning and not through tradition.[58] Thus al-Kindf s philosophy, and especially his natural theology, contained already the seeds of the later conflicts between the orthodox and the intellectuals in Islam. Only as long as he was protected by the caliph al-Mu'tasim was he safe to engage in philosophy.

Al-Kindi did not conceal his indebtedness to earlier and alien philosophers by acquiring the truth "wherever it comes from".[59] For him the truth of the philosopher cannot differ from the truth of the Muslim faithful. Philosophy and theology served one end: the knowledge of the True One, of God. Acclimatizing philosophy in an Islamic society was made easier through the medium of texts of late Greek philosophy. From among these texts it was the so-called Theology in which al-Kindi took an interest. Falsely attributed to Aristotle, the Theology was in the nineteenth century identified as Porphyry's paraphrase of Plotinus' Enneads, 4-6.[60] With all these texts at his disposal al-Kindi elaborated a philosophy that was an able instrument to support by rational arguments the Muslim belief founded upon revelation and tradition, thus creating harmony between speculation and revelation.

In spite of this apparent harmony al-Kindl's language is distinct from that of the Qur'an. Instead of "Allah", which is the common name of God in the Qur'an and even in kaldm literature, al-Kindi used ual-bdri'" (Creator) or "al-'illatal-uld" (the First Cause). The former name is recorded only once in the Qur'an;[61] the latter is of course

completely missing from the Qur'an and the Holy Scriptures, for the faithful reject as polytheism the idea that God Almighty is the first of a series of causes that emanate from Him. God is for the faithful the only cause, the Creator of all. Al-Kindi referred to creation out of nothing by the word ibda which replaced the Qur'anic khalq, jirm was chosen instead of jism, etc. This choice of language gives the impression that al-Kindi deliberately avoided the corresponding Qur'anic expressions, holding aloof the language of speculation from the inimitable language of the Qur'an.

"First Philosophy" means the knowledge of the True One. Whereas every thing is the effect of what precedes and the cause of what follows, the True One is the only cause. The world, emanating ultimately from the first cause, is thus dependent on, and connected with, the True One, but is separated from Him by being finite in time and space. The oneness of the first cause is contrasted with the plurality of the created world: every thing has five predicables: genus, species, difference, property and accident. The modes of existence are explained by the categories. Al-Kindi is in full harmony with Islam in stating that the world has been created out of nothing and is created in time, having come into existence after
not having existed. This is not only his religious credo but also his conviction as philosopher.

Al-Kindl was, apart from metaphysics, also interested in mathematics and natural sciences. His efforts to study the whole encyclopedic range of sciences proved him to be a true follower of Aristotle. With regard to his strong inclination towards mathematics he even surpassed Aristotle. He wrote a treatise entitled That Philosophy Cannot be Acquired except

with a Knowledge of Mathematics.[62] His predilection for mathematics is emphasized also in his treatise On Definitions and Descriptions of Things. Many of the definitions are expressed in a double way: physically (min jihat al-tab') and mathematically (min jihat al-ta'lim).[63] It was also in the field of mathematical computation that he exerted his greatest authority as teacher. His two famous pupils, Ja'far ibn Muhammad ibn 'Umar al-Balkhl (Albumasar in medieval Latin literature)[64] and Abu'l-Abbas Ahmad ibn al-Tayyib as-Sarakhs!,[65] continued and enlarged the mathematical research of their teacher.[66] Al-Kindl's strong inclination for mathematics probably influenced also the so-called Brethren of Purity in the late fourth/tenth century. Favouring practical application of science, al-Kindl elaborated a system of calculating the efficacy of medical drugs. This became necessary since the physicians moved over from simple to compound drugs. The first physician recorded as having used compound drugs was Abu'l-Hakam from Damascus.[67] In order to achieve the intended efficacy the pharmacist had to calculate the right proportion of the ingredients of the drug. Al-Kindl undertook to divide the medical ingredients into grades according to the strength of their curative properties.[68] He was also the author of many treatises and handbooks of medical and pharmaceutical concern.[69]

In one of these medical treatises, recently found, al-Kindl again connected medicine with mathematics by giving the rule for calculating in advance the critical days of a developing disease.[70] Being the quickest planet in the firmament, the moon was held to influence acute diseases. On certain days of the lunar monthly revolution the diseases were held to change for the better or the worse. This theory,

already expounded by Galen, was further elaborated by al-Kindl.

Al-Kindl's mathematical curiosity did not halt even before the Holy Scripture. He wrote a treatise On the Duration of the Reign of the Arabs?[1] and based his calculation upon the letters at the head of twenty-nine chapters of the Quran. They form fourteen enigmatic words that contain fourteen different letters out of the twenty-eight letters of the Arabic alphabet. By adding the numerical value of each of these letters, counting only once those letters which are repeated several times, one receives the approximate number of years of Arab rule until the Mongols in 656/1258 conquered Baghdad and "Arab hegemony was lost for ever".[72]

It is generally held that al-Kindi's philosophy is in harmony with the Muslim creed. This is supported for example by the argument that al-Kindl speaks of creation out of nothing. It should be kept in mind, however, that in his treatise On Definitions and Descriptions of Things al-Kindl speaks of the existence of an upper world that is above the world of creation. This is incompatible with the Muslim faith. The same is true with regard to the theory of emanation, which opposed the article of faith that the world was created in one instant by God's command.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to give a conclusive judgment of an author whose literary work has been preserved only to a very small extent. Nevertheless, the treatises that have come down to us and Ibn al-Nadlm's bibliographical list that contains the titles of al-Kindi's writings allow us to express an approximate evaluation of al-Kindl as philosopher and scientist. Such an evaluation has to take into account that

al-Kindl could not have recourse to any of his "co-linguists". There were, it is true, also learned men besides al-Kindl who commissioned scientific translations or translated themselves, like the sons of Musa ibn Shakir, Hunayn ibn Ishaq, Thabit ibn Qurrah and 'Umar ibn al-Farrukhan, as we are told by Abu Ma'shar.[73] But al-Kindl was the first to transfer Greek philosophy systematically from foreign literary sources and to channel it into his Islamic environment where philosophy was received with coldness and even with hostility. At some time in his life he enjoyed the support of the caliph. But, like most of the later philosophers, he had no authority as an academic teacher because there was no official philosophy teaching. He kept himself aloof through his choice of language from colliding with the orthodox faithful or the mutakallimun. Apart from metaphysics he engaged in research on almost all the natural and mathematical sciences.

Through Latin translations al-Kindl influenced medieval European philosophers. They became acquainted with works from the whole spectrum of his literary output, especially with those that dealt with natural sciences and mathematics.[74] Gerard of Cremona[75] and Avendauth[76] translated several of al-Kindi's scientific works, among them On Optics (De aspectibus) which Roger Bacon,[77] dealing with the speed of light, used.[78] Also translated by Gerard of Cremona were On Degrees [of Compound Medicines], On Sleep and Vision, and On the Five Essences (De quinque essentiis)[79] cited also by Roger Bacon in his Nature and Multiplication of Light or Species.[80] De quinque essentiis was one of the main sources for the knowledge of al-Kindl the philosopher until Abu Rldah edited in 1950 a collection of fourteen treatises mostly on philosophical subjects. Besides these works only fragments of other works were known from medieval

secondary sources. Thus for example the historian al-Mas'udl[81] cited from a treatise of al-Kindl in his Muruj al-dhahab[82] where he

denied the possibility of artificially producing gold and silver. Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Zakariyya' al-RazI[83] wrote a refutation of this treatise.[84]

NOTES

1 c. 185/801-252/866.

2 Died c. 235/849.

3 Died between 220/835 and 230/845.

4 260/873-324/935.

5 Ritter (1929-39): 486.

6 Died 429/1037.

7 Laoust (1965): 103.

8 Corbin (1964): 219; Ivry (1974): 22ff.

9 Died 380/990.

10 232/847-247/861.

11 732/1332-808/1406.

12 Ibn Khaldun (1958), 2: 219.

13 Died c. 375/985.

14 Wiedemann (1970), 2: 562f.

15 Died 339/950.

16 Died 218/833.

17 Died 227/842.

18 192/808-260/873.

19 Astat/Eustatius translated Aristotle's Metaphysics; Abd al-Maslh ibn Na'imah translated Porphyry's interpretation of Plotinus' Enneads, 4—6, known as Aristotle's Theology (cf. Brockelmann (1937), Suppl. 1: 364) and Yahya ibn al-Bitriq translated Aristotle's De caelo, De anima, Plato's Timaeus, possibly also writings of Proclus, e.g. the summary of his Institutio theologica (cf. Endress (1973) passim).

20 Walzer (1963): 14.

21 Cf. e.g. AbQ Rldah (1950): 260.8; Rosenthal (1956), 2: 445.

22 Walzer (1945), 29: 20f; Ess (1966): 235.

23 Abu Rldah (1950): 103; cf. Gutas (1975): 196, Nr 69.

24 Ft hudud al-ashya wu-rusumiha, in Abu Rldah (1950): 165-80.

25 Klein-Franke (1982b): 191-216.

26 E.g. Abu Rldah (1950): 207, 1. 11; cf. Rosenthal (1952): 474; Plotinus (1959): 275; (1955): 184.

27 Plotinus (1963): 8.18.

28 Walzer (1963): 189; Endress (1973): 231.

29 Died 313/925.

30 Ibn Khaldun (1958), 3: 250.

31 Abu Rldah (1950): 160, 1. 6; Walzer (1963): 188.

32 Abu Rldah, op. cit.

33 Ibid.: 205-70.

34 Plotinus (1959): 324 = Enn., 5.3[49], 14.6: 'kai legomen ho me estin, ho de estin oil legomen'.

35 Supra ann. 11; cf. Zintzen (1983): 312-28, esp. 314.

36
Ibn Khaldun (1958), 1: 195.

37 Cf. the Neoplatonic philosopher Simplicius [first half of sixth century] commenting on Aristotle's De caelo 277b 10, in Simplicius (1894): 269.31.

38 Ivry (1974): 56, 1. 6.

39 Ibid.: 59, 1. 3.

40 Walzer (1950): 9.

41 Ivry (1974): 27ff.

42 Ibn al-Nadlm (1871): 259, 1. 19.

43 Abu Ridah (1950): 201-7.

44 Ibid.: 202, 1. 4.

45 Aristotle (1831): Analytica Priora 72b 19: dmesos = ghayr mutawassip, cf. Bohm (1967): 67.

46 Abu Ridah (1950): 205 penult.

47 Ibid.: 207, 1. 1.

48 Philoponus (1899).

49 412—85. This year was remarkable also because of two other events: the Roman Emperor Justinian closed the school of philosophers in Athens (cf. Gibbon, chapter 40) and St Benedict founded the religious order named after him.

50 Ibn Abi Usaybi'ah (d. 668/1270) (1882/4), 1: 105, 1. 5.

51 Pines (1972): 320-52.

52 Especially with reference to prop. 1-3 and prop. 5; Endress (1973): 242ff.

53 Ivry (1974): 205-7.

54 557/1162-629/1231.

55 Neuwirth (1977-8): 84-100.

56 Ivry (1974): 205-7.

57 Abu Ridah (1950): 104, 1. 5.

58 Ibn Khaldun (1958), 3: 347.

59 Abu Ridah (1950): 103, 1. 4. This reminds one of Pliny, who admitted: "We are swept by the puffs of the clever brains of Greece"; Pliny (1963), 8: 188f.

60 Steinschneider (I960): 77.

61 Surah 59 [al-Hashr]: 24.

62 Ibn al-Nadlm (1871): 255 ult.

63 Klein-Franke (1982b): 194.

64 Died 272/886.

65 Died 286/899.

66 Rosenthal (1943): 17.

67 Fl. second half of the first/seventh century; cf. Klein-Franke (1982a): 35.

68 Harig (1974): 148 and 200.

69 Sezgin (1970): 244-7.

70 Klein-Franke (1975): 161-88.

71 Loth (1875): 261-309.

72 Hitti (1958): 484; Rosenthal (1949): 122; Plessner (1962): 184f; Noldeke (1919), part 2: 68-78.

73 Ibn Abi Usaybi'ah (1882/4), 1: 207; Wiedemann (1970), 2: 551.

74 Thorndike and Kibre (1963), col. 1731 et passim.

75 c. 1114-87.

76 First half of the sixth/twelfth century; cf. Alverny (1954), 1: 19-43.

77 c. 1214 to soon after 1292.

78
Grant (1974): 396.

79 Ibid., 494.

80 Nagy (1897).

81 Died 345/956.

82 al-Mas'udl (1974), 5: 159f.

83 Died 313/915.

84 Ibn Abl Usaybi'ah (1882/4), 1: 316, 1. 12; Ranking (1913): 249, Nr 40: "Responsio ad Philosophum el-Kendi eo quod artem al-Chymiae in impossibili posuerit"; Wiedemann (1970), 1: 51ff.

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CHAPTER 12

Al-Fārābā

Deborah L. Black

❧

Life and Works

What little information there is about the life of Abu Nasr al-Farabl comes mostly from medieval Arabic biographers whose writings date from the fourth/tenth to the seventh/ thirteenth centuries. The earliest account in Ibn al-Nadim's (d. 380/990) Kitab al-fihrist gives only minimal information about al-Farabi's life; later accounts add to these bare bones extensive lists of his writings, information about his teachers and pupils and a few anecdotes of dubious reliability.[1] Al-Farabl was probably of Turkish origin, born around 257/ 870 in Farab in Turkestan. Although the details of his early education are murky, he is reported to have studied logic in Baghdad under the Christian scholars Yuhanna ibn Haylan (d. 910) and Abu Bishr Matta (d. 940), one of the translators of Aristotle's works into Arabic. Since the School of Baghdad was the principal heir in the Arabic world to the philosophical and medical tradition of Alexandria, al-Farabl's connection with these teachers forged one of the earliest links between Greek philosophy and the Islamic world.[2] Al-Farabl himself

is listed as the teacher of Yahya ibn Adl (d. 974), another of the important Christian translators and a noted logician in his own right. Al-Farabl is also reported to have taught logic to the grammarian Ibn al-Sarraj, who in turn instructed al-Farabl in the science of Arabic grammar (Ibn Abl Usaybi'ah (1965): 606; Zimmermann, Introduction to. al-Farabl (1981a): cxviii-cxxii). Although there are numerous anecdotes told about al-Farabi's subsequent life and death by the later biographers, their historical accuracy is suspect.[3] Al-Farabl appears to have left Baghdad for Syria in 330/942, travelling to Aleppo and Damascus, and perhaps also to Egypt, between 330/942 and 337/948. He then returned to Damascus, where he died in 339/950.

From the lists of writings provided by the medieval biographers, al-Farabi's philosophical output appears to have been enormous, with over one hundred works being credited to him (Walzer (1965): 780). If these lists are accurate, only a small portion of al-Farabl's writings has survived. Many of these have only recently become available in modern editions, so the interpretation of al-Farabi's work is continually being revised. By far the largest part of ai-Farabi's writings is dedicated to logic and the philosophy of language. Indeed, al-Farabl's logical acumen is mentioned as the basis of his great renown by a number of the medieval biographers, and the philosopher and historian Ibn Khaldun (732/1332— 808/1406) claimed that it was principally because of his logical achievements that al-Farabi was dubbed the "second teacher" (al-mu'allim al-thani), second, that is, only to Aristotle himself (Nasr (1985): 359—60). Apart from his logical writings, which include both independent treatises and commentaries on Aristotle, al-Farabi also wrote extensively on political philosophy and the philosophy of religion, which

he treated as a branch of political philosophy, on metaphysics and on psychology and natural philosophy.[4]

Logic, Philosophy of Language and Epistemology

Al-Farabl's writings on logic and the philosophy of language include both loose commentaries on the Aristotelian Organon and independent treatises. In the former category al-Farabi produced a full set of epitomes of the Organon, including, as had been the custom since the days of the Alexandrian commentators, Porphyry's Isagoge and Aristotle's Rhetoric and Poetics (al-Farabi 1959; 1971a; 1986-7). He also wrote a great commentary (sharh) on the De interpretatione (al-Farabi 1960a; 1981a). His epitomes are not detailed efforts at exegesis of the Aristotelian texts, nor mere summaries of them, but take their overall organization and inspiration from Aristotle while developing personal interpretations of Aristotelian logic and the school tradition that had developed from it. Of his more personal writings, the Kitab al-huruf ("Book of Letters", al-Farabi 1969b) and Kitab al-alfaz al-musta'malah fi'l-mantiq ("Book of Utterances Employed in Logic", al-Farabi 1968a) are also devoted in large part to logical and linguistic topics, emphasizing the need to understand the relationship of philosophical terminology to ordinary language and grammar.[5]

One of the overriding concerns of al-Farabl's logical writings is to delineate precisely the relationship between philosophical logic and the grammar of ordinary language.

The historical reality of the importation of philosophy into Arabic from a foreign language and culture, that of
ancient Greece, and the attendant difficulties created by the need to invent a philosophical vocabulary in Arabic, had made this issue of paramount importance for the earliest Arabic philosophers, including al-Farabi's own teachers and pupils. In addition to this, the linguistic focus of much of Aristotelian logic produced territorial disputes with the practitioners of the indigenous science of Arabic grammar, who were concerned that the philosophers' interest in Greek logic was nothing but an attempt to substitute the grammar of Greek for the grammar of Arabic. Al-Farabl's logical and linguistic writings represented one of the most systematic efforts to harmonize these competing approaches to the study of language.

Throughout his linguistic writings, al-Farabl upholds a conception of logic as a sort of universal grammar that provides those rules that must be followed in order to reason correctly in any language whatsoever. Grammar, on the other hand, is always confined to providing the rules established by convention for the use of the particular language of a particular culture. As al-Farabi puts it in a well-known passage from his Ihsa al-'ulum ("Catalogue of the Sciences"), "this art [of logic] is analogous to the art of grammar, in that the relation of the art of logic to the intellect and the intelligibles is like the relation of the art of grammar to language and expressions. That is, to every rule for expressions which the science of grammar provides us, there is a corresponding [rule] for intelligibles which the science of logic provides us" (al-Farabi (1968b): 68).

By arguing in this way that logic and grammar are two distinct, rule-based sciences, each with its own proper domain and subject matter, al-Farabi strives to establish logic as an autonomous philosophical study of language that complements, rather than conflicts with, traditional grammatical science. But though logic and grammar remain distinct and autonomous sciences, al-Farabi also holds that the logician and the philosopher are dependent upon the grammarian for their ability to articulate their doctrines in the idiom of a particular nation. Hence "the art of grammar must be indispensable for making known and alerting us to the principles of the art [of logic]" (al-Farabi (1987): 83; Black (1992): 48—56). Al-Farabfs Kitdb al-alfdz is one attempt to implement this co-operation of logic with grammar. It illustrates, however, the extent of independence from conventional grammatical constraints that the logician still retains in al-Farabl's scheme. For while the text opens with a declaration of the need to classify Arabic particles along logically perspicuous lines, it goes on to make the bold assertion that the classification of particles offered by the Arabic grammarians themselves is inadequate for this purpose, thereby forcing al-Farabi to borrow the underlying grammatical theory from the works of Greek grammarians, a declaration hardly likely to appease the champions of Arabic grammatical theory (al-Farabi (1968a): 48; Black (1992): 77-83).

The Kitab al-huruf shows another facet of al-Farabi's approach to the philosophy of language.[6] It opens with an extended classification of Arabic particles in relation to the Aristotelian categories. The discussions of individual particles in turn explore the relations between popular uses of these terms in non-philosophical Arabic and the modifications they

undergo when they are transformed into technical philosophical terms (al-Farabi (1969b): 61-130; see Druart (1987b) for a study of al-Farabi's treatment of jawhar ("substance"). The second part of the text presents a discussion of the origins of language, the history of philosophy, and the relations between philosophy and religion. One of its purposes is to situate the more abstract linguistic discussions into an historical and anthropological context, explaining how language itself originates and branches out into popular and technical forms. The theme of the relations between philosophy and religion is also cast in linguistic terms. Religion is viewed as the expression of philosophical truth in popular language, using the tools provided by the logical arts of rhetoric and poetics. There is also a normative side to this discussion, in so far as it lays out the ideal scenario for the development of a philosophical vocabulary from ordinary language, and for the establishment of a religion suitable for translating the fruits of that philosophy back into popular terms. In passages that are meant to evoke the historical reality of Islam's encounter with Greek philosophy, al-Farabi also identifies and ranks a variety of possible deviations from the ideal developmental pattern, in which neither the philosophy nor the religion of a nation springs from its indigenous linguistic and logical development; they are instead imported from another culture (ibid.: 131—61). In the third and final part of the Kitab al-huruf al-Farabi returns to the theme of philosophical terminology, offering an elaborate classification of interrogative particles, their uses in different types of philosophical inquiry and their relation to the types of explanations offered by Aristotle's four causes (ibid.: 162-226).

Although a large proportion of al-Farabi's logical output is dedicated to linguistic topics, he also made important contributions to the more formal aspects of logic, such as syllogistics, the theory of demonstration and related epistemological issues. A predominant strand in al-Farabi's logic and epistemology is the adoption of a hierarchical interpretation of the syllogistic arts (including rhetoric and poetics), in which demonstration is identified as the proper method of philosophy, and all the other methods are relegated to the status of tools for non-philosophical communication. This strand is most evident in those writings where al-Farabi is echoing the logical theory of the Alexandrian commentators, although it is also closely linked to al-Farabi's personal teaching that religion is a popular imitation of philosophy whose tools are the non-demonstrative arts (Black (1990): 1-19, 31-51, 63-71, 78-94). An
excellent summary of this hierarchical approach is given in the following statement found in the logic chapter of al-Farabi's Ihsa al-'ulum:

The fourth [part of logic] contains the rules by which demonstrative statements are tested, the rules which pertain to those things from which philosophy is welded together, and everything by which its activity becomes most complete, most excellent, and most perfect…. And the fourth part is the most vigorous of them, pre-eminent in dignity and authority. Logic seeks its principal intention only in this fourth part, the remainder of its parts having been invented only for its sake.

(al-Farabi (1968b): 87-9)

Al-Farabi goes on to identify two principal roles for these non-demonstrative arts: to act as tools to sustain the fourth

part in its proper function, and to provide safeguards that keep the demonstrator from error.

It would be misleading, however, to take the attitude expressed by this text as an accurate reflection of al-Farabl's overall approach to either demonstration or the remaining arts of dialectic, rhetoric and poetics. When al-Farabi discusses each of these arts in its own right, his views emerge as far more complex, and seem to allow the non-demonstrative arts to play an integral rather than a peripheral role within philosophy. In the opening discussions of his Kitab al-jadal ("Book of Dialectic"), for example, al-Farabi tries to show how dialectic functions to serve and support philosophy by identifying five ways in which it contributes to the attainment of demonstrative knowledge: (1) by offering training in the skills of argumentation; (2) by providing an initial exposure to the principles of the individual demonstrative sciences; (3) by awakening awareness of the innate self-evident principles of demonstration, in particular for the physical sciences; (4) by developing the skills useful for communicating with the masses; and (5) for refuting sophistry (al-Farabi (1986-7), 3: 29-38). While all of these uses continue to reflect the general conception of dialectic as a pedagogical and ancillary art, the breadth of the contributions that are outlined by this list, and the inclusion of the second and third uses in particular, seems to elevate dialectic from the status of a mere handmaiden to a de facto partner with demonstration in philosophical pursuits.

Al-Farabl's rhetorical and poetical theories display a similar appreciation of the autonomy of these arts. In the case of his poetics, al-Farabi is one of the first Islamic authors to identify for poetical discourse a unique epistemological aim which is distinct from the aims of all the other logical arts, takhyil, the

evocation of an imaginative depiction of an object (al-Farabi (1968b): 83-5; (1959): 92-5). This theory of imaginative evocation was to become the cornerstone of subsequent Islamic interpretations of poetic imitation, and through its psychological

underpinnings, which are outlined in the next section, it became the means whereby the emotive and cognitive appeal of poetry and poetic discourse could be explained, and its role in prophecy and religion established.[7] In his discussions of rhetoric al-Farabl makes a similar effort to explain the unique epistemic character of rhetorical persuasion as dependent upon what al-Farabl calls assent to propositions "widely accepted at first glance" (ft bddi' al-ray), basing his explanation upon a detailed analysis of the role of social consensus and inchoate rational intuitions in everyday human beliefs. Al-Farabl even extends this analysis to the formal aspects of rhetoric, offering an explanation of how the truncated form of rhetorical enthymemes and example-arguments reflects the peculiar epistemic goals of rhetoric, and contributes to its utility in communicating with the masses, whose formal logical skills are merely inchoate (al-Farabl (1971a); for studies of al-Farabl's rhetoric see Aouad (1992), Black (1990): 103-79, Butterworth (1984): 111-19).

Finally, in considering the role of the non-demonstrative arts within philosophical pursuits, we would do well to note al-Farabl's assertion in his Tahsil al-saddah ("Attainment of Happiness"): "To be a truly perfect philosopher one has to possess both the theoretical sciences and the faculty for exploiting them for the benefit of all others according to their capacity" (al-Farabl (1981b): 89; (1969a): 43). Al-Farabl, following Plato, holds that all true philosophers are charged

with the task of attempting to communicate their philosophy to others, and that this task is essential to the fulfilment of the philosophical ideal. From this it follows that the arts of rhetoric, poetics and dialectic, in so far as they represent the principal means of communication with the mass of humanity, are an integral part of philosophy and a necessary complement to demonstrative science.

Al-Farabl's theory of demonstration itself centres on an analysis of the conditions that must be satisfied for the acquisition of science or knowledge ('Urn = Greek episteme). Like the other Islamic Aristotelians who were to follow him, al-Farabl bases this analysis upon a distinction between two fundamental cognitive acts, conceptualization (tasawwur) and assent (tasdiq). The former act is that whereby we apprehend simple concepts, and when it is complete or perfect, it enables us to extract the essence of the object conceived. The latter act of assent issues in a judgment of truth or falsehood, and when it is perfect or complete, it yields certain knowledge. These two cognitive acts are in turn identified as the respective goals sought by definitions and demonstrative syllogisms, the two principal topics treated in Aristotle's Posterior Analytics, so that the analysis of the conditions for complete conceptualization and assent becomes the keynote of al-Farabl's ensuing interpretation of Aristotle's theory of demonstration (Kitdb al-burhdn, in al-Farabl (1986-7), 4: 19-22, 45).

One important facet of this interpretation is al-Farabl's analysis of the certitude that characterizes perfect assent. Al-Farabi defines absolute certitude in terms of what we would now call second-order knowledge, arguing that certitude comprises both (1) a belief that the truth to which

we have assented cannot be otherwise; and (2) a belief, in addition to this, that no other belief than the one held is possible. (Al-Farabi adds that this process can in fact go on ad infinitum)) Certitude, in short, requires not merely our knowing that something is the case but also our knowing that we know it (al-Farabi (1986—7), 4: 20). Having defined certitude in this way, al-Farabi is able to free it from its traditional modal interpretation, thereby allowing for the existence of both necessary certitude, in which what one believes to be the case cannot be otherwise at any time; and non-necessary certitude, which is certitude "only at some [particular] time". Necessary certitude requires an object which exists necessarily and immutably; non-necessary certitude does not: "Necessary certitude and necessary existence are convertible in entailment, for what is verified as necessarily certain is necessarily existent" (ibid.: 22).[8]

Despite this broadening of the notion of certitude, al-Farabi holds with Aristotle that demonstration in the strictest sense pertains only to matters that can be known with necessary certitude. But al-Farabi has none the less added a new dimension to the theory of demonstration that takes account of the subjective element within certitude – one's awareness of and knowledge that one knows – as well as the more traditional objective element rooted in the necessity and immutability of the object known.[9]

Psychology and Philosophy of Mind

With the exception of his Risdlah fi'l-'aql ("Treatise on the Intellect"), al-Farabi left no independent treatises on philosophical psychology and the philosophy or mind. His views on these topics are contained in his metaphysical and political writings. The most detailed presentation of his views on the human soul occurs in the Mabddi'drd'ah I al-madinah al-fddilah ("Principles of the Opinions of the People of the Virtuous City"), where al-Farabi adopts an Aristotelian approach to psychology. The soul's principal faculties are identified as the nutritive, sensitive, imaginative and rational; they are ordered hierarchically to one another, and within each there are "ruling" and "subordinate" elements. Al-Farabi does not separate the common sense off as a distinct faculty, but treats it simply as the ruling faculty within the sensible soul "in which everything that is apprehended by [the five senses] is collected" (al-Farabi (1985): 166—9). Nor does al-Farabi have any doctrine of "internal senses"

to unify his treatment of the common sense, imaginative and memora-tive faculties, and he does not mention anything like the faculty that Ibn Slna (Avicenna) will later call "estimation" (wahm).[10] Like Aristotle, he locates the physiological seat of the common sense and the imagination in the heart, a tradition that later internal sense philosophers will modify in the light of Galenic physiology, placing the organs of these faculties in the brain. As for the appetitive activities of the soul, al-Farabi views them as intimately tied to the activities of the corresponding cognitive powers which

give rise to them. Thus, for every cognitive faculty -sensation, imagination and reason – an appetition towards the objects perceived naturally supervenes upon their acts of apprehension. Al-Farabi does isolate an appetitive faculty as the origin of all sensible and rational voluntary acts, but it does not serve to explain the actual arousal of desire. Rather, it functions principally as the motive power through which the soul controls the body, enabling it to seek what the soul perceives as desirable, and to flee what it perceives as harmful.

Al-Farabl's view of the imaginative faculty deserves special attention because of the role assigned to imagination in prophecy and divination. According to al-Farabi, imagination (takhayyul, equivalent to Aristotle's phantasia) is a retentive and a judgmental faculty, responsible both for the retention of the images of sensible things after they have absented themselves from the senses and for exercising control over them by composing and dividing them to form new images (ibid.: 168-9). To these two functions al-Farabi also adds a third function, that of imitation (muhakah), using the Arabic term equivalent to mimesis as it had been used in Aristotle's Poetics. By means of this ability, the imaginative faculty is able to represent objects with the images of other objects, and thereby to extend its representative ability beyond the depiction of sensible qualities to encompass the imitation of bodily temperaments, emotions and desires, and even immaterial realities (ibid.: 211—19). This mimetic ability of the imagination provides the psychological underpinnings of al-Farabi's claim in his logical writings that the art of poetics has as its goal the evocation of acts of imagination, takhyil. In the context of psychology, al-Farabi also employs it to explain prophecy and divination. To understand this

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explanation, however, one must first understand al-Farabl's conception of the rational faculty and the process of intellectual cognition.

Al-Farabi's account of the faculties and stages which characterize intellectual cognition belongs to a tradition of interpreting Aristotle's De anima that goes back to the Greek commentators. Within this tradition, Aristotle's rather loose descriptions in De anima, 3.4 and 5 of an intellect which "becomes all things" and an intellect "which makes all things" are given the standard labels "potential" and "agent" intellect.'[11] The potential intellect is identified as a faculty within the individual human soul;
the agent intellect, however, is treated as an immaterial, eternal substance that functions as the efficient, moving cause of human intellection, enabling universal concepts to be abstracted from sensible images.

In addition to the potential and agent intellects, this tradition also identified a variety of distinct stages between potency and actualization within the human intellect and affixed them with their own labels. In al-Farabl's psychology, this development yields four different meanings for the term "intellect" ('aql):[12] (1) the potential intellect (al-'aql bVl-quwwah); (2) the actual intellect (al-'aql bi'l-fi'I) > (3) the acquired intellect (al-'aqlal-mustafdd) and (4) the agent intellect (al-'aql al-fa"dl). Following Alexander of Aphrodisias, al-Farabi identifies the potential intellect as a pure disposition for abstracting the forms or quiddities of the object to be known from their corresponding sensible images. As this potential intellect comes to acquire intelligible concepts, it passes from pure potency into actuality, and thus becomes the second type of intellect, an actual intellect. The

process of actualizing intelligibles is of course a gradual one, which has as its goal the acquisition of all the intelligibles and all the sciences available to human knowledge. When eventually the intellect reaches this goal (which probably only a few individuals can achieve), it loses all remaining tinges of potency, and thus is rendered pure form and pure actuality. Since on Aristotelian principles anything is intelligible to the degree that it is form and actuality, only at this point does the intellect realize its full capacity for self-contemplation. This, then, marks the attainment of the third stage of intellect, the acquired intellect. At this stage, by virtue of having become fully actualized, the individual human intellect attains a rank akin to that of the other immaterial intellects, including the agent intellect, and becomes one or similar in species with them. As a consequence, it is now able to contemplate not only itself and the intelligibles it has acquired from material things, but also the agent intellect and the other separate, immaterial substances (al-Farabi (1985): 196-207, 240-5; (1948): 12-32 and (1973): 215-20; see also Davidson (1972): 134-54; Jolivet (1977)).

This last consequence of the doctrine of the acquired intellect is upheld, with only minor variations, in all of Farabl's extant discussions of intellectual cognition, and it is implied by the eschatological theories of his political philosophy (discussed under "Practical Philosophy" below). But mention must be made of the conflicting evidence provided by later philosophers such as Ibn Tufayl, Ibn Bajjah, and Ibn Rushd (Averroes), who tell us that in a commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics al-Farabi repudiated the possibility of a direct cognitional union or "conjunction" (ittisdl) with the agent intellect (see Pines (1972)). More precisely, according to Averroes al-Farabi rejected the ontological transformation

that the doctrine appeared to require, that is, its assertion that, through intellectual development, a generable and corruptible mortal

human being could become an eternal and incorruptible separate intellect (Ibn Rushd (1953): 433, 481, 485). How al-Farabl would have reconciled this claim with the doctrines expressed in his surviving works, and whether it represents al-Farabl's mature and considered view on the matter, must remain an open question, however, given the lamentable loss of the Nicomachean Ethics commentary itself.

Against the backdrop of al-Farabi's teachings on the acquired and agent intellects, and on the imaginative faculty, the psychological aspects of his theory of prophecy can now be outlined. According to al-Farabl, prophecy in its various manifestations is the result of an interaction between the intellect and the mimetic capacities of the imaginative faculty. What makes prophetic knowledge unique is not its intellectual content per se, for that belongs equally to the philosopher and the prophet: true prophecy, like the true religion based upon it, is a symbolization and imitation of the selfsame truths known demonstratively and intellectually in philosophy. But all prophets possess, in addition to their intellectual capacities, the gift of an especially keen imaginative faculty. This gift allows their imaginations to receive an influx or emanation of intelligi-bles from the agent intellect, an emanation that is normally reserved for the intellectual faculty alone. Since by its nature the imagination cannot, however, receive abstract intelligibles as abstract, the prophet exploits the mimetic abilities of the imagination to represent these intelligibles in concrete, symbolic form. In this way, what is normally available only to the select few who can attain the level of the acquired intellect can be communicated by the

prophet, under the guise of sensory images, to a much wider, non-philosophical public (al-Farabl (1985): 210—27, 240—7; see also Rahman (1958), Walzer (1962), Macy (1986), Daiber (1986b).

Metaphysics

Al-Farabi's metaphysical teachings have posed certain interpretive difficulties to modern scholars, not only because of the attribution to him of the works mentioned above which are now generally believed to reflect Avicennian teaching but also because of the ambiguity of the attitude he takes in his authentic writings towards Aristotelian and Neoplatonic metaphysics. Recent scholarship has shown that al-Farabl very carefully avoids mentioning Neoplatonic emanational metaphysics in his accounts of Aristotelian philosophy, and that, with the exception of the Kitdb al-jam ("Harmonization of the Opinions of Plato and Aristotle", al-Farabl (1960b)), he never treats the spurious Theology of Aristotle as an authentic work. The most plausible interpretation of al-Farabi's metaphysics in the light of these observations is that recently proposed by Druart, arguing that al-Farabl personally upheld the emanational cosmology central to

Neoplatonism, even while he recognized that it was not Aristotelian. Emanation was, in short, adopted to fill in the lacuna that al-Farabl felt had been left by Aristotle's failure to complete his account of the part of metaphysics that comprises theology or divine science, in which the causal relations between divine and natural beings is set forth (Druart 1987a).

Viewed from this perspective, al-Farabi's emanational theories form an integral part of his contribution to the discussion within Islamic philosophy of the nature and scope of metaphysics and its relation to natural philosophy. Al-Farabi's influence on subsequent developments in this area is attested to in a well-known episode from Avicenna's autobiography, in which Avicenna relates how he had read Aristotle's Metaphysics forty times and yet still remained confused as to its purpose. Only after chancing upon a copy of al-Farabi's opusculum Ft aghrad al-Haklm ft kitdb al-huruf ("On the Aims of Aristotle's Metaphysics") was his perplexity finally dissolved. Although Avicenna does not make explicit exactly how al-Farabi's exceedingly short treatise resolved his mental impasse, it appears that Avicenna was impressed by al-Farabi's remarks regarding the relationship between Aristotle's Metaphysics and the science of theology or "divine science" (al-'ilm al-ilaht). For al-Farabl opens his treatise by noting that while Aristotelian metaphysics is often described as "divine science", the text is in fact dedicated to the study of being and its principles and properties, not to the study of divine, separate substances. Al-Farabl observes that many readers have been confused by this point, expecting the entire text to be about God, the soul and the intellect, and finding that these topics are all but missing, save from book Lambda (Gutas (1988): 238-42). Al-Farabl then proceeds to outline a conception of metaphysics as the universal science which studies the common properties of being qua being. He affirms that theology is indeed a part of this science, not as its primary subject but rather only to the extent that "God is a principle of absolute being" (al-wujud al-mutlaq) (al-Farabl (1890): 34—7, trans, in Gutas (1988): 240-2).

In these corrections of what he takes to be the previous misread-ings of Aristotle's Metaphysics, al-Farabl affirms that divine science is indeed an important part of metaphysics, while acknowledging that only a very small portion of Aristotle's text – a single book – is devoted to the topic. Perhaps this is why al-Farabl declares at the end of his Falsafah Aristutalis ("Philosophy of Aristotle") that "we do not possess metaphys-ical'science" ((1961a): 133; (1969a): 130; cf. Druart (1987a): 35). But the major doctrine of Neoplatonic metaphysics known to al-Farabl, the theory of emanation, has as its local point divine beings and their causal links to the sublunar world. And it is this doctrine that provides the metaphysical foundations for al-Farabi's two most important personal works, al-Madinah al-fadilah and al-Siyasah al-madaniyyah ("The Political Regime"), also known as the MabddVal-mawjuddt ("Principles of Beings") in virtue of its metaphysical parts.

The theory of emanation espoused by al-Farabl in these works rests upon the twin pillars of Ptolemaic geocentric cosmology and the metaphysics of the divine. The framework of emanation is provided by cosmology. The universe is viewed as a series of concentric spheres: the outermost sphere, called the first heaven; the sphere of the fixed stars; and the spheres of Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, the Sun, Venus, Mercury, and finally, the Moon. The mechanics of emanation as a theory explaining the generation of the universe from God draws upon a variety of sources. In its basic premise it represents a radical departure from Aristotle, for whom God was not an efficient cause of the very existence (wujikt) of all other beings, but only the first cause of motion in the universe. Many of the properties of al-Farabl's emanational God are Aristotelian, however: God is one, immaterial, eternal, and

acts of necessity. Most importantly, however, God is characterized by al-Farabl as an intellect whose principal activity is self-understanding, echoing Aristotle's conception of God's activity as a "thinking of thinking" (noesis noeseos). It is God's intellectual activity which, in al-Farabi's scheme, underlies God's role as the creator of the universe. As a result of his self-contemplation, there is an overflow or emanation (fayd) from God of a second intellect. This second intellect, like God, is characterized by the activity of self-contemplation; but it must, in addition to this, contemplate God himself. By virtue of its thinking of God, it generates yet a third intellect; and by virtue of its self-contemplation, it generates the celestial sphere that corresponds to it, the first heaven. Al-Farabl then repeats this dyadic pattern of emanation for each sphere in the cosmology and its corresponding intellect, arriving at a total often intellects other than God.[13] The terminus of the emanational process is our own sublunar world, whose corresponding intellect is none other than the agent intellect familiar from Aristotle's De anima (al-Farabl (1985): 88-107; (1964): 47-8, 52-3).

Through its culmination in the agent intellect, al-Farabl's adoption of the Neoplatonic metaphysics of emanation provides the means whereby Aristotelian philosophy can be placed in a more systematic framework than the Stagirite's own writings allow. For in Aristotelian terms, natural philosophy includes the study of psychology: hence one and the same being, the agent intellect, represents the upper terminus of physics and the lower terminus of metaphysics. In this way, emanation allows al-Farabl not only to fill in the gap between the theological and ontological elements within metaphysics but also to forge a link between the theoretical

sciences of metaphysics and physics that is not clearly articulated by Aristotle himself.

Practical Philosophy

The unity that al-Farabi forges between the theoretical sciences of metaphysics and psychology is also mirrored in al-Farabl's political philosophy which, along with logic, represents the major focus of his philosophical writings. While the rest of al-Farabi's philosophy is generally Aristotelian in character, supplemented by the Neoplatonic elements that have already been noted, al-Farabl's political philosophy is Platonic, and reflects Plato's ideal of basing political philosophy upon metaphysical foundations. Thus, al-Farabl's two principal works on political philosophy – the Siydsah madaniyyah and the Madinah fddilah — also contain the fullest expression of his metaphysical views. Although al-Farabi does devote some attention in these and other works of practical philosophy to ethical issues such as the nature of practical wisdom, the moral virtues and deliberation, most of al-Farabl's interest is on political theory, in particular the requirements of the ideal state and its ruler, and the question of the relationship between philosophy and religion within such a state.[14]

In his work the Tahsil al-saddab ("Attainment of Happiness"), al-Farabi argues for the real and conceptual identity of the notions of philosopher, legislator and Imam, and claims that the diversity of religious and philosophical labels reflects nothing more than different emphases on distinct aspects of a single reality. This means, in good Platonic fashion, that those

who do not attempt to apply their theoretical perfection to practical and political pursuits cannot claim to be true philosophers: such people remain what al-Farabi calls "vain" or futile philosophers. Given the need to communicate this philosophy to the general populace, such a philosopher must presumably also have rhetorical, poetic and imaginative abilities, and thus fulfil as well the conditions of prophecy outlined in the psychological portions of al-Farabl's political works (al-Farabi (1981b): 89-97, (1969a): 43-9; cf. Mahdi (1972a): 188-92).

Of course, al-Farabi recognizes that the ideal combination of prophecy and philosophy, religious and political leadership, and moral and intellectual virtue in a single ruler is something that is seldom if ever realized in political practice.[15] As a result, the harmony between philosophical and religious beliefs that is theoretically possible, but which requires a very specific historical development and fulfilment of these ideal conditions, is not easy, and perhaps even impossible, to realize in practice (al-Farabi (1969b): 152-7). Thus both of al-Farabl's major political treatises also outline the varieties of departures from the ideal state that may occur, following the model of Plato's discussion of virtuous and vicious political regimes in the Republic. Al-Farabi classifies the corruptions of the ideal political union into three general categories: ignorant, wicked and errant cities, each of which has several different types
within it. The ignorant cities all have in common their failure to comprehend the true nature of humanity, its place in the cosmos and, hence, its natural end. In their ignorance of human teleology, they substitute some other false goal for the true end discerned by philosophy. Al-Farabl isolates the following varieties of ignorant cities: (1) indispensable cities,

which seek mere subsistence as their goal; (2) vile cities, which seek only to accumulate wealth; (3) base cities, which exist solely for the sake of sensual gratification; (4) timocratic cities, whose goal is honour and fame; (5) tyrannical cities, in which power and domination of others is the principal goal; and (6) democratic cities, in which there is no single motivating end, but each citizen is left to seek whatever he or she deems best.

The wicked and errant states are those which possess now or once possessed some sort of knowledge of the true human end, but fail none the less to follow that knowledge. Wicked cities are those in which the virtuous end is deliberately abandoned for another one, whereas errant cities are those in which the leader personally has true knowledge of the proper end that his city should follow, but deceives the citizens by presenting them with false images and representations of that end. Finally, al-Farabl also gives some attention to those whom he calls "the weeds" in the virtuous cities, people who, for lack of ability or other baser motives, inhabit the virtuous city and conform to its laws, while failing to participate personally in its goals (al-Farabl (1964): 74-108, Mahdi and Lerner (1963): 35-56; (1985): 228-59).[16]

Although one purpose of the foregoing classification of corrupt states is clearly to educate philosophers so as to enable them to become virtuous leaders of virtuous regimes, al-Farabl's focus upon the proper discernment of the true human end as the defining characteristic of the virtuous city reminds us that the ultimate motivation of his political philosophy is to ensure that the conditions for happiness are met by all people as far as possible. For this reason, al-Farabl concludes his classification of cities and citizens with a

consideration of human happiness in eschatological terms, in which reward and punishment in the afterlife is interpreted in accordance with al-Farabi's belief that human happiness ultimately consists in the assimilation with the agent intellect that is achieved when one reaches the stage of acquired intellect.[17] Only the citizens of the virtuous city will be able to achieve this goal and thereby survive after death when their actualized intellectual souls separate from their bodies. Al-Farabl implies that this immortality is not personal, however, since the body, the principle of numerical diversity within the human species, is no longer present, and hence "the differences of the souls are equally indeterminable in number" (1985: 264—5). Those who lived in ignorant cities will suffer no punishment in the afterlife, since their ignorance was not culpable: they will simply be annihilated as a natural consequence of their failure

to actualize their intellectual powers, which is the condition for the soul's survival after death. The same is true for the citizens who have been misled by their leaders in the errant cities. Punishment in the afterlife is reserved for the citizens of the wicked cities and the rulers of the errant cities, who possessed knowledge of the true end but deliberately rejected it to pursue other ends. Their punishment consists in the simple continuance of their corrupt desires after death, desires which, because of their bodily roots, can no longer be fulfilled and so eternally torment their possessors (al-Farabl (1985): 258-77).

Al-Fārābī's Subsequent Influence

The picture that emerges from the variety of al-Farabl's writings is an impressive one. Al-Farabi's logical and epistemological achievements, which have only recently come to light, have a very modern ring to them: his interest in careful linguistic analysis as an essential tool for philosophical precision, and his broadening and sharpening of the standards by which knowledge is measured and evaluated, have a strong affinity with recent trends in philosophy, in particular within the Anglo-American world. But in al-Farabi these interests were as much a result of the peculiar historical circumstances in which he practised philosophy as were his political and metaphysical teachings. They reflected the need to address seriously the sometimes competing claims between philosophy and religion, and to find a niche for philosophy and its discourse in an Arabic and Islamic milieu. Al-Farabl's interest in types of rationality, in modes of discourse and argumentation, and in the relations between ordinary and philosophical language, are an integral part of his answer to this historical challenge, although they remain philosophically important in their own right.

The linguistic sensitivity that al-Farabl displays, his concern to communicate philosophy to a wide variety of audiences and his careful efforts to assimilate the Greek philosophical tradition into an Islamic context are all hallmarks of al-Farabl's writings that help to explain the high esteem in which he was held by subsequent philosophers in the Islamic,

Jewish, and to a lesser extent Christian, traditions. We have seen the debt that Avicenna openly acknowledged to al-Farabl in metaphysics; Averroes and his fellow Andalusian philosophers also held al-Farabi up as a key authority, especially in logic, psychology and political philosophy. In the Jewish philosophical tradition, Moses Maimonides gave al-Farabl the highest praise among all his predecessors, once again in the area of logic in particular: "As for works on logic, one should only study the writings of Abu Nasr al-Farabl. All his writings are faultlessly excellent. One ought to study and understand them. For he is a great man"

(Introduction to Moses Maimonides (1963): lx). In the Latin West, although al-Farabi's writings were less extensively translated than those of Avicenna and Averroes, works like his Ihsa al-'ulum and Risdlah fiVaql were of central importance in the early transmission of Aristotelian thought, and gave Christian thinkers their first glimpse of the wealth of new philosophical material that was to follow.

NOTES

1 Al-Farabl's full name was Abu Nasr Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Tarkhan ibn Awzalugh (or Uzlugh) al-Farabl. The principal medieval biographies from which information on his life derive are: Ibn al-Nadlm (d. 380/990) (1970): 599-602, 629-31; al-Mas'udl (d. 345/956) (1960): 39-41; Said ibn Ahmad ibn Said al-Taghlibl (d. 463/1070) (1985): 137-40; Ibn Abl Usaybi'ah (d. 668/1269/70) (1965): 92-4, 318, 604-9; Ibn Khallikan (d. 680/1282) (1969-71), 5: 154-7; al-Bayhaql (d. 565/1170) (1946): 30-5; Ibn al-Qiftl (d. 646/ 1248) (1903): 277-9. For convenient summaries of this data

see Walzer (1965): 778-9, as well as Walzer's Introduction to al-Farabl (1985): 2-5; Fakhry (1983): 107-9; and Madkour (1963): 450-2.

2 On the School of Baghdad see Meyerhoff (1930).

3 See Walzer, Introduction to al-Farabi (1985): 2-5 for a summary of these tales; convincing arguments against their historicity are given in Mahdi (1990): 693-4, 705-7, 712-13.

4 Scholarly interpretations of al-Farabl's metaphysical and psychological views written before the mid twentieth century must be approached with caution because of the attribution to al-Farabi of a number of treatises now believed to have been written by Avicenna or one of his later followers. These treatises include the Fusils al-hikdm (in al-Farabl (1890); see Georr (1941-6) and Pines (1951)); the Taliqdtfi'l-hikmah (in al-Farabl (1927); see Michot (1982)); the Zinun al-kabir al-yundni (in al-Farabl (1927); see Druart (1987a): 25 n. 9); and Ithbdt al-mufdriqdt (in al-Farabl (1927); see Madkour (1963): 452). The 'Uyun al-masd'il and the related Dadwi qalbiyyah are also of doubtful authenticity (see Cruz Hernandez (1950-1); Rahman (1958): 21-2), although recently Lameer has argued for restoring the 'Uyun as genuinely Farablan (Lameer (1994): 24-30). Rahman's arguments against this text remain compelling, however. Marmura (1985): 347 and Lameer (1994): 33-43 have questioned as well the authenticity of the Kitdb al-jam' bayna ra'yay al-hakimayn Afldtun al-ildhi iva-Aristutdlis (al-Farabl 1960b), a work in which the traditional Neoplatonic theme of the identity of Aristotle's and Plato's teachings is upheld, and the sole text in which al-Farabl treats the spurious Theology

of Aristotle (based on Plotinus, Enneads, 4-6) as a genuinely Aristotelian text.

5 For general discussions of al-Farabl's logic in its historical context see Abed (1991), Elamrani-Jamal (1983), Eskanasy (1988), Gatje (1971), Hasnawi (1985), Langhade (1981) and Zimmermann in al-Farabl (1981a).

6 The title of the work is usually translated as Book of Letters, although Book of Particles is equally possible. For studies of this text see Arnaldez (1977), Vajda
(1970), Mahdi (1972b).

7 For further consideration of al-Farabl's poetics, see Black (1989 and 1990), Galston (1988), Heinrichs (1978) and Kemal (1991).

8 In addition to the discussion in the Kitdb al-burhdn, al-Farabl also wrote a short independent work on this topic, called the Shard'it al-yaqin ("Conditions of Certitude", in al-Farabl (1986-7) 4: 97-104).

9 For a discussion of other aspects of al-Farabl's treatment of Aristotelian demonstration, see Galston (1981).

10 The only appearances of this term occur in the spurious 'Uyun al-masd'il and Fusus al-hikam.

11 Often these are rendered as "possible" and "active". In the Madinah fddilah, al-Farabl also uses the Alexandrian term "material intellect" as a synonym for the potential intellect.

12 These are the subdivisions of the meanings of "intellect" within psychology, which is itself only one of six meanings of the term identified in the Risdlah fi'l-'aql.

13 The use of a dyadic model separates al-Farabl from earlier Neoplatonic thinkers and from the later Avicenna, who use triadic models to account for the emanation of a distinct rational soul for each celestial body. Al-Farabl does not distinguish the soul as mover of the sphere from its intellect. See, for example, al-Farabl (1964): 34-5; 53.

14 There are numerous studies of al-Farabl's practical philosophy, including Butterworth (1983): 226-30, Daiber (1986a), Mahdi (1975a and 1975b) and Strauss (1945 and 1957). The most comprehensive is Galston (1990).

15 Al-Farabl also allows a plurality of rulers to pool their diverse talents if no one person can be found to combine all of the qualities needed by the virtuous ruler (al-Farabl (1985): 253-4).

16 Al-Farabl also outlines in some detail the nature of the false religious beliefs that underlie the ignorant and errant views of the human end in al-Farabl (1985): 286-329.

17 Of course, the reports about al-Farabl's views in his lost Nicomachean Ethics commentary have made the interpretation of these passages problematic.

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CHAPTER 13

Muḥammad ibn Zakariyyāʾ al-Rāzī

Lenn E. Goodman

꘎

Physician, philosopher, chemist and freethinker, al-RazI (c. 250/864— 313/925 or 320/932), known to the Latins as Rhazes, was born, as his name suggests, in Rayy, near present-day Tehran. Well versed, according to tradition, in musical theory and practice, he is said to have been an alchemist before his formal training in medicine. He headed hospitals in Rayy and later in Baghdad, returning often to Rayy, where he died. His great houses in Rayy and elsewhere in the south Caspian district of Jibal attested his wealth. The author of some two hundred works, he is said to have taught the Jacobite Christian philosopher/translator Yahya ibn Adl (893-974) and was called "the unsurpassed physician of Islam".[1] But later thinkers generally rejected his philosophical ideas, typically with repugnance, although influenced by him even in rebuttal.

Dedicated to the Samanid governor of Rayy, al-Mansur ibn Ishaq (d. 313/925), al-Razi's Mamun was said by ʿAll ibn al-Abbas'(d. 385/994) to omit nothing essential to medical

practice, although offering few explanations of its dicta. Its twelfth-century Latin translation by Gerard of Cremona, the Liber Almansoris, became a mainstay of medical education; Liber nonus, its ninth book, was still used in late sixteenth-century Europe. Al-Razi's Muluki, or Regius, was dedicated to All ibn Weh-Sudhan of Tabaristan. But what is perhaps al-Razi's best-known work was not meant for publication. Often confused with his magnum opus the Kitdb al-jdmV al-kabir ("Great Medical Compendium"), the Continens (Kitdb al-hdwi fi'l-tibb) was al-Razi's private medical journal and notebook.[2] 'Ubaydallah ibn Jibrll, a fifth/ eleventh-century scion of the famous Bukhtlshu' medical family, tells how it was preserved at the instance of the warrior scholar/ statesman Ibn al-Amld (appointed in 327/939 vizier to Rukn al-Dawlah, d. 349/960), who bought the pages from al-Razi's sister and commissioned

al-Razfs students to edit the text. Filling some twenty-five volumes, the Hawi was the most voluminous of Arabic medical texts; its Latin translation for King Charles of Anjou, completed in 1279 by the Jewish physician Faraj ibn Salem ("Farraguth"), absorbed much of the translator's life.[3] Arranged anatomically, "from top to toe", it collated al-Razfs learning and observations on all aspects of pathology, hygiene and therapeutics, using Greek, Byzantine, Syriac and sometimes Indian sources, especially in the tradition from Hippocrates to Ishaq ibn Hunayn (d. 298/910). It included al-Razfs records of his self-treatment when ill. Opinions are noted dispassionately; but the sections regularly end with al-Razfs own views and clinical observations, under the heading li, my own. Al-RazT kept up the file system of the Hawi throughout his life and quarried it in writing his books. Besides the published works identifiable in draft, three nearly

finished books are embedded here in embryo: On Urine, On Fevers and On Crises and Critical Days.[4]

Al-Razfs medical writings included works on diet and treatment; paralysis, arthritis, diabetes, colic and gout; anatomies of the liver, eye, testes, ear and heart; a study on the dilation of the pupil, an abridgment of Galen's (129—c. 199) De pulsibus, and a warning against premature purging of fever patients. Among his most famous works were Gallstones, Kidney and Bladder and Smallpox and Measles, the first work devoted to smallpox, translated over a dozen times into Latin and other European languages. Its lack of dogmatism and Hippocratic reliance on clinical observation typify al-Razfs medical approach.[5] His irreverent spirit peeps out more puckishly from the titles of some of his books on the medical profession: On the Reasons for Peoples Preference of Inferior Physicians, To Whoever is Unattended by a Physician, A Mistaken View of the Function of the Physician, On Why Some People Leave a Physician if he is Intelligent, That an Intelligent Physician Cannot Heal all Diseases, Since that is not Possible and Why Ignorant Physicians, Common Folk, and Women in the Cities are more Successful than Scientists in Treating Certain Diseases – and the Physicians Excuse for This.

Al-RazT heeded the counsel of Galen's work, That the Outstanding Physician must also be a Philosopher. Al-BlrunI (362/973-c. 442/1050) lists some eighty philosophical titles in his al-RazI bibliography, and al-Nadlm lists dozens of his works on logic, cosmology, theology, mathematics and alchemy.[6] Among his writings are a commentary on Plato's Timaeus, perhaps based on the epitome of Galen,[7] a rebuttal of Iamblichus' response to Porphyry's Letter to Anebos,[8] an

appraisal of the Qur'an, a critique of Mu'tazilism, another on the infallible Imam of the Isma ills, a work on how to measure intelligence, an introduction to and vindication of algebra,[9] a defence of the soul's incorporeality, a debate with a Manichaean, and an explanation of the difficulty people have in accepting the sphericity of the earth when they are not trained in rigorous demonstration.

Al-RazI wrote works on eros, coitus, nudity and clothing, the fatal effects of the Simoom on animal life, the seasons of autumn and spring, the wisdom of the Creator, and the reason for the creation of wild beasts and reptiles. One work defends the proposition that God does not interfere with the actions of other agents. Another rebuts the claim that the earth revolves. Al-RazI discussed the innate or intrinsic character of motion, a sore point between Democritean and Aristotelian physics; he wrote several treatments of the nature of matter, and one on the unseen causes of motion. His expose of the risks of ignoring the axioms of geometry may aim at kalām defenders of dimensionless atoms; and his book on the diagonal of the square may have defended his own atomism against the ancient charge, first levelled at Pythagoreanism, that atomism excludes the demonstrated incommensurability of a square's side with its diagonal – a charge disarmed by al-Razl's acceptance of the void and rejection of Aristotle's doctrine of the relativity of space. For al-Razl's absolute space is a Euclidean continuum and need not, like his matter, be composed of discrete, indivisible quanta.

Only a few short works, fragments and essays[10] survive of al-Razl's philosophical writings, but the record of his conversation shows that he regarded philosophy not merely as an adjunct to medical work but as an end in itself. His Tibb

al-rilhanu written for al-Mansur as a companion to the Mansuri, follows al-Kindl's precedent in treating ethics as a kind of psychic medicine or clinical psychology, an approach later used by Ibn Gabirol and Maimonides.[11] Hence the title, Spiritual Physick, as quaintly archaized by Arberry, that is, Spiritual or Psychological Medicine.[12] In an apologia pro vita sua, The Philosophical Way of Life (Kitab al-slrat 'Ifalsafiyyah) al-RazI describes his lifestyle, defensively but revealingly, in some dudgeon with unnamed critics, who apparently took issue with his philosophical hedonism:

In a practical regard, I can say that with God's help and support I have never gone beyond the upper and lower limits [of indulgence and self-denial] I have defined. No act of mine has ever revealed any but a philosophic way of life. I consorted with the ruler not as a man at arms or an officer of state but as a physician and a friend, serving in illness to treat him and improve his body or in health as a companion and adviser. My sole ambition, so help me, was his well-being and that of his subjects. No one has ever seen me avidly pursuing wealth, spending extravagantly, or being disputatious, quarrelsome or unfair. Everyone knows that I am just the opposite, even to the point of often neglecting my own rights huquqi.

In food, drink and entertainment, those who have spent much time with me know that I am not prone to excess.

The same is true in other respects, as those who know me can attest – whether in dress, riding animals, attendants and maids. But in love of learning and dedication to knowledge, those who have spent time with me and know me personally know that from my youth until today my commitment has

been unabating. So much so, that I have never come across a book I had not read or a man I had not met without dropping everything – even at significant harm to my interests – and getting into that book or taking the measure of that man's thinking. My perseverance and dedication reached such extremes that in a single year I wrote over twenty thousand pages in a hand like an amulet maker's. I have kept at work on my big compendium [the Jdmi'] for fifteen years, night and day, until my eyes grew weak and my hand muscles deteriorated, so that now I can no longer read or write. But even so, I have not given up reading or writing in such fashion as I can. For I constantly employ someone to read and write for me.[13]

A contemporary who did know al-Razi enlarges this self-portrait, describing him as an old man "with a large head shaped like a sack":

He used to sit in his reception room [majlis] with his students around him, surrounded by their students, and then still other students. A patient would enter and describe his symptoms to the one he first met. If they did not know what was wrong, he would progress to the next group. If they did not know, al-Razi himself would discuss the case. He was generous, dignified and honest with the people – so compassionate with the poor and sick that he would supply ample food for them and provide them with nursing care … He was never to be seen not taking notes or transcribing information, and I never went in to see him without finding him writing out either a draft or a revision … He went blind at the end of his life.[14]

Al-Razi was enough of a Galenist that he wrote a bibliography of works by Galen unlisted in Galen's own

catalogue or that of the great translator Hunayn ibn Ishaq.[15] But his empiric bent made him chary of authority. His Doubts about Galen[16] rejects Galen's claims as to the superiority of the Greek language and criticizes many of his cosmological and medical views. It claims medicine for philosophy and argues that sound practice depends on independent thinking. Al-Razl's own clinical records, he reports, diverged more often than they confirmed Galen's descriptions of the course of a fever. One urinary disease, which Galen had seen only twice, perhaps because it was "rare in his country", al-Razi had seen over a hundred times. Beyond these matters of sheer experience, al-Razi rejects

the notion, central to the theory of humours, that the body is warmed or cooled only by warmer or cooler bodies, since a warm drink may heat the body to a degree much hotter than its own. Tugging at the edges of the classic tangle we now differentiate under the rubrics of physical and chemical change, he reasons that the drink must trigger a response rather than simply communicating warmth or coldness.

Like Aristotle, al-RazI was impatient with mathematics. He blamed the inadequacies of Galen's theory of vision on an excessive reliance on mathematics, which Galen had imbibed from his mathematician father. Al-Razl's own account was more Aristotelian, tracing visual images from the object to the eye and the optic nerve. And, like Aristotle, al-RazI treated the soul as a substance. The brain was its instrument, like any other organ.

But although al-Razi upheld the substantial, incorporeal soul, and creation, in his own fashion, he was the least orthodox and most iconoclastic of the major philosophers of Islam. To be a philosopher, he had to explain, does not mean belonging

to a sect or school, modelling one's actions and ideas on those of a master. One learns from one's predecessors but can also hope to surpass them. Al-RazI knew that he would never be a Socrates, and he cautioned against anyone's expecting in short order to rival Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Theophrastus, Eudemus, Chrysippus, Themistius or Alexander of Aphrodisias.[17] But he denied the view, widely held in his time and gaining ground once again in our own, that human beings are trapped within the teachings of the great founders of traditions: he told a hostile contemporary, who reports his words incredulously,

You must understand that every later philosopher who commits himself creatively [ijtahada], diligently and persistently to philosophical inquiry where subtle difficulties have led his predecessors to disagree will understand what they understood and retain it, having a quick mind and much experience of thought and inquiry in other areas. Rapidly mastering what his predecessors knew and grasping the lessons they afford, he readily surpasses them. For inquiry, thought and originality make progress and improvement inevitable.[18]

Al-Razl's interlocutor[19] counters that, without intellectual authorities, men would rapidly succumb to. hopeless confusions and contradictions. Like critics of philosophy before and since, he sees philosophical disagreements not as seedbeds of intellectual possibilities but as scandals of intellectual irresponsibility. But al-Razi values independent thinking above consensus. Indeed, he sees it as the key to the liberation of the soul, even if one's thoughts remain inconclusive. All people, he argues, can think for themselves. They do not need a leader or guide to show

them how to live or what to think. Asked how philosophy comports with faith in a revealed religion, he replies: "How can anyone think philosophically while committed to those old wives' tales, founded on contradictions, obdurate ignorance, and dogmatism?"[20] Special prophecy, he insists, is an imposture, a bone of needless contention: "How can you imply that God would prefer one people as the standard bearers of mankind, making all the rest dependent on them? How can you reconcile with the wisdom of the Allwise God's singling out one people in this way, setting mankind at one another's throats, fomenting bloodshed, warfare and conflict!"[21] Turning the tables on the favourite Mu'tazilite argument, Stoic in origin, that God morally must give guidance to humankind, al-RazI argues that divine benevolence precludes special revelation. Prophetic experience is the work of dead souls too ignorant and evil to make a clean break with physicality. Such demonic spirits linger in the world, bound to physicality by sensuous appetites and passions. Finding some vile body as a vehicle, they appear in the guise of angels to deceive and mislead us, so as to cause bloodshed, dissension and destruction among humankind.[22]

What God's goodness demands, al-RazI insists, is guidance for all. This is provided, through the universal gift of intelligence. In the democratic tradition of Epicurean epistemology, heightened by his antagonism to the Ismā'īlī mystique of the infallible Imam, al-RazI insists that no one is wiser than another:

I have no special claim to philosophy over anyone else. I have simply pursued it where others neglected it. They are deprived only by their restiveness with theory, not by any

inner deficiency. The proof is people understand things relevant to their trade and livelihood and handle them perfectly well, applying their ingenuity to devise things that would be much too subtle for many of us. That is because they are interested. If they applied their interest where I have applied mine and pursued what I have sought, they would grasp what I have.[23]

Part of what al-RazI had grasped was that creation would be indefensible against "the eternalists", unless one could posit five eternal beings whose interactions framed the world we know: God, Soul, time, space and matter. In the beginning these five coexisted. God and Soul were beyond time and space. Matter was extended in them, but not throughout them, leaving some room for the void. Matter was not yet in motion. But Soul, passionately desirous of embodiment, confounded herself in matter, setting the world into a confused and disordered motion. God intervened by imparting knowledge to the Soul and order to the movements of nature,[24] averting a cataclysm, and enabling Soul to recognize that the world her motions enlivened was not her true home. God had
permitted her fall, although He did not cause it, because He knew that souls learn only through experience. Now her task, throughout the course of history, is to return to the spiritual world, where all souls are one. Soul falls by a spontaneous motion, neither compelled by nature nor chosen by intelligence. She returns, through God's grace, the intelligence vouchsafed to her.

Nasir-i-Khusraw[25] summarizes the dilemma that al-Razl's use of the gnostic/Neoplatonic myth of the fall of the soul seems intended to dissolve: if God created the world by an act of will, we must ask why now rather than earlier or later? Did

God change His mind or His essence, becoming a Creator after eons, perhaps, of exercising no such intention?[26] But if the origin of the world is a natural event, God is enmeshed in temporality along with the very events His act should ground, and we embark on a spurious search for the cause of the Cause of causes. The only solution, al-RazT reasons, is to find a third alternative to natural and volitional events. This, despite the ridicule of his Ismāʾīlī detractor, he finds in Aristotle's occasional mention of spontaneity, a theme well developed in the Epicurean thesis of the clinamen, or spontaneous swerve of the atoms – a kind of motion readily ascribed to Soul, but not to God.

Eternal matter, space and time sidestep the paradoxes Aristotle had raised against an origin of the world, by admitting that there never was a time before which there was no time or a substrate for the coming to be of matter, the universal substrate of all change. But al-Razi draws the line at change itself: motion is originated. The potential for it in matter requires soul to actualize it; and mind (soul rendered intelligent), to give it order. Creation, then, becomes formatio mundi time and space will be absolute, rather than relative as in Aristotle; and al-RazI will adopt and adapt to his own purposes the atomism of Epicurus, accepting the void (absolute space) and the seeming paradox of the reality of nothingness as the price of his cosmogony. Critics of Avicenna's (Ibn Slna's) eternalism little appreciate that in embracing Plotinian emanation and treating the cosmos as a whole as contingent, although eternal, Avicenna is overcoming what monotheists found most objectionable in the creationism of al-Razi. For Avicenna, as a Neoplatonist, includes matter among the things whose existence depends (eternally) on the act of God. Al-RazI, by contrast, treats

matter, time, space and even Soul, as eternal, hence self-subsistent beings.[27]

The atomism of al-Razi, like that of Epicurus before him and Gassendi after him, but unlike that of the more radical mutakallimun, assigned sizes to the ultimate constituents of things, making them physically, not geometrically, indivisible. And for al-Razi, unlike the kaldm atomists, atomism was an explanatory theory, not a religious doctrine or metaphysical dogma. He takes Galen to task for excluding all other views but that of the atomists. And, unlike Democritus and Epicurus, he does
not attempt to explain everything atomistically, since he is not a materialist. God and the Soul are not atomic phenomena.

Al-Razl's curious doctrine that the void exerts an attractive force[28] may arise from the need to explain the uncaused Epicurean swerve, the clinamen, which al-RazI seems to exploit as a model of the spontaneous motion of the Soul. For al-Razi connects the attractive force of the void with his theory of appetite and thus with his central idea that (kinetic) pleasures are the sensation of repletion. Appetites would result from the progressive distension of the relevant organs, presumably, from rarefaction. Sensuous desire would be the conscious correlate of a literal, physical, lack. And what is free in choice would correspond to the spontaneous movement of the organism to fill some specific void.

Epicurus had counted on the clinamen for exceptions to the rigid determinism of Democritus. If atoms are absolutely solid, the absolute positivity of their impacts would leave no room for chance or freedom – were it not for the absolute emptiness of the void. If asked what would cause the

purported spontaneous swerve that allows both chance and freedom in his world, Epicurus could answer in all candour and consistency: What would prevent it? Al-Razi may have filled in the gap left by such a reductio ad ignorantiam, with a force of attraction (ancestral to the notorious idea of "suction"). Such a force, exerted by the already hypostatic void,[29] would match the "repulsion" (mutual exclusion) of solid atoms, laying down atomic foundations for the two primitive motives of classical physiology, "attraction" and "repulsion", the volitional grounds of pursuit and avoidance.

Al-RazI's chemistry departs from the hermetic style and spiritualizing aims of Jabir ibn Hayyan and his Greek alchemical predecessors and Arabic successors. The Fihrist of al-Nadlm ascribes to him the transcription of a key work of Jabir's into verse, but modern scholars find in al-Razl's writings little trace of what is distinctive in Jabir's thinking. As Peters points out, al-RazI would have no more use for the dogmatic authority of a Hermes Trismegistus than for that of a Muhammad.[30] The mercury he uses comes from Persian cinnabar, a red sulphide of the metal; his sal ammoniac (ammonium chloride), a substance unknown to the Greeks, but called "the eagle" by al-Razi, because of its volatility, "was perhaps obtained from the burning coal deposits of Central Asia". Other substances come from the marketplace, the kitchen, the mine and petroleum well, the laboratory and the artisan's crucible.[31] For al-Razi was plainly not averse to watching traders and craftspeople work, as his remark about their ingenuity reveals.

His alchemy, with its Persian nomenclature and updated stock room, comes closer to chemistry than anything found in the Hellenistic sources. Although he uses blood, urine and

various sorts of plant matter in his preparations, there is nothing here of the "eye of newt and toe of frog"

variety – reagents whose power seeps from their symbolism. But in alchemy, as in medicine and philosophy, al-Razi does not reinvent the wheel. Even his God does not create ex nihilo. Rather, the philosopher's aim is a thorough revision of the tradition. He defends alchemy, in Islamic legal terminology, as "Closer to the Obligatory than to the Prohibited"; he also defends it against the criticisms of the philosopher al-Kindi. Defending the "work" of transmutation, he rejects the idea of "potions". His alchemical practice is (Neoplatonically) naturalistic in assumptions, but empirical in method. Like his successors al-Ghazzall and Maimonides (who also relied on Neoplatonic hylomorphism), al-Razi allies his empiricism to a mistrust of established theory, the theory that arrogates to itself the title of rationality. Like the Greek Peripatetics, he collects anomalous observations, refusing to reject what is perceived merely because it is not explained, and arguing that those who hasten to deny what they cannot prove are inconsistent in accepting, say, magnetism (on which he wrote a treatise). For clearly they cannot explain it.[32] Thus al-Razi prefers the methods to the conclusions of Aristotle.

Al-Blrunl ascribes some twenty-one works on alchemy to him, the greatest of them being the Kitdb sirr al-asrdr or Secretum secretorum. In keeping with al-Razi's very unhermetic spirit, the secrets here are not mystical arcana but trade secrets of the alchemist, which al-Razi freely reveals in discussions of the materials, apparatus and methods of the art. The aim is to traverse the boundaries dividing one type of substance from another, using a powerful substance that will permeate and transform the substrate, by adding or removing

specific properties, transforming base metals into gold or stones into gems. But al-Razi will also use some of his preparations in his medical practice; and his methods as an alchemist smack more of the surgery than of the occult.

His materials, grouped under six rubrics, include four "spirits" (sulphur, arsenic sulphides, mercury and sal ammoniac), seven "bodies" (gold, silver, iron, copper, tin, lead and zinc), thirteen stones (mainly gems, but also glass), five vitriols (plus alum as a sixth), six boraxes and eleven salts. The theory is fairly crude, and not helped much by its overlay upon the familiar Aristotelian/Empedoclean scheme of fire, water, earth and air, and their four fundamental qualities, hot and cold, wet and dry. But experience in the laboratory has by now deformed the symmetry of the Aristotelian scheme, demanding new primary qualities like salinity and inflammability – the latter ascribed to "oiliness" and "sulphurious-ness". Mercury is said to remove moisture; ammonium chloride, earthiness. Sulphur produces whiteness and removes oiliness; calcination dissociates bodies and removes their sulphur or oil; and so forth. Al-Razi's recipes are hard for modern chemists to follow, and his experimentalism is rudimentary, held in check by inadequate theory, just as theory itself is held in check by insufficient experience. But what is striking is the
effort to move from a qualitative scheme of essences in unformed matter to a level of explanation that will treat observed qualitative changes in terms of quantitative relations. Thus all the properties of the five Aristotelian elements – fire, water, earth, air and the celestial substance – heaviness and lightness, opacity and transparency, and the like, are reduced to density and rarity of particles: iron makes sparks when struck on stone, by cleaving the air, rarefying it

into fire. The properties of the elements themselves result from the proportions in them "of absolute matter and the substance of the void".[33] All changes of properties in the substances of nature are explained by "pairing" and "parting" – the combining and separating of Empedocles, now understood not as a blending and tempering of opposed qualities, but quantitatively and reac-tively, in terms of the rearrangement of particles and parts.[34]

Al-Razl's ethics, like his cosmology, profits from Epicurean elements.[35] Like an Epicurean, he is a naturalist and an empiricist in ethics, reaching a mildly ascetic hedonism via a familiar Epicurean route.[36] For he argues that a proper understanding of pleasure does not lead us to seek ever more intense sensations or to mass up pleasurable experiences, as though they could be hoarded, but to the recognition that peace of mind and the surest life, from the standpoint of maximizing human happiness, is the life of prudence, in which modest desires, tailored to the demands of nature, are easily satisfied by modest means. The sybaritic life is a trap which leads not to enhanced but to ever diminished enjoyment:

You need to know that those who consistently give precedence to their appetites, feeding and fostering them, reach a point, as a result, where they are no longer able to enjoy them, or to give them up. Thus those who are addicted to orgasms with women, or to drinking wine, or listening to music, do not enjoy these things – although they are some of the most powerful and instinctual pleasures of our nature – as do those who are not addicted to them. For to those who are dependent on them they become mere states of mind like any other, matters of familiarity and habit. Yet those who are so

inured to them are not readily able to shake them off. For they have become, as it were, necessities for them, rather than niceties or refinements.[37]

Al-Razi wrote a separate work on pleasure, defining it as a form of repose.[38] All (kinetic) pleasures are the sensed return of the body to its natural state, from which it has been removed, either suddenly and sensibly, or gradually and insensibly. Thus all pleasures presuppose a prior pain (more properly: a dislocation, since the "pain" need not be felt).[39] The doctrine may be guided by Plato's Timaeus. But the model, and the confinement of the issue to hedonic concerns, is paradigmatically
Epicurean – fed, in part, by the early Sceptic ideal of the good life. For Ibn al-Qiftl and others rightly see here a connection with Pyrrho's doctrine of repose. Perhaps al-Razi, in his naturalism, simply rederives the physiology of pleasure as a return to the resting state from Plato's analysis of desire, much as Epicurus did.[40] For al-Razi plainly relies on Plato's argument that the greater the appetite the harder it is to fill, making a life devoted to satisfying the appetites (which grow in response to their satiation) about as sensible as trying to carry water in a sieve.[41] But al-Razi also seems to use an Epicurean model when he argues that all pleasures and pains are transitory in so far as they are dislocations from and sensed returns to the natural state.[42]

Like an Epicurean, al-Razi finds the optimum of pleasure not in a seesaw of sensations but in a moderate life, meeting the needs of nature, not straying far from the physical norm of natural adjustment to our milieu. In place of Aristotle's sophisticated and intellectualist anatomy of the virtues, he offers an anatomy and catalogue of human vices: excess in

food or drink, sexual activity, or even music, is unhealthy, he argues, trading on his medical authority. But, in an argument echoed by both Saadiah and Maimonides, he holds that denial too can be unwholesome.[43] We must seek the middle ground, understood not simply as an Aristotelian mean of appropriateness to be located by reason but largely physiologically, in terms of the requirements of nature. For these alone, al-Razi argues, show us the need to rein in our passions. Anger in excess defeats its biological purpose of self-preservation and becomes self-destructive, like the anger of Galen's mother, who, in her frustration, once tried to bite off a padlock. Social climbing and ambition for rank and office are similarly self-defeating.[44] Lying is rejected not on the (deontic) grounds that it is intrinsically wrong but on the prudential, Epicurean grounds that the liar will never be trusted and can never enjoy peace of mind. The Ismāʾīlī author Hamld al-Dln al-Kirmanl (d. 411/1020) criticized al-Razi on this score: Had al-Razi known how ruinous lying is to the soul, he argues, adopting the perspective of virtue ethics pioneered in Islam by Ibn Miskawayh, he would never (as he does, following Plato) have made an exception to the prohibition of lying, for the sake of saving a human life.[45]

Like Epicurus, al-Razi deems it a moral error to base ethical judgments on any considerations beyond personal pleasure in the sense of ataraxia. His entire ethics is focused on the appeal to reason to control passion (al-hawd). And, as Mohaghegh remarks, "Razi uses the word hawd more than any other Muslim moral philosopher", speaking of the need to combat, suppress, restrain and rein it in.[46] He analyses all virtues and vices by way of the resultant prudential standard. Thus, stinginess results from a miscalculation about one's real

desires, and so can be refuted (and cured!) by an appeal to reason. Here the Socratic tendency of the soul

becomes a kind of moral therapy of the sort that Aristotle sometimes practised. Al-RazI tells, for example, of treating a stingy man by calling his attention to his true desires and then prevailing upon him to practise spending modest sums. Rational psychiatry does its moral work by placing reason in the service of our own wholesome hedonic intentions, aiding us to the good life – first by clarifying the true nature of pleasure and then by reminding us (against the unreason of the passions) of the effectual means to our (rationally edited) ends.

Maimonides, who excoriates al-Razl's Epicurean view that evils outweigh goods in this life,[47] none the less follows his example in ethics – not to the extent of abandoning virtue ethics and eudaimonism or treating pleasures as the only good (the false assumption he exposes at the heart of the Epicurean dilemma), but to the extent that his important ethical work, the Eight Chapters, includes not only an anatomy of the soul but also chapters on its illnesses and their cure, and a prescription for moral weaknesses modified unabashedly from al-Razl's model:

if a man appears to have developed the trait of depriving himself of anything good (because of niggardliness) … and we wish to cure him of this illness, we must not order him merely to be more liberal. That would be like treating a man who had a high fever with some mild dose that would not break his fever. No, what we must do is have him spend extravagantly, over and over again, so many times that his propensity to be stingy disappears and he is nearly a spendthrift. But we do not let him become one; we order him

to keep up his generous actions but guard against both excess and deficiency.[48]

Where Maimonides sees some therapeutic value in temporary excess, al-RazI had prescribed only modest spending, lest one feed the passions that are peculiarly drawn to excess. In context, Maimonides is explaining the relative and temporary value of ascetic exercises, although rejecting asceticism as a way of life. His therapeutic model, couched in a disagreement with al-RazI, is entirely Razlan.

Al-Razl's ethics is consistently prudential. Even the excessive intel-lectualism that he seems to diagnose in himself, following the advice of Galen, that we may discover our own vices by heeding the criticisms of our enemies,[49] is recognized as a vice by its destructiveness to our health and peace of mind, and by the inevitable frustration met by too lofty an intellectual ambition. Thus, as I argued years ago, "pleasure" for al-RazI here "becomes the judge of reason, not reason of pleasure".[50] Excessive or impatient eagerness to learn is a vice because it makes one prone "to delusion and melancholia".[51] The analysis is no different from that al-Razi provides of those who are addicted to romance – or power[52] – or to the case of the ophthalmic child who compulsively rubs his eyes,
eats dates and can't be kept from playing in the sun,[53] or the grown man who seems to be unable to stop playing with his beard.[54] Granted al-Razi does, in the case of romantic love[55] (a special bugbear of Epicureans[56]), lapse into almost pietistic language about the need to keep the soul, and not just the body, clean.[57] His central theme is clear when he classifies the affliction of the lover, etiologically, along with that of the

alcoholic, as a form of dependency, or, to use his word, addiction.[58]

Like Epicurus, al-Razi has an interest in the pathological side of religion and hopes that reason can dispel certain religious compulsions, in the interest of mental health, or moral sanity. Ritual (madhhab) he argues, pertains to the passions, not the mind: "Cleanliness and purity must be judged solely by the senses, not by deduction, and treated in accordance with perception, not presumption."[59] It is compulsive to demand levels of purity that are warranted neither by the demands of religion (!) nor even by the responses of squeamishness. For, al-Razi argues, neither religion nor sensibility can respond rationally to impurities that cannot be sensed. Al-Razi's rejection of excessive fastidiousness as a vice is in keeping with his psychiatric understanding, particularly of melancholia, that is, depression.[60] It betrays him into a stance whose hygienic dangers will remain unseen until the times of Semmelweiss and Pasteur. But it reveals both the depth and the target of his naturalism. For his point is that purity should be a physical not a notional matter, and his remark that neither religion nor revulsion can respond to what remains unseen has a normative rather than a descriptive force. For religions in general and the Ismā'īlī Islam al-Razi confronted in particular make quite an issue of unseen, symbolic purity and impurity. That is what al-RazI insists is a matter of passion, not of reason. In religion, as in life in general, passion (hawd) is the enemy.

Part of the profit of his physiological understanding of pleasure, al-Razi argues, is that it frees one from the fear of death. Escaping that fear is of moment to al-Razi not only for the specific and immediate mental peace it brings, but for

longer range moral reasons as well. For all vices, he argues, following the lead of Epicurus, result from obsessive desires, which are themselves products of the fear of death: "As long as the fear of death persists, one will incline away from reason and towards passion (hawa)."[61] Immortality for al-Razi is an object of desire and to be pursued as such, by Socratic, Platonic, Aristotelian means. Its pursuit, which Epicureanism eschewed, is justified on prudential grounds – partly because it is understood here (as it was not in Epicureanism) as a prima facie good – and partly on the grounds that the hope of immortality serves the Epicurean end of freeing us from the fear of death. For monotheism has banished the terror of a pagan, diabolical afterlife; and Islam, at least for al-Razi, has failed to restore it. But for those who cannot accept the reality of immortality, because they believe that the soul dissolves with the

body, a more characteristically Epicurean consolation remains: "For pain is a sensation, and sensation is a property only of the living being."[62]

Al-RazI tries hard to apply al-Kindi's prescription for banishing anxiety and sorrow – considering one's loved ones as already lost, for example, and recognizing that death only removes one to a higher place.[63] But he admits that this is hard: the fear of death "can never be banished altogether from the soul, unless one is certain that after death it shifts to a better state" – a conclusion al-RazI acknowledges to be fraught with difficulties: "For this rubric would require very lengthy argumentation, if one sought proof rather than just allegations [khabar]. There really is no method whatever for argument to adopt on this topic, least of all in this book. For the subject is too elevated and too broad as well as too long, as I have said. It would require examination of all faiths and

rites that hold or imply beliefs about an afterlife and a verdict as to which are true and which are false" – a task al-RazI has no intention of attempting. He excuses himself by adopting the committed but mildly, and appropriately, agnostic lead of Socrates,[64] treating immortality and dissolution disjunctively: For those who are certain of a better state in the hereafter, death should hold no fear.[63] Yet the Epicurean idea that death "is nothing to us" can still join hands with the Biblical idea (Job 3: 13) of death as surcease. Putting aside the vexed (yadtarru) and problematic thesis of an afterlife, al-RazI argues, we can satisfy those who are convinced that the soul perishes with the body, by showing them that even without immortality "death is more salutary for man than life", since in death there is no pain; whereas in life pain is the inevitable concomitant of pleasure.[66]

NOTES

1 The encomium is from Sa'id's Tabaqdt al-umam (Beirut, 1912): 52—3.

2 The Hdwi was published at Hyderabad in Arabic in 1955. Before his death, al-RazI published four medical books under the title Kitab al-hdwi. But he can hardly be blamed for using the same title (literally, "The Collection") as was later chosen by his students for the posthumous compilation of his files.

3 Ibn Abl Usaybi'ah, 'Uyun al-anbaft tabaqdt al-atibbd' (Cairo, 1882), 1: 314; see M. Meyerhof, "Thirty-three Clinical Observations by Rhazes", his, 23 (1935): 321—56.

The Latin Continens was printed at Brescia in 1489 and repeatedly in the next century.

4 See Albert Z. Iskandar, "The Medical Bibliography of al-Razl", in G. Hourani (ed.), Essays on Islamic Philosophy and Science (Albany, 1975): 41—6.

5 See W. A. Greenhill, trans., A Treatise on the Smallpox and Measles (London, 1847); P. de Koning, trans., Traite sur le calcul, les reins et la vessie (Leiden, 1896).

6 Al-BlrunI, Risdlah fi Fihrist kutub M. b. Zakariyd' al-RdzT (Paris, 1936); ed. with Persian trans., M. Mohaghegh (Tehran, 1984/5); al-Nadlm, Fihrist, trans. B. Dodge (New York, 1970): 82, 377, 435, 599, 701-9.

7
Galeni compendium Timaei Platonis, 14, ed. P. Kraus and R. Walzer in Plato Arabus (London, 1951): 19, 65—6. But al-Blrunl ascribes translations as well as abridgments to al-Razi, and even mentions a poem of his, "in the Greek language". Al-Razi knew Plutarch's On the Production of the Soul in the Timaeus, as Frank Peters points out. Peters writes: "No Arabic version of a Platonic dialogue has been preserved. And yet Ibn al-Nadim, writing in the late tenth century at the height of Islam's reception of Hellenism, knew … of translations of the Republic, the Laws, the Sophist, the Timaeus, and finally the Letters. But as soon as we approach more closely to the works themselves, we find ourselves in the presence of epitomes rather than translations" (Allah s Commonwealth (New York, 1973): 287-8).

8 Peters writes: "Iamblichus the author of On the Mysteries of the Egyptians is transformed into the mysterious Anebo (Anabun'), the priest to whom Porphyry directed the original letter…. We do not, of course, possess the Greek of Porphyry's Letter to Anebo>, though the Arabs certainly did, at least in part" (Allah s Commonwealth'. 291). Iamblichus answers Porphyry in his De mysteriis, trans. Thomas Taylor as On the Mysteries of the Egyptians, Chaldeans and Assyrians (London, 1968 [1821]). Although the name Iamblichus vanishes, al-Razi would side with Porphyry's critical questioning, counter to Iamblichus' work, which is couched as The Answer of the Preceptor Abammon to the Epistle of Porphyry to Anebo.

9 Although it has earlier roots, algebra was established in Arabic mathematics in 236/850, by al-Khwarazml's use of two methods for reducing specific problems to canonical form, in his Kitab al-mukhtasar ft hisdb al-jabr wa'l-muqabalah', see Encyclopaedia of Islam, 2nd ed. (Leiden), s.v. "al-djabr".

10 The term is used by al-Razi himself, as al-Nadim notes. The essay form grew from the epistolary style in early Arabic prose and so bore the name risalah, originally, a letter.

11 See Ibn Gabirol, Tikkun middot ha-nefesh, trans. Stephen S. Wise, as On the Improvement of the Moral Qualities (New York, 1902); Maimonides, Shemonah Perakim, trans. Joseph I. Gorfinkle, as The Eight Chapters of Maimonides on Ethics (New York, 1912); both works were reprinted in New York by AMS in 1966.

12 The Spiritual Physick ofRhazes (London, 1950); and see M. Mohaghegh, "Notes on the 'Spiritual Physick' of al-Razi", Studia Islamica, 26 (1967): 5—22.

13 In Paul Kraus, Abi Mohammadi filii Zachariae Raghensis (Razis) opera philo-sophica fragmentaque quae supersunt (Cairo, 1939; Pars Prior, all that was published; repr. Beirut, 1973): 109-10.

14 M. ibn al-Hasan al-Warraq, quoting an elderly contemporary who knew al-Razi, ap. Ibn al-Nadim, Fihrist, trans. Dodge: 701—2. Al-Razl's blindness was apparently caused by a cataract, developed not long before his death. He refused surgery, saying that he had seen enough of the world.

15 See L. E. Goodman, "The Translation of Greek Materials into Arabic", Cambridge History of Arabic Literature: Religion, Learning and Science in the Abbasid Period (Cambridge, 1990): 487-91.

16 See S. Pines, "Razi Critique de Galien", Actes du Septieme Congres International d'Histoire des Sciences (Jerusalem, 1953): 480-7.

17 The Philosophical Life, trans. A. J. Arberry: 704; Spiritual Physick, trans. Arberry: 67.

18
Munazarat bayn al-raziyayn, in Kraus: 301: "idh kana'l-bahth wa'l-nazar wa'l-ijtihad yujibu 'l-ziyadah wa 'l-fadl".

19 Al-Razi's interlocutor was Abu Hatim al-RazI (d. 322/ 933), chief lieutenant to the Isma'lli dai of Rayy, and later dai

himself. He is credited with winning over Ahmad ibn All, the governor of Rayy, to Isma'llism. He reports his debates with our al-RazI in A 'lam al-nubuwwah, ed. Salah al-Sawy with an English introduction by S. H. Nasr (Tehran, 1977); extracts are translated by F. Brion, Bulletin de Philosophic Medievale, 28 (1986): 134-62.

20 Munazarat. 303: "muqayyam 'aid al-ikhtilafdt, musirr 'aid al-jahl wa'l-taqlidr

21 Munazarat", ed. Kraus: 295. Al-Razi's The Tricks of the Prophets or Ruses of the Self Styled Prophets, cited in al-Blrunl: 17 (cf. Mutahhar al-Maqdisl's Kitab al Bad' wal-ta'rikh, ed. C. Huart, 4: 113), seems to have inspired later thinkers and fed the enlightenment interest in the theme of the Three Imposters. Al-Razl's contemporary, the heretical Shi'ite and quondam Mu'tazilite Ibn al-Rawandl (d. c. 910) made an even broader attack on revealed religion, cloaking his critiques of prophetic miracles and even the inimitable style of the Qur'an, under the thin veil of an ascription to the "Brahmins" – whose rejection of special prophecy was a staple of Islamic dogmatics.

22 Nasir-i Khusraw, in Kraus: 177; Arabic: 178. Al-Razl's realism about apparitions, his assumption that the something in fact is seen by prophets, echoes the Epicurean claim that the gods must be real, since men have seen them; To Menoeceus, in Diogenes Laertius, Lives of the Eminent Philosophers, 10.123—24; Cicero, De natura deorum, 1.46; for the veracity of the senses cannot be questioned (Kyriae Doxai, 24). But the claim that wicked spirits linger in the world, trapped by sensuality, is Platonic.

23 Munazarat. 296. Restiveness here is idtirdb; cf. the Epicurean idea of trouble or disturbance. Al-RazI brings his "democratic" or sensualist epistemology to the defence of absolute space, arguing from the untutored intuitions of the common man against the sophisticated sophisms of Aristotle on the relativity of space, as Pines points out in the Dictionary of Scientific Biography, s.v. al-RazI.

24 Cf. Najm al-Dln al-QazwInl on Fakhr al-Dln al-Razl's Kitab muhassal afkar al-mutaqaddimln wa'l-muta'akhirm min al-'ulamd' wa'l-hukamd' almutakallimin, in Kraus: 203, where it is explained that for al-Razi matter is eternal but form is temporal and imparted.

25 Kraus: 282—3; see M. Mohaghegh, "Razl's Kitab al-'ilm al-ilahi and the Five Eternals", Abr-Nahrain, 13 (1973): 16-23; L. E. Goodman, "Razl's Myth of the Fall of the Soul: Its Function in his Philosophy", in G. Hourani (ed.), Essays on Lslamic Philosophy and Science (Albany, 1975): 25—40.

26 This argument runs back to Parmenides and was used by Proclus (A.D. 410—85) in his eighteen arguments for the eternity of the world. Al-RazI had written a book against Proclus, clearly not satisfied with the responses of John Philoponus (sixth century), which had proved so welcome to al-Kindl and would be used by al-Ghazzall and Maimonides, although rebutted by al-Farabl.

27 See L. E. Goodman, Avicenna (London, 1992): 63, 79.

28 See Kraus: 265.

29 Al-RazI bit the bullet as to the substantiality of "space", sharply distinguishing space or the void from the Aristotelian "place", the outer boundary of a body: "Clearly time and space are not accidents but substances. For the void does not subsist 'in' a body, since, if it did, it would be destroyed when that body was destroyed, as growth is destroyed with the destruction of that which grows" (Kraus: 198, 11. 20-1; cf. al-Razfs further arguments on p. 199).

30 Allah's Commonwealth: 371.

31 J. R. Partington, "The Chemistry of Razl", Ambix, 1 (1938): 193. Sal ammoniac is known to the Chinese sources from the second century C.E.

32 Cf. Cicero, De divinatione, 1.39.86: "You ask why everything happens. You have a perfect right to ask, but that is not the point at issue now. The question is, Does it happen, or does it not? For example, if I were to say that the magnet attracted iron and drew it to itself, and I could not tell you why, then I suppose you would utterly deny that the magnet had any such power. At least that is the course you pursue in regard to the existence of the power of divination, although it is established by our own experience and that of our forefathers."

33 Nasir-i-Khusraw, in Kraus: 172.

34 Fihrist, trans. Dodge: 703, 707-8.

35 See L. E. Goodman, "The Epicurean Ethic of Muhammad b. Zakariya' al-Razi", Studia Islamica, 34 (1971): 5-26.

36 Al-Razfs approach was not without its influence on far more traditional figures. Ibn al-Jawzi, for example, borrowed both the title and the organization of his own ascetically inclined Tibb al-ruhani from al-Razi.

37 Spiritual Physick, ed. Kraus: 22-3; cf. Arberry's rendering: 25. See Vatican Fragments 21, 25, 33, 35, 58-9, 67-9.

38 See Ibn Abl Usaybi'ah; Kraus: 139; cf. ataraxia in Kyriae Doxai, 3, and Saadiah on rest in the Book of Critically Selected Beliefs and Convictions, 10.16. For al-Razfs theory of pleasure, see L. E. Goodman, "Razf s Psychology", Philosophical Forum, 4 (1972): 26-48.

39 Spiritual Physick, chapter 5, trans Arberry: 39.

40 See Plato, Phaedo, 60a, Phaedrus, 258e, Republic, 9.583d; cf. Philebus, 42-3, 51-2; and the resolution at Laws, 1.644c; Epicurus, Kyriae Doxai, 3: "The magnitude of pleasure reaches its limit in the removal of all pain"; cf. Vatican Fragments, 14.

41 Plato, Gorgias, 492-3.

42 See Kraus: 143; Epicurus, Kyriae Doxai, 4.

43 Cf. Epicurus, Vatican Fragments, 63: "There is a limit even to simplicity, and one who ignores it is as much in error as one who goes too far."

44 Mehdi Mohaghegh, Filsufi Rayy (Tehran, 1970): 22, traces al-Razfs disparagement of the quest for rank to Galen's On the Passions and Errors of the Soul (Columbus, 1963), a

work that al-Razi seems to have followed on a number of points. The rejection of a political life and the argument that the quest for rank finds no natural or inherent limit are both Epicurean, and this work may provide a key link between al-Razfs ethical calculus and that of Epicurus.

45 See Mohaghegh: 19.

46 Mohaghegh: 11 notes with amusement that Ibn al-Jawzi misread (or played upon?) zamm, "reining in", as dhamm, "censure or blame" and went on to use the phrase as the title of his well-known Dhamm al-hawa ("The Censure of Passion").

47 See Guide, 3.12, citing al-Razfs Theology, see Rambam (New York, 1976), 287; Saadiah had absorbed the Razl an line of argument.

48
Eight Chapters, 4, trans. L. E. Goodman, Rambam, 227.

49 Al-Razi cites and summarizes Galen's Good Men Profit by their Enemies and How a Man may Discover his own Vices in Spiritual Physick, chapter 4; Kraus: 35. As Walzer pointed out (Encyclopaedia of Islam (Leiden), s.v. akhlaq) the two Galenic titles represent parts of Galen's On Moral Character but they circulated as independent works in Arabic and were used by Ibn Miskawayh as well as al-Razi; see Mohaghegh: 13-14.

50 See L. E. Goodman, "The Epicurean Ethic of al-Razi": 17.

51 Spiritual Physick, chapter 11, trans. Arberry: 67.

52 Spiritual Physick, chapter 5, trans. Arberry: 38.

53 Spiritual Physick, chapter 2, trans. Arberry: 24.

54 Spiritual Physick, chapter 6, trans. Arberry: 85.

55 Al-Razi, like most Arabic writers, including Saadiah after him, clearly distinguishes the erotic dalliances of romantic love from coitus per se; see L. E. Goodman, "Saadya's Ethical Pluralism"', Journal of the American Oriental Society, 100 (1980): 407-19, "The Sacred and the Secular: Rival Themes in Arabic Literature", in M. Mir (ed.) The Literary Heritage of Islam: Studies in Honor of James Bellamy (Princeton, 1993): 287-330.

56 "The pleasures of love never did anyone any good, and one is lucky if they do him no harm" (Epicurus, Vatican Fragments, 51; cf. Lucretius, De rerum natura, 4.1056-191).

57 Spiritual Physick, chapter 5, trans. Arberry: 48; similarly with gluttony in chapter 13, trans. Arberry: 76-7.

58 Spiritual Physick, chapter 14; al-Razl's word for an addict is mudmin, Kraus: 23, 11. 1, 2.

59 Spiritual Physick, chapter 16, ed. Kraus: 79; trans. Arberry: 86.

60 See al-Razl's extracts from Rufus of Ephesus, in F. Rosenthal, The Classical Heritage in Islam (London, 1965): 198-200.

61 Spiritual Physick, ed. Kraus: 93, trans. Arberry: 103; cf. Kyriae Doxai, 11-12, 30.

62 Spiritual Physick, ed. Kraus: 93, trans. Arberry: 103; cf. Epicurus, Kyriae Doxai, 2.

63 Al-Kindl "Essay on How to Banish Sorrow", ed. with Italian trans, by H. Ritter and R. Walzer, in Uno scritto morale inedito di al-Kindi (Rome, 1938); cf. Spiritual Physick, chapters 11-12. Note al-Razl's use of al-Kindl's term daf banishing or repelling, in the titles of these chapters.

64 Apology, 42: "Now it is time that we were going. I to die and you to live, but which of us has the happier prospect is unknown to anyone but God."

65 Indeed al-Razi relies on transmigration for the only acceptable justification of the slaughter of domestic animals. For, consistent with his hedonism, he regards the pain of brutes as morally decisive – justifiable only for the alleviation or prevention of greater pain. Thus hunting is acceptable only if directed against carnivores, whose nature leads them to cause more pain than they will suffer; abuse or overwork of domestic animals, only, for some greater good, as, for example, when a horse is spurred on to save a human life, preferably that of a learned, good or useful human being; but slaughter of domestic animals for meat, only because it facilitates the deliverance of their souls to a higher stage.

66 Spiritual Physick, chapter 20, ed. Kraus: 92-4; trans. Arberry: 103-5.

CHAPTER 14

Al-'Amiri

Everett K. Rowson

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In its methodological sophistication, its metaphysical elaboration and its distinctive approach to the problem of revealed religion, the thought of al-Farabl represents not only an advance on that of al-Kindl but a break with it. The cumulative achievements of the Baghdad translators, and in particular the intellectual discipline of the Baghdad philosophical school led by al-Farabf s teacher Matta ibn Yunus, would seem to relegate the earlier al-Kindl to the role of a primitive initiator, enjoying some historical importance but little if any abiding philosophical influence. That such was not the case, however, is clear from the works of his most prominent epigone, the Khurasanian philosopher Abu'l-Hasan Muhammad ibn Yusuf al-Amiri (d. 381/992).

Of al-Kindl's immediate pupils we know relatively little, and only two of them can be said to be more than shadows. Ahmad ibn al-Tayyib al-Sarakhs! (d. 286/899) was a prolific author of philosophical, scientific and literary works who enjoyed the patronage of the caliph al-Mu'tadid but was subsequently imprisoned and then executed for political offences; none of his works appears to be extant, and we have

no direct evidence for any of his students.[1] Somewhat better known is the Khurasanian Abu Zayd al-Balkhi (d. 322/934), who, after studying for some years with al-Kindl in Iraq, returned to his native Balkh, where he wrote extensively in many fields, including philosophy, science and literary topics, as well as religion and theology.[2] Modern scholars have been chiefly aware of al-Balkhl's influential geographical work, but a treatise on medicine and ethics, entitled Sustenance for Body and Soul, has also been preserved.[3] The legacy of al-Kindl was carried on in the following generation by two known pupils of al-Balkhi, the obscure Ibn Farighun,[4] author of a Compendium of the Sciences? and al-Amirī.

Like al-Balkhi, al-Amiri was a native of eastern Iran, and spent most of his life there. As he died only in 381/992, he must have been a very

young man when he studied with his aged master, and it was only some two decades after the latter's death that he set out for the West, spending some five years in Rayy, at the court of the Buyid vizier Ibn al-'Amld (d. 360/970), a patron of philosophers who also employed Ibn Miskawayh (d. 421/1030) as his librarian. From Rayy al-'Amiri made at least two visits to Baghdad, where he came into contact with the philosophers of the local school, now led by the Christian Yahya ibn Adl (d. 364/974); but according to al-Tawhldl (d. 414/1023), the brilliant and sardonic chronicler of intellectual life in the city at this time, al-'Amiri was not well received by his Baghdad colleagues, who treated him as an unsophisticated provincial, and he soon retreated to the more congenial society of the East. In his later years al-'Amiri enjoyed the favour of prominent figures in the Samanid realm of Khurasan and Transoxania, and resided both in the

dynasty's capital, Bukhara, and its leading city, Nishapur, where he died in 381/992.[6]

The titles of some twenty-five of al-'Amiri's works are known, and of these six (or seven, depending on a contested attribution) are extant and have been published.[7] With the possible exception of Ibn Miskawayh, then, al-'Amiri is the best-documented Muslim philosopher from the half century between al-Farabl and Ibn Slna. That he perceived himself as continuing a Kindl "school" is clear not only from his own explicit statements – he praises al-Kindl and al-Balkhl, contrasting their thought with the "ravings" of Abu Bakr al-RazI (d. 313/925) and avoiding any mention of al-Farabl or other Baghdad philosophers[8] – but also from both the range and content of his oeuvre. We have fragmentary evidence for his commentaries on parts, at least, of the Aristotelian Organon, and some titles which suggest direct treatment of topics in Aristotelian and Neoplatonic physics and metaphysics, as well as other titles concerned -like many of al-Kindl's and al-Balkhl's works – with such non-philosophical subjects as medicine, horticulture and good manners. But it is striking that in his extant works al-'Amiri is concerned above all to show how philosophy can be applied to questions of a theological nature, and how philosophy and Islam can be not only reconciled but treated as complementary avenues to truth. It is in this approach, and in his relatively conservative treatment of Islam itself, that al-'Amiri shows himself to be a true Kindian.

Perhaps the most eloquent testimony to al-'Amiri's views on reason and revelation is his best-known work, An Exposition on the Merits of Islam.[9] Addressing himself to a lay audience, he argues in this work for a rational investigation of religious

belief and praxis, and, on the basis of his claim that the ultimate purpose of knowledge is virtuous action, attempts in a programmatic comparison of Islam with other religions to show how Islam is more successful than its rivals at achieving this goal. In his introductory chapters, al-'Amiri reviews the utility of both the

secular sciences – represented by the quadrivium – and the religious sciences – Tradition, Law and Theology – and defends the value of each of these two kinds of knowledge against attacks from adherents of the other; he further insists on the equal validity of each of the religious sciences, supporting the study of Law against conservative traditionists, of Theology against conservative jurisprudents and of Tradition against rationalizing jurisprudents and theologians. Singled out by him for particular criticism are certain philosophers, pseudo-sophisticates and "esoterists" (by which he means certain Isma'lll circles) who claim that the sufficiently enlightened can dispense with observance of religious duties. In general, al-Amiri maintains the superiority of the religious to the secular sciences; while reason can testify to the validity of revelatory knowledge, prophets are superior to sages. He then devotes individual chapters of this book to showing Islam's superiority to Christianity, Judaism, Magianism and Manichaeism with respect to belief, ritual, political organization, social structure and intellectual endeavour, and in an appendix defends Islam against attacks on its purported approval of violence, its factionalism, the ambiguity of its Scripture and its problematic claim to having been prefigured in Jewish and Christian Scripture.

There is an apparent reference to this work in an account by al-Tawhidl of a celebrated altercation between al-Maqdisi, a member of the Brethren of Purity (Ikhwan al-Safa', see next

chapter), and the religious conservative al-Jarlrl, in which the latter's arguments point up the basic difference in attitude towards the revealed religion between members of the Kindl school and the Baghdad philosophers.[10] Attacking the Brethren for their attempt to harmonize philosophy with the religious law, al-Jariri refers to previous attempts to do something of a similar nature, giving three specific examples: Abu Zayd al-Balkhl, who compared philosophy and the Shari'ah to a mother and a wet-nurse, Abu Tammam al-Nlsaburi, an obscure philosopher with Isma'lll ties, and al-Amiri, whom al-Jarlri describes as persecuted for his godless views, forced to seek sanctuary with Ibn al-Amld, and attempting to gain favour with the masses by writing books in support of Islam. In this same passage, al-Tawhldi depicts his master, Abu Sulayman al-Sijistanl of the Baghdad school of philosophy, as equally opposed to the kind of harmonization envisaged by the Brethren, albeit for reasons very different from those of al-Jariri: in contradistinction to such philosophers as al-Balkhl and al-Amiri, the interconfessional Baghdad school found it in their interest to keep their philosophical discussions as far away from the domain of revealed religion as possible.

Besides his general defence of Islam, al-Amiri also applied philosophical arguments to specific theological questions, as can be seen most clearly from his discussion of the fate of the individual soul after death in his book On the Afterlife.[11] Relying heavily on a lost Neoplatonic commentary on Plato's Phaedo, al-'Amirl reproduces in this work a series of standard arguments for the immortality of the soul, accompanied by a survey of Aristotelian psychology as modified in the Alexandrian Neoplatonic tradition. Granting that the pagan Greek philosophers did not acknowledge the

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resurrection of the body, although they accepted both the immortality of the soul and its reward and punishment in the afterlife, al-Amiri presents the Qur'ānic revelation concerning the Garden and the Fire as a necessary supplement to philosophical analysis, providing crucial information inaccessible to the unaided human intellect, but retains a prudent agnosticism about the exact form of bodily resurrection. In the introductory chapters of this work he offers a survey of early Greek philosophy, summarizing the lives and opinions of Empedocles, Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, and asserting historical connections between the prophetic and philosophical traditions; these chapters proved to be the single most influential piece of all of al-Amiri's work, reappearing in some form in most of the major doxographies of the following centuries.

In another pair of works, al-Amiri applies Aristotelian and Neoplatonic concepts to the fraught question of free will and predestination. The Deliverance of Mankind from the Problem of Predestination and Free Will?[2] the earlier of the two, focuses on this question as formulated by Islamic theologians, but attempts to resolve it through an analysis of Aristotelian causation; the conclusion is presented as a "middle path" between the two extremes, and identified with a celebrated pronouncement by Abu Hanifah denying both divine compulsion (jabr) and unrestricted human delegation of power (tafwid). Here, as elsewhere in al-Amiri's writings, his theological affiliation seems to be essentially Maturidite; the Mu'tazilites are occasionally attacked by name, the Ash'arites more obliquely by doctrine but anonymously. In this work al-Amiri also explicitly reiterates a fundamental doctrine of al-Kindl, identifying God's act of creation ex nihilo (ibda) as a unique form of causation, distinct from and

superior to the four Aristotelian causes. In his later Determination of the Various Aspects of Predestination[15] he repeats many of these arguments, but treats the entire question in a more purely philosophical way, relying particularly on Aristotle's discussion of chance in the Physics.

An ostensibly more technical work, Vision and the Visible,[14] is primarily devoted to reviewing various Greek theories in optics and the physiology of vision; yet here again al-Amiri shows his concern with theological questions, launching into a spirited attack on theological occasionalism, and framing the entire discussion with two laments on the anti-intellectualism of the present ^lay.

While various aspects of al-Amiri's philosophical tenets emerge in all these works, the only extant example of something approximating an
exposition of a philosophical system is his Chapters on Metaphysical Topics,[15] which consists primarily of a paraphrase of the celebrated Liber de causis, itself a reworking of Proclus' Elements of Theology. While recognizing, like al-Kindl, the basic hypostases of Plotinian Neoplatonism, al-Amiri's system lacks both the complexities of Proclean henads and the cascading intellects associated with the celestial spheres which are found in al-Farabl and Ibn Slna. His concentration on the hypostasis of Soul, its intermediary position in the universe and the ethical consequences of this position, is most comparable to what we find in the ethical works of his contemporary Ibn Miskawayh, with whom he undoubtedly shared some basic sources.

Although he rarely cites Greek philosophers or their works by name, al-Amiri clearly had access to a wide range of

translated Greek materials, particularly pseudonymous ones. Besides the De causis, he quotes passages from the Theology of Aristotle, the Liber de porno, and the bizarre doxog-raphy of pseudo-Ammonius, and the influence of other, unidentifiable works is detectable throughout his ceuvre. The span of Greek sources at his command would be increased even more if we could be sure of his authorship of the work entitled On Happiness and its Creation in Human Life?[6] a major doxography of ethical and political thought in which extensive citations from Plato and Aristotle, as well as various pre-Socratics and later Greek philosophers, are juxtaposed with others from Sassanian wisdom literature and from the Qur'ān and Hadith, major Islamic religious figures and Arabic poets, to form a coherent disquisition on happinessin both the individual and the polity.

Al-Amiri's interpretation of Greek philosophy as a whole, and his particular brand of Neoplatonism, can be widely paralleled in works by his contemporaries, in particular Ibn Miskawayh and, with reservations, the Brethren of Purity; but, in his particular concern to convince the religiously committed of the acceptability and utility of this philosophy, he appears to be the last representative of a trend initiated by al-Kindl. To the extent a reconciliation between philosophy and Islam of enduring influence was to be achieved, it was on a very different basis, that of the thought of another Khurasanian philosopher from the next generation, Ibn Slna. Ibn Slna had little use for any of his predecessors, with the exception of al-Farabl, and he attacked the Kindians in general as well as al-'Amiri by name;[17] whether, and in what ways, al-Amiri's thought may nevertheless have contributed to Ibn Slna's new synthesis is a question in need of further investigation.

NOTES

1 See Franz Rosenthal, Ahmad b. at-Tayyib as-Sarashsi (New Haven, 1943).

2 See Encyclopaedia of Islam, new edition (Leiden and London, 1954), s.v. "al-Balkhl, Abu Zayd"; E. K. Rowson, "The Philosopher as Litterateur: al-Tawhldl and His Predecessors", Zeitschrift fur Geschichte der Arabisch-Islamischen Wissen-schaften, 6 (1990): 50-92.

3 Masdlih al-abdan wa'l-anfus, facsimile edition (Frankfurt am Main, 1984).

4 See Encyclopaedia of Islam, new edition, Supplement, s.v. "Ibn Farighun".

5 Ibn Farfun, JawdmV aWulum, facsimile edition (Frankfurt am Main, 1985).

6 For al-Amirf s biography, see Everett K. Rowson, A Muslim Philosopher on the Soul and Its Fate: al-Amirfs Kitdb al-Amad 'aid l-abad (New Haven, 1988): 3-7, and Joel L. Kraemer, Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam: The Cultural Revival during the Buyid Age (Leiden, 1986): 233-41.

7 Al-Amiri's works are surveyed in Rowson, A Muslim Philosopher. 7—17, and M. Minovi, "Az Khaza'in-i Turklyya", Majalla-yi Ddnishkdda-yi Adabiyydt_yDdnishgdh-i Tehran, 4, 2 (1954): 75.

8 Rowson, A Muslim Philosopher: 76—7.

9 Al-Tldm bi-mandqib al-Isldm, ed. A. Ghorab (Cairo, 1967).

10 Al-Tawhldl, al-Imtd' wal-mu'dnasah, ed. A. Amin and A. al-Zayn (Cairo, 1953), 2: 13-23; see Joel L. Kraemer, Philosophy in the Renaissance of Islam: Abu Sulayman al-Sijistani and His Circle (Leiden, 1986): 230-43; Humanism: 168-74, 237f; Rowson, A Muslim Philosopher. 22-A.

11 Al-Amad 'ala l-abad, in E. K. Rowson, A Muslim Philosopher.

12 Inqadh al-bashar min al-jabr wa'l-qadar, ed. S. Khalifat, Rasd'il AbVl-Hasan al-Amiri wa-shadhardtuhu'l-falsafiyyah (Amman, 1988): 247-71.

13 Al-Taqrir li-awjuh al-taqdir, ed. S. Khalifat, op. cit.: 301-41.

14 Al-Qawlfi'l-ibsdr waVmubsar, ed. S. Khalifat, op. cit.: 409-31.

15 Fusul fi'l-ma'dlim al-ildhiyyah, ed. S. Khalifat, op. cit.: 361-79; see also E. K. Rowson, "An Unpublished Work by al-'Amirl and the Date of the Arabic De causis Journal of the American Oriental Society, 104 (1984): 193-9.

16 Al-Sa'ddah wa'l-is'dd, facsimile of copy by M. Minovi (Wiesbaden, 1957-8); for the problem of attribution, see Rowson, A Muslim Philosopher. 15-17.

17 See Dimitri Gutas, Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition (Leiden, 1988): 292.

CHAPTER 15

The Brethren of Purity (Ikhwān al-Ḷafā')

Ian Richard Netton

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Introduction: The Cauldron of Syncretism

The Brethren of Purity, or Ikhwan al-Safa' as they are called in Arabic, hold a certain place in the affections and interests of those who have studied the intellectual development of Arabic and Islamic thought. They are particularly beloved by the Isma'llls who claim them as their own (see Netton (1982): 95-104). They continue to intrigue because of the synthetic quality of their thought and the mystery of their identity and place of origin. This chapter will concentrate principally on the former and only briefly refer to the latter. Their thought is indeed worthy of more than superficial study, for the Brethren are as famed in the Middle East as Hegel, Kant and Voltaire in the West. Their self-designation as "Sleepers in the cave of our father Adam" (R, 4: 18), clearly deriving from the Qur'ān and the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus legend, certainly reflects

the mystery of their identity. And while there are some things that do remain unclear about their thought – for example, were they, or were they not, Isma'llls? – there is much that may be said with satisfaction and positive conviction about that thought. In particular, while it would be unfair and unjust to characterize it as a total syncretism, there is no doubting the impact of the ideas of Plato, Aristotle, and especially Plotinus, on the philosophy of the Brethren of Purity. Such elements will be surveyed in this chapter.

A useful starting point in any analysis of this philosophy is the City of Basrah in southern Iraq. Like that philosophy it was – and is – open to much outside contact and influence. In the forefront of the news in recent times because of the 1980s Iran—Iraq War and the 1991 Persian
Gulf War, it was famed in the Middle Ages as a cradle of Arabic philology. It was home to a huge variety of immigrants from areas as diverse as Sind, India and Malaya. Its commercial and financial acumen made it the medieval equivalent of London or Tokyo today with all the cosmopolitan overtones which mention of such cities implies. And we start with reference to the city of Basrah because most scholars believe that this was the Brethren's home. "The rest", as I have put it elsewhere, "must be conjecture. Arabic sources differ over their individual names and perhaps it is a successful measure of the secrecy which they sought for themselves in their age that we know so little about their lives in our own. Like the deserted camp of the beloved in early Arabic poetry, the traces of their passage have become faint and shadowy" (Netton (1982): 1).

We will not, therefore, agonize here over the precise identities of these philosophers, nor their Age beyond situating them

loosely in the tenth or eleventh century A.D. We may, however, with some certainty, reject from the start the extraordinary idea that the real author of the writings of the Brethren of Purity, their Epistles (Rasd'il), was the fourth Islamic Caliph All ibn Abl Talib (d. 40/661), or the sixth Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (d. 148/765).

The Brethren of Purity produced as their magnum opus what was gathered into a veritable encyclopedia, a corpus of fifty-two Epistles of varying length and quality which survey a huge range of subjects ranging from music to magic. They are heavily didactic in tone and highly eclectic in content, providing both a pedagogical and a cultural mirror of their Age and its diverse philosophies and creeds. The Epistles themselves neatly divide into four main parts: fourteen focus on the mathematical sciences, seventeen deal with the natural sciences, ten with the psychological and intellectual sciences, and eleven conclude the latest four-volume Arabic edition by concentrating on what are called metaphysics or the theological sciences. A key aspect of the Epistles is its central section featuring a long debate between humans and delegates from the animal kingdom; this fills much of the twenty-second Epistle which goes by the name of On How the Animals and their Kinds are Formed (Netton (1982): 2). It has been magisterially surveyed, analysed and translated by L. E. Goodman (1978).

Seyyed Hossein Nasr (1978: 39) has warned that "the sources of the Ikhwan should not, however, be considered solely as historical texts". He translates part of a passage (R, 4: 42), in which "they themselves inform the reader of the universality of their sources, which include Revelation and Nature in addition to written texts", as follows:

We have drawn our knowledge from four books. The first is composed of the mathematical and natural sciences established by the sages and philosophers. The second consists of the revealed

books of the Torah, the Gospels and the Qur'ān and the other Tablets brought by the prophets through angelic Revelation. The third is the books of Nature which are the ideas [suwar] in the Platonic sense of the forms [ashkdl] of creatures actually existing, from the composition of the celestial spheres, the division of the Zodiac, the movement of the stars, and so on … to the transformation of the elements, the production of the members of the mineral, plant and animal kingdoms and the rich variety of human industry … The fourth consists of the Divine books which touch only the purified men and which are the angels who are in intimacy with the chosen beings, the noble and the purified souls …

We should not, therefore, lose sight of the sheer diversity of source material drawn upon by the Brethren of Purity, even though in this chapter we will restrict ourselves to the more "philosophical" elements of those sources. Moreover, all that follows presupposes a background or, to put it another way, a cauldron of syncretism, a Middle Eastern milieu familiar with the thought of both Aristotle and Plotinus which it absorbs but dresses in its own forms, not without some change, from much (but by no means all) of the translated Aristotelian corpus. We note, finally, the existence in the background of pseudo-Aristotelian texts, like the notorious Theologia Aristotelis, which had far more in common with the philosophy of Plotinus than that of the Stagirite (see Netton (1989): 12-13). With all this, it is small wonder that the Epistles of the Brethren of Purity have been characterized as syncretic.

Pythagoras: Philosophy and Number

Even the most cursory reading of the Epistles highlights the Brethren's devotion to number. It is good that one study mathematics and number before other (higher) branches of knowledge like physics, logic and divinity (7?, 1: 49). The Brethren held "the Pythagorean belief that the nature of created things accords with the nature of number" and stated: "This is the school of thought [madhhab] of our Ikhwan" (Netton (1982): 10). They also followed the Pythagoreans in their devotion to certain numbers: in particular the Brethren manifested a particular reverence for the number four, a reverence which transcended the sphere of pure mathematics: they drew attention, for example, to the four seasons, four winds, four directions and four Empedoclean elements. There were four natures and four humours. The lute had four strings and even matter was divisible into four types. The reasoning behind such veneration for this particular
number is not hard to find: God created "most things in groups of four and … natural matters are arranged in fours principally to correspond to, or harmonise with, the four spiritual principles which rank above them, consisting of the Creator, the Universal Intellect, the Universal Soul and Prime Matter" (Netton (1982): 11).

For the Brethren one could learn about God's unity by knowing something of number and they stated that Pythagoras held that the second led to the first (R, 3: 200). Yet with all their devotion to number the Brethren managed

to avoid the prime Pythagorean error, noted by Aristotle, in which a number and the thing(s) numbered were confused. They also rejected Pythagorean notions of transmigration, holding rather that purification achieved in a single life on earth gained humans admission to Paradise (Netton (1982): 12-14).

Plato: Philosophy and the Hero

Despite some references there is no deep discussion of, or involvement with, the Platonic Forms or "Ideas" (ideai) in the Epistles of the Brethren of Purity. These Epistles can in no way be described as Platonic. What the Brethren do stress very powerfully, however, is their conception of the Platonic philosopher as hero. In passages which show some familiarity with at least the outlines of the Phaedo and Crito dialogues, Socrates is held up for admiration and respect as a great philosopher who knows how to die bravely. It is also interesting that the Brethren orient their description of Socrates' death scene towards their own doctrines. Terminology is put into Socrates' mouth which is heavily reminiscent of the Brethren's own chosen hierarchy (Netton (1982): 16—19). Plato's own view that the body was an impediment to the achieving of spiritual perfection was also shared by the Brethren of Purity, but the latter rejected Plato's epistemology with its suspicion of sensory perception. The Brethren "explain carefully that the method of instruction should be through the senses, then by the intellect and finally by logical deduction; but without the senses one can know

nothing" (R, 3: 424). The contrast between this view and that of Plato could not be more apparent (Netton (1982): 17-18).

Aristotle: Philosophy, Definition and Structure

Loosely speaking, from a philosophical point of view, we can say that the Epistles of the Brethren of Purity rest on twin foundations: Aristotelianism
and Neoplatonism. What must be enunciated and stressed right at the beginning however, in any coverage of either the Aristotelianism or the Neoplatonism of the Brethren is that they used the doctrines of Aristotle and Plotinus and shaped them in accordance with their own beliefs, not always producing a hybrid which either Aristotle or Plotinus would have recognized.

That the Brethren respected Aristotle is not hard to prove. Quite apart from the influence of the Stagirite on the content and terminology of their Epistles, the Brethren produced "a story about Muhammad in which the Prophet claims that, had Aristotle lived to know the Islamic message brought by him, the Greek philosopher would have undoubtedly been converted to Islam" (7?, 4: 179; Netton (1982): 19).

Apart from direct references to, and Epistles based upon, several of Aristotle's major treatises (see especially Netton (1982): 115 n. 79), the primary contribution of Aristotle to the writings of the Brethren was in the field of metaphysical terminology, an area frequently invaded by the terminology

of Neoplatonism. Thus we find substance and accident, matter and form, potentiality and actuality, and many other Aristotelian terms being peddled throughout the text of the Brethren. Two examples must suffice here of the way in which the basic terms of Aristotle were Neoplatonized: the first relates to Aristotle's Classical four causes:

Of the four causes of plants, two are recognizably Aristotelian: the material cause of plants is the … four elements while the final cause is the provision of nourishment for animals; but the efficient cause is the powers of the Universal Soul and the formal cause is linked with astral reasons involving a lengthy explanation.

(R, 2: 155; Netton (1982): 25)

My second example illustrates what the Brethren did with Aristotle's categories. If hierarchy, division and emanation may be said to be the key features of Neoplatonism, then the first two at least are apparent in full measure in the following:

substance divided first into its corporeal [jusmdm] and spiritual [ruhdm] aspects. Corporeal substance then further divided into that which pertained to the celestial sphere [falaki] and the natural sphere [tabi'i], and so on outwards until a final division into animals born from the womb, those born from an egg, and those born from decayed matter, was reached. Quantity [kamm] was similarly divided into the separate [munfasil and the linked [muttasil].

(R, 1: 408-9; Netton (1982): 37)

Most extraordinary perhaps of the metamorphoses which overtake Aristotle's terms is the following, in which form is described in terms of substance:

The Ikhwan wrote: Know that form [al-surah is of two kinds: constituting [muqawwimah] and completing [mutammimah]. The scholars called constituting forms substances [jawdhir] and completing forms accidents [a'rdd.

(R, 1: 401; Netton (1982): 45)

Plotinus: Philosophy, Emanation and Hierarchy

The principal focal point in any study of the Rasd'il or Epistles of the Brethren of Purity must be their Neoplatonism which pervades the entire text. A survey of the Brethren's use of the main features of this doctrine will therefore here conclude this chapter.

Both emanation and hierarchy, those key features of classical Neoplatonism, figure prominently in the thought of the Brethren of Purity. Making use of a sun simile, which has analogies with an earlier comparison employed by Plotinus, the Brethren tell

how the generosity and virtues which were in God emanated [afddah] from Him "by the necessity of wisdom [bi-wdjib al-ḥikmah]" in the same fashion that light and brightness emanated from the eye of the sun. The first product of this unbroken emanation [fayd was called the Active Intellect,

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from which emanated, in turn, the Passive Intellect [al-'Aql al-munfa'il] or Universal Soul; from the latter emanated Prime Matter.

(Netton (1982): 35)

However, a major difference between Plotinus and the Brethren of Purity is instantly perceptible in the latter's hierarchy of being. Plotinus postulated a relatively "simple" structure, at least in its composition if not in its theological elaboration, of One, Intellect and Soul. The Brethren enlarged this hierarchy of being into a ninefold emanationist structure comprising:

The Creator

↓

The Intellect

↓

The Soul

↓

Prime Matter

↓

Nature

↓

The Absolute Body

↓

The Sphere

↓

The Four Elements

↓

The Beings of this World (mineral, plant & animal)

(R$_y$ 1: 54, 7?, 3: 56, 181)

It seems that in such complexity and multiplication of hypostases, the spirits of the later Neoplatonic masters like Iamblichus (c. A.D. 250— c. 326) and Proclus (A.D. 412—85) are abroad. And it is clear from the briefest study of the Epistles of the Brethren of Purity that the concepts of emanation and hierarchy dominate the entire text in a profound and penetrating fashion, even invading and "Neoplatonizing" Aristotle's own categories (see Netton (1982): 36-7). As for their view of God, it is obvious that the Brethren perceived Him in two different and unhar-monized ways: on the one hand, God takes on many of the classical Neoplatonic characteristics like unknowableness; on the other, elsewhere in the text, He is the traditional Qur'ānic Deity, acting in a recognizable Islamic fashion. No specific attempt is made by the Brethren to reconcile what are often opposing or contradictory views of Divinity (see Netton (1982): 39-42).

The Neoplatonism of the Epistles produced by the Brethren of Purity cannot be overemphasized. Its permeation of these writings, together with the Aristotelian and other elements, makes their corpus one of the most syncretic known in the history of the intellectual development of Islamic thought. That said however, we must not leave their writings giving the impression that they constitute a total unoriginal syncretism and nothing else. The Epistles are not simply a sum total of influences and no more. The reality is much more subtle, as I hope will be apparent
from the concluding paragraphs. The syncretism probably explains some of the contradictions in their text; but their intention highlights their true originality.

What the Brethren of Purity were really intent upon, and the goal towards which they employed every Islamic and un-Islamic doctrine which they could muster, was salvation to be achieved by purification in this life. As I have summarized it elsewhere:

They were Neoplatonic teachers intent on, and infatuated with, the propagation of a doctrine of purity, achieved through asceticism, self-denial and righteous living, as a passport for entry to the Islamic Heaven. The pillars of this doctrine were tolerance, mutual help [ta'awun] and a philosophy of eclecticism which utilised any text which might bolster their own teaching.

(my italics: Netton (1982): 108)

Were the Brethren of Purity really Muslims? The point can be argued both ways and must depend on how exclusivist or inclusivist an image one has of the Islamic religion anyway

(see Netton (1982): 106). Perhaps a neat way of characterizing them, or summing them up, is to describe the Brethren as "Wisdom Muslims" (Netton (1981): 67). They had an immense veneration for knowledge and wisdom. Revering the intellect they often despised the body in a truly ascetic and Platonic fashion (ibid.: 66). Their desire for thoroughness in thought, and support for their ideas, led them to a thorough eclecticism which sometimes embraced the Christian and the Indian as well as the further reaches of mathematics. Were they really philosophers or mere intellectual magpies without a system? If one defines a philosopher according to the actual etymological sense of that word, then the answer must be a resounding "yes". They may not have produced a single "tidy" system but neither did Wittgenstein! Their text may appear sometimes to be shot through with contradictions but there is no doubting that it is underpinned by a genuine philosophical and theological stance, that of salvation via asceticism and wisdom.

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CHAPTER 16

Ibn Sīnā

Shams Inati

❦

Life and Works

Ibn Slna, Avicenna (370/980-429/1037),[1] also known as al-Shaykh al-Ra'ls ("Master and Head")? is among the very few medieval Muslim thinkers to have written an autobiography, which was completed by his student Abu 'Ubayd al-Juzjanl.[2] This autobiography/biography was later transmitted by a number of biographers, including al-Bayhaqi (d. 565/1170), al-Qiftl (d. 646/1248), Ibn Abl Usaybi'ah (d. 669/1270) and Ibn Khallikan (d. 680/1282).[3]

Ibn Slna was born in Afshanah (a small village neighbouring Bukhara, the capital of the Samanid dynasty), where his father Abd Allah, originally from Balkh, met and married Sitarah. They had three sons, All, al-Husayn (Ibn Slna) and Mahmud. When Ibn Slna was about five years of age, the family moved to Bukhara. There the father was appointed governor of Kharmayathnah, a village in the suburbs of Bukhara.

The rest of the story of Ibn Slna's life, education and career is well known, and there is no need to recount it here in detail. Suffice it to say that the most striking features of this story, as he and al-Juzjanl tell it, are (1) his completing the study of the Qur'ān and Islamic literature by the age of ten and the rest of the sciences, including Islamic law, astronomy, medicine, logic and philosophy, by the age of eighteen, and (2) his enormous productivity in spite of the unstable political conditions under which he lived that forced him at times to flee from one territory to another, to move in disguise and even to be imprisoned. His great achievement in the various branches of learning seems to have resulted from a rare memory that enabled him to retain by heart, for example, the Qur'ān and Aristotle's Metaphysics; a high intellectual curiosity that helped him consider and solve difficult problems even in his sleep;[4] and an inner determination that generated extraordinary physical and
intellectual energy. The number of works he wrote (estimated to be between 100 and 250),[5] the quality of his work and his other involvement in medical practice, teaching and politics all reveal an unusual level of competence.

At a very early age, Ibn Slna was introduced to various religious, philosophical and scientific teachings. For example, he was introduced to the Epistles of the Brethren of Purity and Isma'llism by his father, who was a member of this sect. He was also exposed to the Sunni doctrine, as his fiqh teacher, Isma'll al-Zahid, was a Sunni, and to Twelve-Imam Shi'ism. In addition, he was given some background in logic, geometry and astronomy by his other teacher, al-Natill. He exercised his independence of thought very quickly, however. First, he dispensed with teachers, continuing his education on his own; and second, he did not adhere to any of the doctrines

to which he was exposed. Rather, he drew on various sources, selecting only what he considered convincing. Thus, we see in his system traces of Platonism, Aristotelianism, Neoplatonism, Galenism, Farablanism and other Greek and Islamic ideas. His system is unique, however, and cannot be said to follow any of the above schools. Even al-Shifd', which reflects a strong Aristotelian tendency, is not purely Aristotelian, as it is usually considered. The theory of creation, for example, which is basically Neoplatonic, and that of prophecy, which is Islamic in essence, are but two examples of its many non-Aristotelian teachings. Al-JuzjanI confirms the uniqueness of this work and asserts that it is nothing but the product of Ibn Slna's own thought.[6] Ibn Slna himself makes a similar point, stressing his originality in this work, especially, in the Logic and Physics.[7]

The most important of Ibn Slna's books are al-Qanun fi'l-tibb ("The Canon of Medicine"), al-Shifd' ("Healing"), al-Najdh ("Deliverance"), (Uyun al-ḥikmah ("Sources of Wisdom"), Ddnishndma-yi 'ald'i ("The Book of Science Dedicated to Ala' al-Dawlah") and al-lshdrdt wa'l-tanbihdt ("Remarks and Admonitions"). Al-Qanun fi'l-tibb consists of five parts. Translated into Latin a number of times, it was considered the most important medical source both in the East and in the West for about five centuries (i.e., until the beginning of the eleventh/seventeenth century) and continues to be the primary source of Islamic medicine wherever it is practised to this day, such as the Indo-Pakistani subcontinent. The enormous amount of material in al-Shifd', which is the most detailed philosophical work of Ibn Slna, is grouped under four main topics: Logic, Physics, Mathematics and Metaphysics. Logic is divided into nine parts, Physics into eight, and Mathematics into four. Physics (with the exception of the two parts dealing

with animals and plants, which were completed after Mathematics) was the first to be written, followed by Metaphysics, then Logic, and finally Mathematics. Al-Najdh, which is a summary of al-Shifd', also consists of four parts. The Logic, Physics and Metaphysics

of this work were prepared by Ibn Sina, and the Mathematics by al-Juzjanl. 'Uyun al-ḥikmah, known also as al-Mujaz ("Epitome"), seems to have been intended for class instruction in logic, physics and metaphysics. This is evident from the simplicity, clarity and brevity with which the work is presented. Danishnama-yi 'alal also consists of four parts and is particularly significant in that it is the first work of Islamic Peripatetic philosophy in the Persian language. Al-Ishdrdt wa'l-tanbihat, which is the most mature and most comprehensive philosophical work of Ibn Sina, also consists of Logic, Physics and Metaphysics. It closes with a treatment of mysticism, a treatment that may be classified more properly under ethics considered in its Sufi sense than metaphysics. In addition, Ibn Sina left a number of essays and poems. Some of his most important essays are Hayy ibn Yaqzan ("The Living Son of the Vigilant"), Risalat al-tayr ("The Epistle of the Bird"), Risalah ft sirr al-qadar ("Essay on the Secret of Destiny"), Risalah Ji'l-'ishq ("Essay on Love") and Tahsil al-sa'adah ("Attainment of Happiness"). His most important poems are al-Urjuzah fi'l-tibb (an iambic poem on medicine),[8] al-Qastdat al-muzdawijah (an ode in couplets),[9] and al-Qastdat al-'ayniyyah (an ode whose verses end with the letter ').[10] He also wrote a number of Persian poems.

Division of the Sciences

Ibn Sina understands "the purpose of philosophy to be the determination of the realities of all things, inasmuch as that is possible for a human being".[11] There are two types of philosophy, theoretical and practical. The former seeks knowledge of the truth; the latter of the good.[12] The purpose of theoretical philosophy is to perfect the soul through knowledge alone. The purpose of practical philosophy is to perfect the soul through knowledge of what must be done, so that the soul acts in accordance with this knowledge.[13] Theoretical philosophy is knowledge of things that exist not owing to our choice and action. Practical philosophy is knowledge of things that exist on account of our choice and action.

The individual subjects of theoretical knowledge are of two main types: those to which movement can be attached, such as humanity, squareness and unity; and those to which movement cannot be attached, such as God and the intellect. The former are again divided into those that cannot exist unless movement is attached to them, such as humanity and squareness; and those that can exist without any movement being attached to them, such as unity and multiplicity. The former of the last two types is either such that it cannot be free from movement either in reality or in thought (e.g., humanity and horseness), or such that it can be free from movement in thought but not in reality (e.g., squareness).[14] There are, therefore, three branches of theoretical philosophy: that which

deals with things inasmuch as movement is attached to them both in reality and in thought; that which deals with things inasmuch as movement is attached to them in reality but not in thought; and that which deals with things inasmuch as movement is attached to them neither in reality nor in thought, regardless of whether movement can be attached to them, as in the case of unity, or cannot be attached to them, as in the case of God. The first is physics, the second is pure mathematics and the third is metaphysics.[15]

Practical philosophy, on the other hand, is concerned with learning one of the following: (1) the principles on which public sharing among people is based, (2) the principles on which personal sharing among people is based, or (3) the principles on which the affairs of the individual are based. The first is the management of the city, referred to as political science; the second is home management;[16] and the third is management of the individual, referred to as ethics.[17] The principles of practical philosophy are derived from the divine Sbari'ah, and its complete definitions are made clear by the divine Shari'ah.[18] The benefit of the science of management of the city is to make known the manner in which sharing among people occurs for the purpose of the well-being of the human body and of the preservation of humanity. The benefit of the science of home management is to make known the type of sharing that must take place among the members of the same home in order to ensure their well-being. Such sharing occurs between husband and wife, parent and child, and master and slave. The science of management of the individual yields a twofold benefit – to make known the virtues and the manner of acquiring them in order to refine the soul, and to make known the vices and the manner of avoiding them in order to purify the soul.[19]

Only an outline of the most important aspects of Ibn Slna's philosophy can be provided here. The most essential elements of his logic, which he considers the introductory part to philosophy,[20] are discussed in Chapter 48 below. Only a sketch of his general logical scheme will be given in this chapter.

Logic

Ibn Slna considers logic as the key to philosophy, whose pursuit (knowledge) is the key to human happiness. Logic performs this function by helping to derive unknown concepts and judgments from known ones, thus increasing our degree of knowledge (concepts are mental objects with no affirmation or negation; judgments are mental objects with affirmation or negation). Logic does this by acting as a set of rules for distinguishing the valid from the invalid explanatory phrases, which embody concepts and are the instruments for moving from known
concepts to unknown ones, and proofs, which embody judgments and are the instruments for moving from known judgments to unknown ones. Since the valid leads to certitude and the invalid to falsehood, knowledge is attained only through the use of logic, except when, on rare occasions, God provides this knowledge without any human effort.[21]

While the logician's function is to open the way for the knowledge of the natures of things, he or she is not concerned with such natures in themselves or as they exist externally or in the mind, but only with concepts, representing these natures under the aspect of being subject or predicate,

individual or universal, essential or particular.[22] Only when the concepts of the natures of things are considered inasmuch as they have certain states and a certain relationship to each other can they help to move thought from the known to the unknown. Even though the primary concern of the logician is concepts inasmuch as they are arranged in a certain manner, the logician must deal with expressions, as they are the only way to reason about or to communicate concepts.[23] With this in mind, Ibn Slna opens his logical treatises with a discussion of expressions, beginning with single expressions, the smallest elements of the explanatory phrase and proof.

As the ultimate goal of the logician is to pave the way for knowledge of the natures of things, universal expressions that mirror universal concepts, which in turn mirror these natures, must be his or her concern. That is why most of the discussion of the single expression focuses on the study of universal terms (the five predicables): genus, species, difference, property and common accident. The main types of the explanatory phrase, definition and description, are then introduced. The former, which consists of a genus and a difference or differences, is said to be the most reliable form of the explanatory phrase.

The proof, which utilizes explanatory phrases as its parts – these are the propositions or premises – is of three types: syllogism, induction and analogy. The most reliable form of proof is the syllogism, which is also of three types: the conjunctive, the conditional and the exceptive. The propositions that form the premises of the various types of the syllogism fall into nine categories. Each of these categories derives its assent or judgment from a different source, which will be indicated here in parentheses following

the name of the category of propositions: sensible (from the external senses only); experiential or observational (from memory of repeated sense experience); based on unanimous traditions (from multiple testimonies); received (from scholars or respected religious leaders); estimative (from the estimative power); widespread (from being widely known); presumed (from the realization that the opposite is possible); imagined (from resemblance to propositions involving assent); primary (from the clarity of reason).[24] Demonstration is the most reliable form of the syllogism; composed of propositions characterized by certainty, it
leads to a conclusion with certainty. Such propositions are either primary, experiential, sensible or widely known. A demonstration requires three elements: those principles with which the demonstration is made (the premises), those issues that are the object of demonstration (the problems), and those subjects in which demonstration is made. Ibn Slna usually closes his logical discussions with a study of ambiguities, whether in expression or in meaning.

Physics

Physics is concerned with the study of certain principles and of the things that are attached to natural bodies. These principles are mainly three: matter, form and the agent intellect.[25] This intellect is considered a natural principle inasmuch as it is the cause of holding matter and form together and, as such, is the cause of the existence of natural bodies. Only inasmuch as it has this relation to the physical realm is the agent intellect discussed in physics, and not inasmuch as it has such and such a nature or such and such a

relation to separate principles or intelligibles. The things that are attached to natural bodies include motion, rest, time, place, void, the finite and so forth.

For example, every natural body is said to have a natural place and a natural shape. All natural motions lead to a creative, circular motion that is not subject to generation and corruption. This circular motion belongs to the heavenly bodies, which are followed by the bodies that are subject to generation and corruption. The first of the latter type of bodies in existence is the four elements: water, air, fire and earth. These elements are subject to the celestial influences.[26] When the four elements come together, their mixtures vary in temperament owing to the influence of the celestial powers. This variation in temperament results in the composition of these elements: minerals, plants and animals (the last and highest of whom are human beings). The closer their temperament is to equilibrium, the higher the form of the natural body. For this reason, there is a gradation in being from minerals to plants to animals, as well as a gradation of the various kinds subsumed under every level of these three types of being. The closest temperament to equilibrium causes the existence of human bodies, which have the highest form in the terrestrial sphere – this form being the human soul. This kind of soul is defined as "a primary perfection of an organic, natural body to which it belongs to perform acts of life".[27] Primary perfection is what gives actuality to the species of a thing, as shape gives actuality to the sword. This is to be contrasted with secondary perfection, which is what gives actuality to the actions and reactions that follow upon the species, as does cutting for the sword.[28]

The discussion of the soul takes up a large portion of Ibn Slna's Physics. We are told that if the function of the soul is limited to nutrition, growth and reproduction, it is a mere plant soul.[29] If sensation and movement are added to these, then it is a mere animal soul.[30] The soul of a human being includes these, but has an additional part, namely the human or rational, which divides into the practical and the theoretical faculties or intellects.[31] When this rational part occurs to a being, that being becomes a human being.[32] Through conjunction with the agent intellect that contains the intelligibles, the theoretical part of the rational soul receives its proper perfection, the perfection that makes it what it is. This perfection is the best thing a human being can achieve, as it is the best thing for any being to achieve its proper perfection, which completes its nature.

A brief discussion of the animal and rational souls is now in order, given the important role that they play in achieving this perfection. As mentioned, the animal soul has sensation and movement. The sensitive part consists of the external and the internal senses. The external senses are, in order of necessity for animals, touch, taste, smell, hearing and sight. The internal ones are common sense, representational faculty, imagination, estimative faculty and memory. The common sense is the faculty in which external sensations or forms of external objects collect. It is the faculty that enables us to judge, for example, that honey is sweet when we perceive honey visually, without the gustatory sensation that it is sweet. The reason is that the faculty of common sense simultaneously receives from the different external senses the different sensations of the one external object, which we call honey. This makes it possible for us to distinguish between the yellow colour and the sweet taste of honey, while

realizing at the same time that they belong to the same object. The representational faculty retains the forms that the common sense receives from the outside. The objects of this faculty are present even in the absence of external objects. In contrast, the objects of the common sense are present only when the external objects are there – except in rare cases when they are poured into the common sense from the internal senses, which either manufacture them or receive them from the divine world.[33] The estimative faculty is said to grasp sense notions that are different from the sense forms grasped by the common sense. These notions are exemplified by the lamb's fear of the wolf. The memory retains the notions of the estimative faculty, as the representational faculty retains the sense forms. Finally, the imagination combines some objects of the representational faculty and of memory with each other, while separating the rest from each other. It must be mentioned that this faculty is called imagination, but only if employed by the estimative faculty. If it is employed by the intellect, it is called cognition.[34]

The locomotive part of the soul is responsible for the motion of the organs by means of the nerves and muscles due to the will. This motion is assisted by primary and secondary instruments. The primary ones, which concern us here, are either the imagination or the rational soul. These cause inclination either in the direction of or away from a perceived object. Inclination in the direction of an object is for an object that is imagined or presumed to be useful. When a power expresses such an inclination, it is called appetitive, while the inclination itself is called appetition. Inclination away from an object is for an object that is imagined or presumed harmful. When a power expresses such an inclination, it is called irascible, while the inclination itself is called anger. Both

intellection and motion are affected by the condition of their instruments. If, for example, the instrument of sight is diseased or has aged, then sight declines or disintegrates totally.[35]

The human or rational soul performs either bodily actions and reactions, or purely intellective actions. The former do not belong to it and proceed from it and the body, whereas the latter belong to it and proceed from its essence. The actions that the rational soul performs in conjunction with the body are exemplified by consideration of the particular matters that must be done or avoided voluntarily, including the practical crafts such as carpentry, farming and animal husbandry. Reactions, on the other hand, are states consequent upon the preparations of the body and the rational soul, such as the preparation for crying or shyness. The purely intellective acts, which are performed by the rational soul, consist of grasping the quiddities or natures of things as universal concepts, such as "humanity" and "horseness". Such concepts cannot be grasped by any of the external or internal powers, for these powers belong to the animal world and thus whatever they grasp must be to some degree material and particular.[36] Contrary to the animal powers, the rational soul can grasp the quiddities or natures of things apart from matter and particularity. From such universal concepts, it composes judgments possessing certainty.

As mentioned, the rational soul has two parts, one with a capacity for action and the other with a capacity for knowledge. The former, called the practical intellect, is directed towards the body. With it, one can distinguish between what must and what must not be done, as well as between good and bad particular things. This intellect is

perfected through habits and experiences. The latter, called the theoretical intellect, is directed towards the divine world and enables one to receive the intel-ligibles.[37]

The theoretical intellect passes through four stages. Firstly, it is in potentiality and has not yet formed any concepts or grasped any intelli-gibles. This is the potential or material intellect (al-'aql al-hayulant). This intellect is called material, not because it is material in nature but because
it has the capacity for receiving intelligible forms as matter has the capacity for receiving material forms. Secondly, it is this potentiality actualized by the occurring of primary intelligibles in it. This is the habitual intellect (al-'aql bi'l-malakah). Thirdly, it is the acquisition of the intelligibles made constant. This is the actual intellect (al-'aql bi'l-fi'l). Fourthly, it is these intelligibles themselves. This is the acquired intellect (al-'aql al-mustafad),[38]

For a thing to move from potentiality to actuality, another thing, which is already in actuality, must give it the form that actualizes it. What moves the theoretical intellect from potentiality to actuality cannot be a body, because it must already possess the intelligible forms, which are non-material and which it gives to our theoretical intellect. Therefore it must be an intellect – this intellect being the agent intellect. The agent intellect sheds its light on the objects of our imagination, which have been received originally from the external world, thus making them visible to our theoretical intellect, as the sun sheds its light on the external things, thus making them visible to our sight. When the light of the agent intellect reaches the objects of the imagination, it renders them intelligible to our theoretical intellect by abstracting them from matter.[39]

Since the rational soul can receive the intelligible forms, it must be in its substance of the nature of these forms. If what receives the intelligible forms were a body or a power in a body, these forms would be divisible, and a simple form could not be intelligible. Arguments are advanced to show that the idea that the rational soul is either a body or a power in a body is false. The conclusion is drawn that, like the agent intellect and the intelligible forms, the rational soul is immaterial.[40] It follows that the rational soul is simple, for multiplicity lies in materiality. Because it is simple, it is indestructible. Contrary to Alexander of Aphrodisias and al-Farabi, who believe that the only human soul assured of indestructibility is that which knows at least some realities – that which is completely deficient in such knowledge is eventually destroyed – Ibn Slna considers all human or rational souls to be indestructible. To him, knowledge of the realities of things is necessary only for happiness but not for existence after death.

Metaphysics

Metaphysics[41] is the science that provides knowledge of the principles of theoretical philosophy. This it does by demonstrating through the intellect the complete acquisition of these principles.[42] Metaphysics deals with the existent inasmuch as it exists, that is, with the general or absolute existent and what is attached to it. In other words, the subject of metaphysics is the existent, not inasmuch as it applies to some things
and inasmuch as something particular is attached to it, as in physics and mathematics (such as quantity and quality, action

and reaction, which are attached to the objects of physics) but inasmuch as it applies to the principle of existence and inasmuch as something universal is attached to it (such as unity and multiplicity, potentiality and actuality, eternity and coming into being, cause and effect, universality and particularity, completeness and incompleteness, necessity and possibility).[43] These qualities are essential accidents of the existent inasmuch as it exists, as well as being non-essential accidents of the particular existent. Metaphysics seeks to study the general existent and its essential accidents. We understand from Ibn Slna's logic that an essential accident is one that does not constitute or enter into the essence of a thing, yet necessarily accompanies it, as "laughter" for "human being". A non-essential accident neither constitutes the essence of a thing nor necessarily accompanies it; however, it resides in it, as "white" may reside in "human being".

The existent is either substance or accident. A substance is anything that is not in a subject, whether or not it is in matter. Thus, substance is of two main types: (1) that which is in matter, and (2) that which is not in matter. The latter category is broken down into three types: (2a) matter, (2b) that which is accompanied by matter, and (2c) that which is neither matter nor accompanied by matter. This scheme means that substance is of four types: (1) form in matter, as the soul is in the body; (2a) matter with no form – this is absolute matter, which has no existence in actuality but only in conception; (2b) the composite of form and matter, as the human being is a composite of soul and body; (2c) form separate from matter, as God or any intellect is neither matter nor in contact with matter.[44] Accident, on the other hand, is in a subject and is

divided into nine types: quality, quantity, relation, time, place, position, condition, action and reaction.

The existence of a thing is either necessary or possible (contingent). Necessary existence is such that if the thing to which it belongs is assumed to be non-existent, an impossibility arises. Possible existence is such that if the thing to which it belongs is assumed to be non-existent or existent, no impossibility arises.[45] Ibn Slna mentions that in other contexts "possible existence" could also be used in the sense of "being in potentiality".[46] Necessary existence is either that which always belongs to a thing through that thing itself, or that which always belongs to it through another. For example, the existence of burning is necessary, not because of the burning itself, but because of the meeting of two things, one naturally capable of burning and the other naturally capable of being burnt.[47] What is necessary through itself cannot be necessary through another and conversely. For example, if the existence of A is necessary through A itself, this existence cannot be necessary through B. Similarly, if it is necessary through B, it cannot be necessary through A itself. This is to say that if,
in the second case, one considers A in itself, one finds its existence non-necessary, or possible in itself. If this is not the case, its existence would be either necessary in itself, but this has been denied, or impossible, which cannot be, for its existence has been affirmed. Therefore, its existence is possible in itself, necessary through another, and impossible without another. Its existence through another is other than its existence without another. By the former, it is necessary; by the latter, it is possible.[48]

The existence of a being necessary in itself is determined on the basis of two principles: first, the chain of possible beings at any time cannot be infinite and, second, this chain cannot be necessary since it consists of possible units. Thus, it must lead to a necessary cause external to this chain – this cause being the Necessary Existent or Being, otherwise known as God.[49]

Being eternally prior in existence to everything and the source of the existence of everything, this Existent is said to be the first cause.[50] It is free from matter, one and simple in all respects.[51] Thus it has no genus or difference, the two necessary elements of a definition. Therefore there is no definition of it, but only a name. Being immaterial, it is purely good, for only in matter, the source of privation, does evil lie.[52] Owing to its immateriality, it is also an intellect, and, owing to its simplicity, the intellect and the intelligible in it are one.[53] In itself, it is the Beloved and the Lover, the pleasurable and the pleased. It is the Beloved because it is the highest Beauty. It is the highest Beauty because there is no higher beauty than that of being a pure intellect, above all manner of deficiency, and one in all respects. Suitable and apprehended beauty or goodness is desired and beloved. The more the apprehension grasps the essence, and the more the essence of the apprehended is beautiful, the more the power of apprehension loves it and finds pleasure in it.[54]

Thus the Necessary Being, who is most beautiful, perfect, and best, who apprehends itself at this ultimate beauty and goodness and in the most complete manner of apprehension, and who apprehends the apprehender and the apprehended as one in reality is in essence and by its essence, the greatest

lover and beloved and the greatest thing pleased and pleasurable.[55]

From this Necessary Being, the rest of the existing things overflow through the process of emanation. The first things that emanate are the celestial intellects, followed by the celestial souls, the celestial bodies and finally terrestrial beings. All these things emanate from It in eternity; otherwise, a state would arise in It that was not there before. But this is impossible in a being whose existence is necessary in all respects.[56] This emanation is a necessary outcome of God's Essence and cannot be linked to any intention external to His Essence. Firstly, there is nothing in Him
external to His Essence – He is a total simplicity, but He can be considered from different points of view. It is only by virtue of such consideration that one can speak of His Attributes. Secondly, even if it were possible for Him to have Attributes external to His Essence, it would not be possible for Him to have among such Attributes any intention relating to the world. "The reason is that every intention is for the sake of the intended and is less in existence than the intended. This is because if a thing is for the sake of another, that other is more complete in existence than it."[57] This is to say that whatever is more complete in existence than another cannot intend that other. God, therefore, cannot intend the world or anything in the world, since He is more complete in existence than the world.

Even though neither God nor any other cause can be perfected essentially by its effects and therefore cannot intend its effects or anything for them, still it may lead accidentally to beneficial effects and, if it is divine, know and be pleased with these effects. Health, for example, is such "in substance

and essence, not to benefit the sick; but it results in benefiting the sick".[58] Similar to health, superior causes are what they are in themselves, not to benefit anything else; but they do benefit other things accidentally. They differ from health, though, in that they know the things that exist and the order and goodness according to which such things exist.[59] Still, providence is attributed to God, the first cause of all things. Providence must be understood, however, not in the sense of divine guidance of the world or concern about it. Rather, providence is defined as God's knowledge of the order of existence and the manner of its goodness, His knowledge that He is the source of the emanation of this order inasmuch as that is possible, and His being pleased with it.[60]

Ibn Slna's thought had a clear and strong impact on the East and on the West, in science, literature and philosophy. The impact of his philosophical thought, which concerns us here, was exhibited in a large number of commentaries on his works and in other forms of writings on his various ideas, reflecting the spirit of his thought or rejecting it. The best known of such commentaries are those of Ibn Kammunah, Fakhr al-Dln al-RazI and Naslr al-Dln al-TusI on al-Ishdrdt, and Sadr al-Dln al-ShlrazT on parts of al-Shifd'. Among the most prominent Eastern thinkers whose thought reflects that of Ibn Slna are al-TusI, Suhrawardl, Qutb al-Dln al-ShlrazI, Mir Damad, Sadr al-Dln al-ShlrazI (Mulla Sadra) and the Syriac Christian Ibn al-'Ibrl. Suhrawardl's and al-Shlrazi's theories of illumination, for example, stem from Ibn Slna's "Oriental philosophy". Also, their discussions of being and essence were generated by Ibn Slna's view on this subject. Ibn al-'Ibrl too adheres closely to Ibn Slna's analysis of God's relationship to the world, the presence of evil,

and the nature and unity of the human soul as well as the impossibility of the soul's pre-existence and transmigration.[61]

But, as mentioned, not all those who felt the effect of Ibn Slna's thought responded to it positively. Ibn Slna had his strong critics, such as al-Ghazzall and al-Shahrastanl in the East, and William of Auvergne and Thomas Aquinas in the West. These critics rejected primarily his ideas concerning God's nature, knowledge of particulars and relationship to the world, as well as the eternity of the universe. Even Mulla Sadra, a follower of Ibn Slna, rejected strongly the eternity of the universe and the denial of the resurrection of the body. Also, Ibn Rushd, who in his major work, The Incoherence of Incoherence, seeks to defend philosophy as embodied primarily in Ibn Slna's works, charges that Ibn Slna misunderstood and distorted Aristotle at times.

Such opposition to Ibn Slna's ideas, however, did not prevent even these critics from borrowing heavily from him. Al-Ghazzall's logic and philosophical terminology, to give but two examples, are, for the most part, those of Ibn Slna. Also, the distinction Ibn Slna introduced in his theodicy, for example, between evil in itself and evil for another was borrowed by Aquinas, and from him by Suarez. Because Ibn Slna's works are not sufficiently known in the West, however, the credit for this distinction is given in the West to Aquinas. Furthermore, two of Aquinas's well-known proofs of God's existence, that from efficiency and that from contingency, as well as his distinction between essence and existence, were also borrowed from Ibn Slna. The numerous references Aquinas gives to Ibn Slna in Being and Essence and elsewhere are sufficient to show the influence Ibn Slna had on this prominent Christian philosopher and theologian

whose ideas dominated Western thought for so long. Gundissalinus, Albert the Great and Roger Bacon are also among the Western thinkers whose work reflected elements of Ibn Slna's thought, especially with regard to the nature of the human soul. No doubt the following factors facilitated Ibn Slna's influence on Latin philosophical circles: first, the translation into Latin, and fast circulation in universities, of the most essential parts of al-Shifa as early as the twelfth and thirteenth Christian centuries; and, second, Ibn Slna's efforts to synthesize Greek and Islamic thought, an attempt in which the West found the seed for a synthesis between Greek philosophy and Christianity.

NOTES

1 His full name is Abu 'All al-Husayn ibn Abd Allah ibn All ibn Slna – Abu All being his nickname. Perhaps his titles, Master and Head, refer respectively to his prominent rank in learning and his high political position as a vizier (A. F. al-Ahwanl, Ibn Slna (Cairo, 1958): 18). This would correspond to his
other title, al-Haklm al-WazIr (Wise Man and Vizier). He was also known as Hujjat al-Haqq (Proof of the Truth).

2 He was one of Ibn Slna's closest students, who accompanied him during most of his later life. For a translation of his bibliography see W. E. Gohlman, The Life of Ibn Sina (Albany, 1974).

3 See Z. D. al-Bayhaql, Tdrikh hukamd' al-isldm, ed. M. K. 'All (Damascus, 1976): 52-72; A. H. al-Qiftl, Tankh

al-hukamd ed. J. Lippert (Leipzig, 1903): 413-26; I. A. Usaybi'ah, 'Uyun al-anbafi tabaqdt al-atibbd Part Three, ed. Samlh al-Zayn (Beirut, 1987): 2-28; I. Khallikan, Wafaydt al-a'ydn wa anba abna al-zamdn$_y$ Part Two, ed. Ihsan Abbas (Beirut, 1978): 157-62.

4 See Ibn Abl Usaybi'ah, 'Uyun al-anba: 5.

5 For a list of Ibn Slna's works, see G. C. QanawatI (Anawatl), Mu'allafdt Ibn Sina (Cairo, 1955) and Y. Mahdavi, Fihrist-i musannafdt-i Ibn Sina (Tehran, 1954).

6 Ibn Sina, al-Shifd al-Mantiq$_y$ al-Madkhal (hereafter al-Madkhal), ed. G. C. Anawatl, M. al-Khudayri and A. F. al-Ahwanl (Cairo, 1952): 2-4. Unless otherwise specified, all works referred to in the rest of this chapter are by Ibn Sina.

7 Ibid: 10.

8 This is Ibn Slna's longest poem, consisting of around one thousand verses.

9 In this ode, which was written for al-Suhayll, Ibn Sina summarizes the study of logic in a poetic form so that his brother All could remember it easily.

10 This poem on the soul is Ibn Slna's best known.

11 Al-Madkhal: 12. Falsafah (philosophy) and ḥikmah (wisdom) are used by Ibn Sina interchangeably.

12 Al-Madkhal: 14.

13 Ibid: 12.

14 Ibid: 12-13.

15 Ibid: 14. For the division of the sciences, see also al-Shifd] al-Ildhiyydt (hereafter al-Ildhiyydt), 1, ed. M. Y. Musa, S. Dunya and S. Zayid (Cairo, 1960): 3-4; Mantiq al-mashriqiyyin (Cairo, 1910): 6-7; and ʿUyun al-ḥikmah, ed. A. R. Badawl (Cairo, 1954): 17.

16 No specific name is given to the science of home management, but it may be referred to as social science; it corresponded to the Greek understanding of "economics".

17 Al-Madkhal: 14.

18 ʿUyun al-ḥikmah: 16.

19 Ibid. For the division of the sciences, see also Tis rasd'il, ed. Hasan Asl (Beirut, 1986): 83-5.

20 For a study of the relation of logic to philosophy, see Shams Inati, Remarks and Admonitionsy Part One (Toronto, 1984): 9-11.

21 Al-Madkhal: 19.

22 Remarks and Admonitions, Part One: 11.

23 Ibid: 12.

24 Ibn Sina, al-Najdh, ed. M. Fakhrl (Beirut, 1985): 97-101; Remarks and Admonitions, Part One: 28-9 and 118-28.

25 The agent or active intellect (al-'aqlal-fa"dl) is, according to Islamic philosophy, the intelligence governing the Moon. This term seems to have been coined by al-Farabl, as al-Kindl before him seems unfamiliar with it. Al-Kindl calls this intellect instead the first intellect. In any case, according to Ibn Sina, this intelligence is caused by intellectual emanation proceeding from God and ending with the human rational soul. The agent intellect is the last divine intelligence and is responsible for administering the sublunary world. Its primary function is to give corporeal form to matter and intellectual form to the rational soul, hence its name the giver of forms (wdhib al-suwar). For a summary of Ibn Slna's cosmology and natural philosophy see S. H. Nasr, An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines (Albany, 1993): 215ff.

26 'Uyun al-ḥikmah: 33.

27 Al-Shifid] al-Tabi'iyydt$_y$ al-Nafi (hereafter al-Nafi), ed. F. Rahman (London, 1959): 11. See also 77/ rasd'il: 69, where the definition of the soul is given, but there the perfection is not described as primary, and the body is described as having "life in potentiality".

28 Al-Nafi: 11. For the distinction between primary and secondary perfections, compare with Aristotle, De anima, 2.412A.

29 Tis 'rasd'il: 55 and 'Uyun al-ḥikmah: 35.

30 Tis' rasd'il: 55-6 and 'Uyun al-ḥikmah: 35-7.

31 Al-Nafi: 45.

32 rasail: 51.

33 Ibid.: 59.

34 Al-Ishdrdt wa'l-tanbihdt, Part Two (published with Part Three and Part Four), ed. S. Dunya (Cairo, 1958): 382 and 77/ rasd'il: 57. For a list of the faculties of the three parts of the soul, see al-Nafs: 39ff. and al-Ishdrdt wal-tanbihdt$_y$Part Two: 373-86. See also al-Nafis: 39ff. for an elaboration of the faculties of the plant soul; 58ff. for an elaboration of the external senses; and 152—4 and 159ff for an elaboration of the internal senses. For a brief account of the internal senses, see 'Uyun al-ḥikmah: 38-9.

35 Ibid.: 39-40.

36 Tis 'rasd'il: 57-8.

37 Ibid.: 68.

38 Ibid.: 68-9. For a discussion of the rational soul, see 'Uyun al-ḥikmah: 42-3.

39 For the relation of the agent intellect to us, see 77/ rasd'il: 69 and 'Uyun al-ḥikmah: 43.

40 For the immateriality of the rational soul, see ibid.: 44—46.

41 Ibn Sina also refers to this branch of philosophy as first philosophy, divine science or wisdom in an absolute sense (al-Ildhiyydt, 1:5).

42 Ibid: 17.

43 Al-Najdh: 235-6 and 'Uyun al-ḥikmah: 47.

44 See al-Najdh: 237; al-Ildhiyydt, 1: 93; and 'Uyun al-ḥikmah: 48.

45 Al-Najdh: 261.

46 Ibid.

47 Ibid.

48 Ibid.: 262 and 'Uyun al-ḥikmah: 55.

49 Al-Najdh: 271-2.

50 Al-Ildhiyydt, 2: 342-3.

51 Al-Najdh: 264-5.

52 For a detailed discussion of God's Attributes, see al-Ildhiyydt, 1: 344-69.

53 Al-Najdh: 280.

54
Al-Isharat wa'l-tanbihat, Part Four: 782.

55 Al-NajaP. 282.

56 Ibid.: 265.

57 Ibid.: 305.

58 Ibid.: 307.

59 Ibid.

60 Al-Ilahiyyat, 2: 415.

61 See al-Ab Bulus Bahnam, "Fi'1-Adab al-Siryaniyyah", in Majallat al-kitab, 11 (Cairo, 1952): 514-28.

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CHAPTER 17

Ibn Sīnā's "Oriental philosophy"

Seyyed Hossein Nasr

One cannot discuss the thought of Ibn Slna seriously, especially as it has influenced Islamic philosophy during the past millennium, without delving into the meaning of his "Oriental philosophy" (al-hikmat al-mashriqiyyah) which has drawn the attention of many Western scholars from L. Massignon, C. A. Nallino and S. Pines to H. Corbin, who has provided the most extensive plausible reconstruction of it.[1] Although this dimension of Ibn Slna's thought did not influence the West and has not been taken seriously by contemporary Western scholars save for Corbin and some of his students,[2] it remains an important link in the uninterrupted tradition of Islamic philosophy marking a notable stepping stone from the synthesis of Ibn Slna to the Illuminationist doctrines of Suhrawardi, who in his Qissat al-ghurbat al-gharbiyyah ("The Story of the Occidental Exile") refers explicitly to the Hayy ibn Yaqzan of Ibn Slna[3] and considers his work to be the achievement of what Ibn Slna had set out to accomplish without reaching the ultimate goal, implying that the "Oriental philosophy" was a prelude for Hikmat

al-ishrdq, or theosophy of the Orient of Light formulated a century and a half later by Suhrawardi. Far from being a "harmless" and rational formulation of the well-known mashshai philosophy by Ibn Slna, as claimed by C. A. Nallino, Ibn Slna's "Oriental philosophy" belongs to the same world as that of Suhrawardl's ishraq and was seen as belonging to the same universe by such later figures as Mulla Sadra and Sabziwari. In this tradition, which must be taken seriously by anyone who is interested in Islamic philosophy as a distinct and integral intellectual tradition and not simply as a chapter of Western philosophy, mashriql and ishraqi can hardly be considered to be so distinct as to be unrelated. As Corbin has asserted, "Suhrawardl's representation of Ishraq moves in a circle. Illuminative
wisdom (ishraqt) is neither in any opposition to Oriental wisdom (mashriqt) nor even distinguished from it: such a divine wisdom or theosophia is illuminative because Oriental, and Oriental because illuminative."[4] In any case one cannot deal fully with Ibn Slna in the context of the later Islamic philosophical tradition without paying serious attention to what he calls al-hikmat al-mashriqiyyah.

At the beginning of his short work Mantiq al-mashriqiyyin ("Logic of the Orientals"), of which what remains extant is devoted almost solely to logic and where Ibn Slna expresses certain logical views different from those of Aristotle,[5] he distances himself explicitly from his Peripatetic works and states that what is to follow, that is the mashriqt philosophy, contains his real views concerning philosophy:

We have been inspired to bring together writings upon the subject matter which has been the source of difference among people disposed to argumentation and not to study it with the

eye of fanaticism, desire, habit or attachment. We have no fear if we find differences with what the people instructed in Greek books have become familiar with through their own negligence and shortness of understanding. And we have no fear if we reveal to the philosophers something other than what we have written for the common people – the common people who have become enamored of the Peripatetic philosophers and who think that God has not guided anyone but them or that no one has reached Divine Mercy except them.

Although we admit the wisdom of the most learned predecessor of these philosophers [that is, Aristotle], and we know that in discovering what his teachers and companions did not know, in distinguishing between various sciences, in arranging the sciences in a better manner than before, in discovering the truth of many subjects … he was superior to those who came before him, the men who came after him should have brought to order whatever confusion had existed in his thought, mended whatever cracks they found in his structure, and expanded his principles. But those who came after him could not transcend what they had inherited from him. Bigotry over whatever he had not found out became a shield, so that they remained bound to the past and found no opportunity to make use of their own intellects. If such an opportunity did arise, they did not find it admissible to use it in increasing, correcting and examining the works of their predecessors.

When we turned our attention to their works, however, from the beginning the comprehension of these works became easy for us. And often we gained knowledge from non-Greek sources. When we began on this project, it was the beginning

of our youth, and God shortened the time necessary for us to learn the works of our

predecessors. Then we compared everything word for word with the science which the Greeks called logic, and it is not improbable that the Orientals had another name for it. Whatever was contrary by this means of comparison we rejected. We sought the reason for everything until the Truth became separate from error.

Since those who were the people of learning were strongly in favor of the Greek Peripatetics, we did not find it appropriate to separate ourselves and speak differently from everyone else. So, we took their side, and with those philosophers who were more fanatical than any of the Greek sects, we too became fanatical. Whatever they sought but had not found and their wisdom had not penetrated, we completed. We overlooked their faults and provided a leader and tutor for them while we were aware of their errors. If we revealed some opposition it was only in matters in which no patience was possible. But in most cases we neglected and overlooked their faults … We were forced to associate with people devoid of understanding who considered the depth of thought as innovation [bid'ah] and the opposition to common opinion as sin …

Under these conditions, we longed to write a book containing the important aspects of real knowledge. Only the person who has thought much, has meditated deeply, and is not devoid of the excellence of intellectual intuition can make deductions from it …

We have composed this book only for ourselves, that is, those who are like ourselves. As for the commoners who have to do

with philosophy, we have provided in the Kitdb al-shifa more than they need. Soon in the supplements we shall present whatever is suitable for them beyond that which they have seen up to this time. And in all conditions we seek the assistance of the Unique God.[6]

It is of great significance that this revealing passage should appear in a book entitled Mantiq al-mashriqiyyln which was most likely the first part of Ibn Slna's work al-Hikmat al-mashriqiyyah that for the moment is lost. We must therefore seek to reconstruct his "Oriental philosophy" from his non-Aristotelian works, remembering not only that Ibn Slna wrote the summa of Peripatetic philosophy in Islam, the Kitdb al-shifd' ("The Book of Healing") but that he also composed the last chapters of the Ishdrdt dealing with the exposition and defence of Sufism and gnosis ('irfdn), wrote commentaries upon the Qur'ān, composed treatises on visiting the tombs of saints and on eschatology and wrote the first complete cycle of visionary recitals in the history of Islamic philosophy. This cycle, consisting of Hayy ibn Yaqzdn ("The Living Son of the Awake"), Risalat al-tayr ("The Treatise of the Bird") and Saldmdn wa Absal ("Salaman and Absal") and forming together an initiatic trilogy as demonstrated by Corbin, was to serve as a model for Suhrawardfs recitals and contains
the outlines of the universe of the "Oriental philosophy" even if we do not possess all the details of that universe.

In Ibn Slna's "Oriental philosophy' it is not so much that the Aristotelian cosmos is repudiated as it is transformed. The outline and content of the universe remain the same; and yet, there is a profound transformation. Reason becomes wedded to the Intellect, the external cosmos becomes interiorized,

facts become symbols and philosophy becomes a veritable sophia inseparable from the gnosis which Ibn Slna defended so vigorously in the ninth chapter of his Ishdrdt entitled Ft maqdmdt al-'drifin ("On the Stations of the Gnostics"). The goal of philosophy becomes not only the theoretical knowledge of the substances and accidents of the cosmos but the experience of their very presence and actualization in such a manner as to enable the soul to free itself from the confines of the cosmos considered as a crypt.[7] "Hence the cosmos is no longer the external object, the distant model, of descriptions, of theoretical inventions, of deductive explanations: it is experienced and shown as a succession of the stages of a more or less perilous exodus upon which one is able to enter or which one has essayed."[8]

The "Oriental philosophy" of Ibn Slna, far from being an unimportant appendix to his mashshd'i philosophy, marks a step in the direction of that intellectual universe dominated by Illumination and gnosis which was to characterize most of later Islamic philosophy. In that universe of discourse where such figures as Suhrawardl, Ibn Arabl, Ibn Turkah IsfahanI and later Mir Damad and Mulla Sadra dominated the scene, Ibn Slna continued to be read and studied avidly not only as a Peripatetic exponent of rational (bahtht) philosophy but also as a gnostic. His "Oriental philosophy" was seen as the intermediary step between his mashshd'i works and the doctrines of ishrdq and thereby helped in the integration of Ibn Slna's philosophy into a vast schema which began with the study of logic and terminated with wonder (al-hayrah) in the contemplation of the Divine Mysteries. One cannot therefore understand the full significance of Ibn Slna in the Islamic philosophical tradition without paying some attention to his "Oriental philosophy" and what can be reconstructed

from his extant works concerning that philosophy whose full and complete exposition from the pen of the master of the Peripatetics has never reached us.

NOTES

1 Corbin has summarized the views of various recent and contemporary scholars concerning the meaning of the "Oriental philosophy" in his Avicenna and the Visionary Recital, trans. W. R. Trask (Irving, 1980), "Postscript": 271—8. See also S. H. Nasr, An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines (Albany, 1993): 187ff.

2
One of Corbin's students, Christian Jambet, has in fact written a book entitled La Logique des Orientaux (Paris, 1983), named after Ibn Slna's Mantiq al-mashriqiyyin, in which he speaks of his al-hikmat al-mashriqiyyah.

3 Suhrawardi writes after mentioning the last part of Hayy ibn Yaqzan there is an allusion to the secret known only to the Sufis and "people of unveiling" and also "I decided to mention something [of that secret] for some of our respected brothers in the form of a story and I entitled it Qissat al-ghurbat al-gharbiyyati Sohravardi, Oeuvresphilosophiques et mystiques, 2, ed. H. Corbin (Tehran, 1977): 275-6.

See also H. Corbin (trans.), Sohravardi Shaykh al-Ishraq, LArchange empourpre (Paris, 1976): 273.

4 Corbin, Avicenna and the Visionary Recital'. 38.

5 See the edition of Shukri Najjar (Beirut, 1982). In the introduction the editor deals with Ibn Slna's innovations upon the logic of Aristotle.

6 Nasr, An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines: 186-7.

7 See ibid., chapter 15, "Nature and the Visionary Recitals": 263fif.

8 Corbin, Avicenna …: 33.

CHAPTER 18

Ibn Miskawayh

Oliver Leaman

✦

Ahmad ibn Miskawayh (d. 421/1030) was a member of a distinguished group of thinkers who combined political careers with philosophical activity. As treasurer of the Buwayhid ruler Adud al-Dawlah, he was very much part of the practical side of his society, while as a member of the group of intellectuals including al-Tawhldl and al-Sijistanl he contributed a great deal to theoretical debate at the time. Although many of his contemporaries were rather disparaging about his work, not to mention his person, he is an interesting thinker who displays much of the style of the times. Miskawayh wrote on a wide number of topics, as did so many of his contemporaries, and although there can be no question but that his work is less distinguished than that of Ibn Slna, what we know of it today provides evidence of some very interesting contributions to the development of philosophical thought. Within philosophy itself Miskawayh's main claim for attention lies in his well-constructed system of ethics, with which we shall largely be concerned here.

Before we look at the ethics, however, it is important to get a grasp of Miskawayh's general philosophical position. Since

he covered so many distinct areas, ranging from history to psychology and chemistry, it would be tempting to look for a central philosophical principle which unites all his contributions to knowledge, but none is readily available. It must of course be admitted, though, that many of his works are no longer extant, and so it is difficult to form an impression of his entire body of thought with any likelihood of accuracy. In his Fawz al-asghar ("The Lesser Victory") he presents a rather unusual account of the nature of Neoplatonism, in which he claims that the ancient (i.e. Greek) philosophers were in no doubt over the existence and unity of God, so that there is no problem in reconciling their thought with Islam. He even claims that Aristotle's identification of the Creator with an unmoved mover is a powerful argument in favour of a creator acceptable to religion,

since the very distinct nature of such a creature prevents our normal categories of description from getting a grip. The only way in which such a creator can be described is in terms of negative concepts, an interesting prefigurement of the notion of the via negativa in philosophy. Miskawayh concludes that since there is no rational route to understanding the Deity, we should follow the indications of religion and the general views of the religious community. He is so intent on reconciling philosophical with religious views of the nature of the world that he finds no problem in bringing together the view that God created the world out of nothing with the Neoplatonic notion of constant emanation. Many faldsifah argued that there is a problem here, of course, but Miskawayh does not seem to see the problem. Perhaps he was helped here by his rather unusual model of emanation, whereby the Deity produces the Active Intellect, the soul and the heavens straight off. Within the tradition of Islamic Neoplatonism these results of divine emanation generally appear some way

down the scale of being, which suggests that Miskawayh has difficulties understanding the real basis to the distinction between creation and emanation. There are good grounds for accusing Miskawayh of not so much seeking to combine the various metaphysical theses which he uses into a satisfactory argument but rather combining them in arbitrary ways to produce a conclusion that fails to recognize the important issues which they raise.

Miskawayh's ethical work is very different, though, and shows evidence of a real understanding of conceptual difficulties in the area. There are a number of important works here, the Taharat al-a'raq ("Purity of Dispositions") better known as Tahdhib al-akhlaq ("Cultivation of Morals"), but not to be confused with the work of the same name, but of much less interest, by Yahya ibn Adl. Miskawayh's work sets out to show how we might acquire the right dispositions to perform morally correct actions in an organized and systematic manner. The basis of his argument is his account of the nature of the soul, which he takes quite readily from Plato to be a self-subsisting entity or substance, in marked contrast with the Aristotelian notion of the soul. The soul can be seen to be distinct from the body, he argues, for a variety of reasons. The soul distinguishes us from animals, it distinguishes us from other human beings, it uses the body and its parts and it seeks to come into contact with more spiritual and higher realms of being. The soul cannot be an accident because it has the power itself to distinguish between accidents and essential concepts, and is not limited to awareness of accidental things by the senses but can apprehend a great variety of immaterial and abstract entities. If the soul were only an accident, it could do none of these things but would be limited in its scope as are the other

physical aspects of the body. Not only is the soul not an accident, but when we want to concentrate upon abstract issues the body with its accidents is actually an obstruction which we should avoid if we are to make contact with intelligible reality. The soul is then an independent substance which controls the body, and must be immortal. The essence of the soul is opposite to the essence of the body, and so the former cannot die, and it is involved in an eternal and circular motion, replicated by the structure of the heavens. There are two directions which this motion can take, though, either upwards towards reason and the Active Intellect, or downwards towards matter. Our happiness arises through the former, and our misfortunes through the latter.

When Miskawayh comes to discuss the nature of virtue he combines Aristotelian with Platonic ideas while his theory also has much affinity with Sufism. Virtue comes out as the perfection of that aspect of the soul which represents the essence of humanity, namely, our reason, and distinguishes it from lower forms of existence. Our virtue increases in so far as we develop and extend the ability we have to deliberate and apply reason to our lives. The ways in which we do this should be in accordance with the mean, the most distant point from two extremes, and justice arises when we manage to bring this off. He develops a set of virtues relating to wisdom, courage, temperance and justice which outline the range of moral development at which we should aim. He combines the Platonic division of virtues with an Aristotelian understanding of what virtue actually is, and adds to this the idea that the more these virtues can be treated as a unity the better. This is because he identifies unity with perfection, and multiplicity with the meaningless plurality of physical objects. Such a Pythagorean notion has more than aesthetic charm in its

favour. Miskawayh can argue plausibly for the idea that the notion of divine or perfect justice is a simple idea, dealing as it does with eternal and immaterial principles. Human justice, by contrast, is variable and depends upon the character of particular communities and their inhabitants. The divine law specifies what should be done everywhere and at every time, while the law of the state takes account of the changeable and contingent customs of the time.

Miskawayh spends a lot of time discussing the variants of friendship which brings out nicely the distinction between relationships which are essentially transitory and variable (especially those based upon pleasure) and those based upon the intellect, which are also pleasurable but not in a physical way. Our souls are capable of recognizing similar perfected souls, and the effect of such recognition is intense intellectual delight. This is very different from the ordinary way in which people form relationships with each other because they want to get something out of the relationship. Miskawayh differentiates between a wide category of types of friendship, but he does not conclude that only the highest and most intellectual form is important. On the contrary, even those capable of this ultimate level of friendship have to live in society, and so must assume the other types of friendship if they are to be able to attain
perfection. We find ourselves firmly on Aristotelian ground here again, with the claim that perfection of the virtues and satisfaction of our more mundane demands go hand in hand. Yet Miskawayh also argues that the highest form of happiness exists when we manage to abandon the requirements of this world and can receive the emanations flowing from above which will perfect our intellects and permit us to be illuminated by Divine Light. There seems here to be an even

higher level of happiness which is something like mystical awareness of God, where we throw off all the trappings of our corporeal existence and allow our souls to partake of entirely spiritual aims.

Miskawayh spends much time describing the joys of this mystical relationship between the enfranchised soul and divine reality, and it obviously is for him an even higher form of happiness than that available to us through intellectual perfection. One of the intriguing features of his work, though, is that he combines the ability to discuss both what is supposed to happen at the highest level of human perfection with practical advice on how to develop our ordinary capacity for virtue. He regards the cultivation of our moral health in a very Aristotelian way as akin to the cultivation of physical health, necessitating measures to preserve our moral equilibrium. We should try to keep our emotions in check, and carry out practices which help both to restrain us on particular occasions and to develop personality traits which will maintain that restraint throughout our lives. To try to eradicate faults, we have to investigate the ultimate cause of the faults, and then seek to replace them with their virtuous alternatives. It is interesting to observe how this approach copes with particularly difficult problems, like the fear of death. This fear Miskawayh regards as without basis, and it is intriguing to see why. The soul itself cannot die, and so there is no problem in wondering what happens after death. We all have to die, and it is indeed part of our very nature to perish eventually, and to accept both that we are contingent and yet that we should not die is to contradict oneself. If we fear the pain consequent of dying, then the object of our fear is not death but the pain. Once we have died there will be no more pain, which suggests that death is rather to be welcomed than

rejected. What is important in this treatment is not the strength of the arguments themselves which Miskawayh produces but the way in which he argues. He suggests, along with al-Kindl and the Cynics and Stoics who wrote on this issue, that to reconcile ourselves to reality we have to understand what the real nature of our emotions is. That is, we have to come to understand their character, and we can do this by using reason. Reason will help us to understand dispassionately that the only important things we have are those things which cannot be taken away, like reason itself, the soul and morality. Once reason shows us what is important, we know how to behave and think, and without the ability to carry out
this type of exercise we are at the mercy of our feelings and the influence of others.

This belief in the capacity of human reason to help us determine what we should do and what our role in the world is has led the most distinguished recent commentator on Miskawayh, Mohammed Arkoun, to call him a humanist, a part of the general humanist movement of his time involving al-Tawhldl and al-Sijistanl. In some ways this description is very apposite, since it does mark the importance in Miskawayh's thought of reason and what reason can tell us, by contrast with religion and the teachings of religion. This is not to say that he did not think the teachings of Islam are important. There is no reason to believe that he was not entirely sincere in his adherence to Islam. Yet, it is philosophy that is his central concern and even when he considers religious practices he sometimes gives them an instrumental rationale.

Al-Ghazzall came to be infuriated by Miskawayh's suggestion that the point of communal prayer is to base religion upon the natural gregar-iousness of human beings in society. It seemed to al-Ghazzall that, if this was the point of the practice, then it would be seen as not having the importance it should have as one of the basic rituals of religion. The significance of such communal rituals, according to al-Ghazzall, is that they are specified by the religion, and for no other reason. Their reason is that they are not only reasonable; God points to the vast gap between us and Himself by setting us unpleasant and difficult tasks. For Miskawayh the reason for the ritual is that it has a part to play in helping us adapt to religious life using the dispositions which are natural to us, so that the rules of religion are essentially reasonable. Miskawayh quotes from the Qur'ān, Aristotle, Plato, al-Kindi and his contemporaries in his writings without emphasizing the position of the Qur'ān above that of the other authorities. The teachings of Islam have a part to play in informing us how to live and what is real, but so also do other more theoretical approaches, and in any case the greatest respect seems to be accorded to the Greek authorities.

This might suggest the question as to how original Miskawayh's thought is. It clearly was influential, and both during his life and after his death in 421/1030 it was much quoted and copied. The style of some of his works, combining abstract thought with practical suggestions, is a compelling one, capable of attracting a whole range of different audiences, and was popular long after he died. Yet Miskawayh does seem to have presented a mixture of ideas and theories which were not properly integrated, and which consisted of a ragbag rather than a synthesis. Commentators

do frequently comment upon the complex nature of his sources, some of which we can only conjecture about today, as though his main contribution is to try to weave all these different authors into a particular text. It is true that some of his writings are just lists of

"wisdom" from a range of cultures and religions (the Jdwiddn khirad or "Perennial Philosophy", for example). Some of his practical comments upon moral problems seem rather better suited to the Reader's Digest than to analytical philosophy. Yet it is worth acknowledging that at its best his philosophy is highly analytical and maintains high standards of consistency and coherence. The fact that he mixes together Plato, Aristotle, Neoplatonism, Pythagoras, and so on is not an indication so much of his collecting different theories, but rather of a creative attempt at using these different approaches to cast light upon important issues. There is nothing basically wrong with being an Aristotelian and yet going off into Platonic or Pythagorean directions. Miskawayh shows how possible it is to combine a Platonic conception of the soul with an Aristotelian account of moral development. The notion of a yet higher realm of being at which the soul comes into contact with divine reality is a perfectly possible addition to the account which he gives of social and intellectual life. His arguments throw up many problems of their own, but they are noticeable as arguments, and there is no attempt at importing revelation to resolve theoretical difficulties. It is perhaps the combination in Miskawayh of elegance of style, practical relevance and philosophical toughness which prolonged his influence in the Islamic world.

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CHAPTER 19

Al-Ghazzālī

Massimo Campanini

❧•❀❖❀•☙

If we wish to place al-Ghazzali within a history of Islamic philosophy we must make some preliminary remarks. The most obvious starting point is that al-Ghazzali did not consider himself a philosopher, nor liked to be considered as such. Yet it is interesting that the Christian thinkers of the Middle Ages, reading his book Maqasid al-falasifah ("The Aims of Philosophers"), a reasoned and objective exposition of the main philosophical topics of his time, looked on him as a faylasuf like Ibn Slna or Ibn Rushd. It not only means that al-Ghazzali studied and assimilated philosophy deeply, being aware of its theoretical glamour and its structural strength, but also it leads us to believe that philosophy must have had at least an indirect influence even on his mystical thought. Moreover, although al-Ghazzali, who was essentially a theologian, a mystic and a jurist, fought sharply against philosophy, trying to demonstrate its contradictions, it would be misleading not to recognize that his mysticism and theology are not simply practical and religious doctrines but have a noticeable theoretical depth.

A second important issue arises regarding the strictly philosophical question of the relation between truth and certainty, an issue al-Ghazzali viewed as a vital problem for the scholar. He argued that philosophy cannot assure the truth because it does not produce certainty; and brought against philosophy the same charge Ibn Rushd brought against theology, namely of yielding to huge compromises about the logical coherence of its arguments. In the Munqidh min al-dalaU al-Ghazzall wrote:

They [the philosophers who apply logic] draw up a list of the conditions to be fulfilled by demonstration which are known without fail to produce certainty. When, however, they come at length to treat of religious questions, not merely are they unable
to satisfy these conditions, but they admit an extreme degree of relaxation.

(al-Ghazzaii (1967a): 36)

Actually, in al-Ghazzall's opinion, the relation of necessity which exists between the premises and the conclusions of a syllogism is not able to persuade both the mind and the heart. True knowledge is the consequence of illumination (ilhdm), of a divine inspiration. Al-Ghazzall says that "when God takes care of the heart …, the breast lightens and the mystery of the spiritual realm [malakut] is revealed, and the veil of error vanishes and the reality of divine things shines in the heart" (al-Ghazzall (1985), 3: 21). Once the heart becomes owner of truth, the mind then obtains certainty: "the necessary truths of the intellect became once more accepted, as I regained confidence in their certainty and trustworthy character. This did not come about by systematic

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demonstration or marshalled argument, but by a light which God most high cast into my breast" (al-Ghazzall (1967a): 25).

It does not mean that al-Ghazzall denied, for instance, the compulsory nature of reasoning (Marmura 1965), especially mathematical and logical reasoning;[1] but it is important to point out that he considered theoretical certainty as an effect of the highest kind of knowledge, a knowledge which attains its top level by mystical experience and taste (dhawq). Here, notwithstanding that his starting point was philosophical, al-Ghazzall arrives at conclusions very far from ordinarily philosophical.

Abu Hamid Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Ghazzall was born at Tus, a city in Khurasan, in Persia, in 450/1058. He received a good traditional education first at Jurjan and then Nishapur, the provincial capital, where he attended the lessons of the most distinguished theologian of his time, the Ash'arite Imam al-Haramayn Abu'l-Ma'ali al-Juwaynl. Under his guide, al-Ghazzall adopted the main principles of the Ash'arite kalam, to which he remained faithful until the end of his life.[2]

Principles like the Unity of God (Tawhid) and the reality of Divine Attributes, which must be distinguished from the very Essence of God, together with other characteristic topics of al-Ash'arl's theology are held by al-Ghazzall too: the belief in the eternity of the Qur'ān; the acceptance of the Qur'ānic apparently anthropomorphic descriptions of God, who is said to have sight, hearing and a body even though we cannot know how;[3] the conviction that all the blessed will see the Face of God in Paradise like "a moon in a bright night"; the repeated assertion that the only way to know God is

revelation, because human reason is too weak to grasp such sublime realities; and the acknowledgment that the succession of the four righteous caliphs (al-rashiduri) is legitimate according to the order of morality.

All these utterances are clearly opposed to the Mu'tazilite doctrines and can be judged "orthodox", although it is notoriously difficult to understand the real meaning of orthodoxy in Islam. Some scholars deny that Ash'arism must be considered the chief orthodox school in the Islamic world (see Makdisi (1963) and (1983)) and even maintain, in relation to al-Ghazzali, the impossibility of identifying Ash'arism with Shafi'ite madhhab (Makdisi in UNESCO (1987)). The solution of this problem does not matter here. The essential point is that al-Ghazzali turned Ash'arite kalam into the dialectical basis of his religious revival, making of it the actual framework of his philosophical and to some extent mystical reflection.

In 478/1085 al-Ghazzali joined the court of Nizam al-Mulk, omnipotent vizier of the Seljuq Sultan Malikshah, and became a close friend of the vizier. Nizam al-Mulk appointed him teacher of Shafi'ite jurisprudence in the Madrasah Nizamiyyah of Baghdad (484/1091), and soon al-Ghazzali collected around himself a great number of students. After a few years, al-Ghazzali was an intellectual of the court, if not a courtier. Occupying this position, he appreciated the corruption and immorality of power, the compromises of orthodox fuqaha and 'ulama with depraved kings and emirs, and his political ideas matured (see Laoust (1970) and Watt (1963)).

Al-Ghazzali professed a sincere loyalty to the caliphate, recognizing the legitimacy of 'Abbasid rule. Anyway, he argued that caliphs and sultans had to co-operate to bring peace and safety to the Muslim empire. The caliphs, who were given complete religious authority, had to receive the oath of allegiance from the sultans, on whom supreme political authority rested. The sultan had not only the duty to defend the caliphate but also to repress any possible revolutionary tendency (see Binder (1955) and the papers collected in Lambton (1980)). Above all, al-Ghazzall's political attitude was inspired by a sort of quietism, because he stigmatized any revolt, even against an oppressive and evil monarch (Laoust (1970): 368ff). This attitude is induced by a particular meaning of the relation between the outward and inner world. In fact, political quietism is functional to the renaissance of religious sciences. Nobody – and surely not a scholar or a mystic – can look after his or her conscience if the outside world is troubled by wars and injustice. The reform of the heart needs social peace and harmony, even though this silence has to be paid for with an autocratic power. The wise person may, however, close the windows of the world to open the door of soul.

Obviously, it can be argued that this quietism was justified by fear and dislike of Isma'lll Shi'ism which, at the end of the fifth/eleventh century, seemed still very strong in Fatimid Cairo and indeed was vigorously spreading throughout the Middle East after Hasan Sabbah founded at Alamut a BatinI state of warrior monks improperly known
as "Assassins". The same Nizam al-Mulk was finally killed by an Assassin in 485/1092. Farid Jabre interpreted the development of almost all al-Ghazzalf s thought in the light of his anti-Batinite polemic (Jabre 1958). This thesis is

undoubtedly too simple, but it is true that al-Ghazzall viewed Isma'llism as a real danger for orthodox Islam, both politically and dogmatically. So he devoted many works to the confutation of Isma'llism, perhaps the most important of which is the Fadd'ih al-bdtiniyyah wa fadd'il al-mustazhiriyyah or al-Mustazhin ("The Infamies of the Batinites and the Excellences of the Mustazhirites"), composed in 487-8/1094 and dedicated to the new caliph al-Mustazhir.

The core of al-Ghazzall's anti-Batinite criticism consists in underlining the absurdities and the heretical innovations which follow the blind submission (taqlid) the Batinites show to the authoritarian teaching (ta'lim) of their Imams. Really, the only living guide for the Muslims must be the Prophet Muhammad, whose acts and utterances compound the body of Hadith and Sunnah and are necessary and sufficient to rule the life of the Islamic community. An orthodox Muslim, al-Ghazzall says,

claims knowledge of only two questions: one of them is the existence of the Maker, the necessary existent, in no need of maker and manager; and the second is the veracity of the Apostle. And regarding the remaining questions, it suffices us to learn them by blind acceptance from the Apostle.

(al-Ghazzall (1980a): 250)

Even though al-Ghazzall seems here to be substituting a blind submission to another authority, it is also worth pointing out that he charges the Batinites with being bad theologians, making a poor use of logic and arbitrarily altering the meaning of the holy texts. Al-Ghazzall thinks that it is

deceptive and contradictory to try to invalidate intellectual reasoning by an apodeictic proof exalting the infallibility of the Imams (al-Ghazzall (1980a): 218). Indeed, if we pay unconditional approval to the Imam's utterances, how can we build our doctrine on reasoning? The talim is in opposition to intellect (al-Ghazzall (1980a): 249).

This is quite an intriguing point. Although al-Ghazzall continues to speak against the gnoseological legitimacy of reasoning, he does not cease to emphasize the greater rationality of his own position. The same attitude al-Ghazzall shows in the Tahdfut al-faldsifah ("The Incoherence of the Philosophers"), the famous work directed properly against philosophy. Dogmatically, philosophy is as dangerous as Isma'llism, and in the Tahdfut al-Ghazzall intends to demonstrate that philosophers are unable to prove, from a theoretical point of view, the religious truths. Anyway, he does not fight philosophers with the weapons of authority and divine revelation, but with the same techniques philosophy uses (see Leaman (1985): chapters 1-3; and Bello (1989): chapters 6-8). In this
sense, al-Ghazzall takes perhaps an even more rationalistic position than Ibn Rushd, who, in his Fad al-maqdl and Tahdfut at-tahdfut, tried to transform philosophy into a doctrine which, if not close to religious law, at least does not contrast with it, rather than describing theology as a rationalist discipline (see Campanini (1989): Introduction). On the contrary, al-Ghazzall keeps religion and philosophy well separated, being aware of the essential irreducibility of the two positions.

In the Tahdfut al-faldsifah he argues that philosophers cannot demonstrate the creation of the world by God, nor the

spiritual substance of the human soul. In particular, he argues that philosophers become infidels on three questions: the eternity of the world (a thesis peculiar to Aristotle); the impossibility of God's knowledge of particulars (a thesis strongly held by Ibn Slna), and the denial of bodily resurrection and mortality of the individual souls, a naturalistic theory which is not exclusively Aristotelian. These three subjects are enough to transform the philosophical message into a potentially corrupting theory. After all, even if the greatest philosophers cannot in general be charged with infidelity (al-Ghazzall (1928): 6-7), their doctrines lead many people "to refuse the details of religions and creeds, and to believe that they are human constructed laws and artifices" (al-Ghazzall (1928): 5).

A correct and orthodox starting point must begin by considering God as the highest Being and as the unique actually acting Will. On the one hand,

in God there is an Essence [haqiqah] and a quiddity [mdhiyyah], and this Essence is equivalent to his Existence, namely that God is free from non-being and privation. However, His Existence is not additional to Essence … No agent has produced the existence of a God who does not come to an end and is eternal without any determining cause.

(al-Ghazzall (1928): 196)

On the other hand, "The First Principle is all-knowing, all-powerful and all-willing. He acts as He wants and decides as He wants; He creates all the creatures and natures as He wants and in the shape He wants" (al-Ghazzall (1928): 131)

Al-Ghazzall stresses vigorously the Will of God, a quality which transforms itself in the potentiality (and actuality) of action. Considering these premisses, is there a place in al-Ghazzali's system for natural causes or causae secundae The problem of causality is perhaps the most discussed in the historiographical literature on our thinker. Even in recent times, several scholars have faced this issue (see Goodman (1978); Alon (1980); Abrahamov (1988)).

It is wrong to think that al-Ghazzall absolutely denied the existence of natural causality. To deny that fire burns cotton would be foolish.
What al-Ghazzall denies is the existence of a necessary connection between the cause and the caused independently of the Will of God who creates the fact of burning. If the contingent world is also the world of all-possibility, al-Ghazzall claims that this possibility is just the field of God's free action. The difficulty does not lie in the objective existence of things which are concrete just because God created them. The epistemological problem resides in the impossibility of connecting directly an effect to a cause. The causes can be always hypothetical, and the only certainty we have is that they are consequences of God's Will.

It is well known that al-Ghazzall precedes David Hume in his theory that the nexus of causality is only apparent and is the effect of the human custom of linking together two occurrences which are happening uniformly in nature: "The continuity of custom ['ddah regarding them [i.e. the things which seem necessary but are only possible], time after time, implants in our mind so strong [an impression of] flow [jaraydn] in accordance with past habits that [the continuity]

cannot be separated from the things" (al-Ghazzall (1928): 285).

Al-Ghazzall expresses the same concept in other places in the Tahdfut (al-Ghazzall (1928): 277—8), but he always stresses the fact that it is God who creates the linkage among the phenomena: "As to what appears outwardly of the connection … it depends on the determining action [taqdir of God – praise be to Him! – who creates [the appearances] in a sequence ['ald'l-tasdwuq]"

God is able to overturn the rules of natural eventualities and submit the functioning of nature to completely new laws. But this does not mean that God really behaves in such a manner or that He does not give the fire or the water the natural properties to burn and to extinguish. So it is worth moderating the sceptical value of some of al-Ghazzall's statements such as the following: "I proceeded therefore with extreme earnestness to reflect on sense-perception and on necessary truths, to see whether I could make myself doubt them. The outcome of this protracted effort to induce doubt was that I could no longer trust sense-perception either" (al-Ghazzall (1967a): 23).

Even though al-Ghazzall sometimes seems attached to a vaguely Cartesian methodical doubt, it does not imply an authentic denial of religious truths nor a refusal of the objective world's reality. Rather, doubt has a prevailing epistemological meaning, and it is addressed to the trustworthiness of the human sciences.

In 488/1095, owing to a spiritual and psychological crisis whose veracity cannot be questioned (Poggi 1967),[4]

al-Ghazzall left Baghdad and for two or three years he lived in Syria and Palestine and made the pilgrimage to Mecca. He came back to Persia before 493/1099, and he carried on his concealment till the summer of 499/1106 when Fakhr al-Mulk, vizier of the Seljuq Sultan Sanjar, persuaded him to resume his
juridical teaching in the Madrasah Nizamiyyah of Nishapur. Al-Ghazzah's return to public life lasted only a little more than two years, because in 503/1109 he retired finally to Tus, where he died in 505/1111.

The long period of concealment witnessed a deep transformation of al-Ghazzali's speculative interests and even of his Weltanschauung. He did not attend any more to philosophy and applied himself totally to Sufism and to the renewal of orthodox religion. In the Munqidh, the spiritual autobiography composed approximately between 501/1107 and 503/ 1109, he reveals an almost messianic feeling of being aware that "God Most High has promised to revive His religion at the beginning of each century" (al-Ghazzali (1967a): 75). Al-Ghazzali had the conviction that he was the person designated to carry out this task for his epoch, and pursued his reforming aim by composing a great work, whose title is significantly The Revivification of the Sciences of Religion (Ihyd' 'ulum al-din), and an exhaustive abridgement of the major work, that is the Book of the Forty Principles of Religion (Kitdb al-arba'tn ft usill al-din), as well as its Persian summary Kimiya-yi sa'ddat ("The Alchemy of Happiness").

Many scholars argued that al-Ghazzali achieved the reconciliation of Sufism and orthodoxy (among the last Glassen (1981)). A fact is that, at the end of his life, he

considered Sufism as the best doctrine in comparison with philosophy or theology, because, while the human sciences are abstract and superficial, Sufism leads the learned to a positive knowledge of God and nature:

I apprehended clearly that the mystics are men who had real experiences, not men of words, and that I had already progressed as far as possible by way of intellectual apprehension. What remained for me was not to be attained by oral instruction and study, but only by immediate experience and by walking in the mystic way.

(al-Ghazzali (1967a): 55)

The path to God throughout Sufism is a living experience and like an ascending parabola whose starting point is "science". In the Arba'Tn al-Ghazzali interprets "science" as the knowledge of God and His Attributes and of the religious duties like prayer, pilgrimage and the alms tax (al-Ghazzali (1970): 12—51). But this kind of science, although necessary, is just propaedeutic to an evaluation of a set of subsequent preparatory stages.

There is, first of all, the necessity of avoiding unlawful and blameworthy behaviour, like wrath, avarice, love of worldly goods, etc., which can remove the faithful and the novice (murid) from the right path. In opposition to these reprehensible attitudes, al-Ghazzali suggests commendable conduct, among which of great importance are repentance, asceticism and fear of God.

Repentance is "the way of reverting from the remoteness to the proximity of God" (al-Ghazzali (1970): 197; al-Ghazzali

(1985), 4: 11-12). Asceticism is "the dislike of the soul for materiality", a dislike whose roots (ad) are the science and the light, that is the mystical knowledge and illumination shining in the heart (al-Ghazzali (1970): 211). Fear of God is "pain in the heart and its burning because of the expectation of future adversities" (al-Ghazzali (1970): 205), and the best fruit of this feeling is the opening of the soul's inner doors to a quiet hope (al-Ghazzali (1985), 4: 135ff.). In the end, the correct behaviour of a mystic implies a silent satisfaction with God's decrees. Both in the Ihya and in the Arbain al-Ghazzali concludes his exposition by the rida bi'l-qadd'which is coupled with a sincere thanksgiving for all the benefits (and also all the sufferings) God decides to bring to humankind.

After having attained the best possible disposition, the murid is ready to begin the proper approach to God (Campanini 1991). The first step is the frank intention of worship (niyyah); but the two main moments are the dhikr and the tawakkul The dhikr is the continuous remembrance of God's Name (Gardet and Anawati (1961): the fourth part) and it leads the mystic to immersion and annihilation (fand[1]) in God. Anyway, the fand' or ecstatic grasp is only a short and transient instant (al-Ghazzali (1970): 62) and does not concern any kind of hulul, or descent and incarnation of God in the mystic. Al-Ghazzali strongly rejects every immoderate claim of some Sufis, such as the theophatic utterances by al-Hallaj or al-Bastaml, because they are dangerous and can lead through incomprehension to heresy and polytheism (shirk).

Rather, al-Ghazzali underlines the importance of love (mahabbah) (Siauve 1986) and this represents surely an element of distinctness from some of the other Islamic Sufis.

In the Arbain al-Ghazzali writes that "a true learned man loves only God Most High; and if he loves somebody who is not God, he loves him for God, the Almighty and Sublime" (al-Ghazzali (1970): 257). The highest degree of love involves a full confidence in God: this is the meaning of tawakkul, such a complete trust in the Creator that the believer gives himself up to Him "like a dead man in the hands of a corpse-washer" (al-Ghazzali (1970): 249; al-Ghazzali (1985), 4: 242-3).

Some scholars however denied that al-Ghazzali's mysticism was a real ecstatic experience, stressing on the contrary the technical and practical aspects of his theory (Jabre 1958), although all Sufis themselves consider him to be one of the most outstanding among them. It is difficult to reach a balanced answer to this problem from the outside. An important issue is to point out that the Sufi way did not imply for al-Ghazzali the neglect of the orthodox practices of worship and the careful fulfilment of the Sunnah (al-Ghazzali (1967a): 71—2). Al-Ghazzali is persuaded that exteriority leads to interiority (al-Ghazzali (1970): 102ff.), so that Makdisi is right when he says, drawing a comparison between al-Ghazzall and Ibn Taymiyyah on Sufism, that both criticized sharply the exaggerations of some Sufis because Sufism often sides against the religious law and devalues the external (and social) meanings of that law (Makdisi (1983): 55).

Finally, Sufism is not for al-Ghazzall simply an individual path to reach perfection but a whole conception of life including ethics and morality, behaviour and belief, cosmology and metaphysics. In this sense, it is perhaps true that al-Ghazzali's mysticism is not only a lived experience

but also a rational construction by which the learned person can taste the beatitude of ecstasy without relinquishing the satisfaction of theoretical inquiry.

Already the Mlzdn al-'amal, composed in the last year of al-Ghazzall's period in Baghdad, shows a tendency to an intellectual reading of the mystical way of life. Commenting on this book, Laoust writes that in it "al-Ghazzall is associating the method of the Sufis with the method of speculative theologians, and in particular of the Ash'arites" (Laoust (1970): 73). So we can realize that there is not a complete break in al-Ghazzall's conception of ethics before and after the crisis of 488/1095. Reason and mysticism have never been separated in al-Ghazzali's mind.

Even in works devoted primarily to religious reform like Ihya and Arbain, we find a well articulated image of God who "in his Essence is unique, individual, without companions and there is nothing which looks like Him … He is everlasting, continuous in His existence" (al-Ghazzall (1970): 13). The concrete reality of God seems absolutely stated, but

He is not a body with a shape, nor a measured or definite substance. Nothing looks like Him, either regarding measurability or regarding divisibility in parts. God is not a substance, nor can substances define Him; He is not an accident nor can accidents define Him. No existent being looks like Him and "nothing can be compared with Him" (Qur'ān, 42: 11). God does not look like things. Quantity cannot limit Him; no region can enclose Him; no side can surround Him.

(al-Ghazzall (1970): 14)

This description of God, as far as His transcendence is concerned, is very close to the Mu'tazilite negative theology described by al-Ash'ari in his Maqdldt (al-Ash'ari (1969), 1: 235), and signifies the irreducibility of God to the natural world and his transcendence (Shehadi (1964); Burrell (1987)). This kind of negative theology removes God from nature and grants his untouchability by any deficiencies or limitations, death or dissolution.

But a danger is implicit in the Mu'tazilite position, namely the tatil, the denial of those Divine Attributes, apparently anthropomorphic, which,
none the less, are explicitly declared in the Qur'ān. Al-Ghazzali wants to avoid such a risk. For him, the Divine Attributes are positive realities, and they are separated from the Essence of God:

God Most High knows science, lives life, is powerful through power, willing through will, speaking with a word, hearing by a capacity to hear, seeing by a capacity to see. He has these qualifications in virtue of the eternal attributes. If someone [a Mu'tazilite] says that God knows without science, he would say that it is possible to be rich without richness or that there is a science without a scientist or a knowing without an object of knowledge.

(al-Ghazzali (1985), 1: 102-3)

The idea of God al-Ghazzali sketches is strongly Islamic. God is a person living and willing. He decides the destiny of people and animals and can make people suffer without granting them any reward (al-Ghazzali (1985), 1: 104). Anyway, as we have already pointed out, this arbitrary power

does not mean irrational subjectivity in choices. Rather, there are a few places where al-Ghazzali seems to approach Leibniz's concept of "the best of all possible worlds" (see Ormsby (1984)). In the Ihyd we read:

Everything which God apportions to man … is … pure right, with no wrong in it. Indeed, it is according to the necessarily right order, in accord with what must be and as it must be and in the measure in which it must be; and there is not potentially anything whatever more excellent and more complete than it.

(al-Ghazzali (1985), 4: 229-30)

And in the Arbain:

There are different ways for grasping, with perfect awareness, the perfection of God's generosity and wisdom. One of these ways is the reflection on the manner in which God organized [tartib] the causes determining the caused. One may regard the knowledge of the decree qada by which God produced everything in the twinkling of an eye, and of the predestination [qadar] which is the clear cause [sabab] of the decree's details. They are the most perfect and the best possible [decisions] and there is no way to act better and more adequately.

(al-Ghazzali (1970): 202)

Obviously, al-Ghazzali does not argue that our world is the best world God was able to create, but simply that the omnipotence of God has established for this universe the most perfect possible rules of functioning, even if He would have been able to produce infinitely different

worlds. Al-Ghazzall's theory of God's omnipotence is perhaps comparable to the Western medieval distinction between potentia absoluta et ordinata Dei? a question faced by the most important Christian thinkers such as Duns Scot, Thomas Aquinas and William of Ockham. In al-Ghazzall's view, God can act extra legem, but actually He does not, because He provides for the world after having created it. Furthermore, al-Ghazzall thinks that the two potentiae are not two dissimilar divinely acting ways but the result of only one determining disposition.

The rationality of God's creation is clearly expressed also in the Maqsad al-asna fi sharh asma Allah al-husna ("The Highest Aim in the Commentary of the Beautiful Names of God"), a book composed approximately at the same time as Ihya' and a text which can be placed in a long tradition of Islamic studies about the metaphysical, religious and even cosmological meaning of God's ninety-nine beautiful Names (Gimaret 1988). So in the Maqsad we read that "what comes out from non-existence to existence needs, first of all, a measure (taqdfr); secondly, to exist in accordance with this measure; and thirdly, to obtain a right shape" (al-Ghazzali (1987): 75).

These operative functions are signified by three of God's Names: al-Khaliq, or "who gives the things their measure", al-Bari or "who brings out the things from nothing to being" and al-Musawwir, or "who creates the things in accordance with the measure" (al-Ghazzall (1987): 76). In reference to the Name al-Musawwir, al-Ghazzall specifies that "God disposes the things in the best possible arrangement" (al-Ghazzall (1987): 77), so that it is really difficult not to infer a perfect disposition of the universe.

From a mystic cosmological point of view, this universe is double-faced: there is a natural world which is subdued to God's compulsory Will and is called by al-Ghazzall mulk; and there is a heavenly world which is called malakut (Wensinck (1940): 79ff). Now, the mulk is only the shadow of the true world. In the Arba'in al-Ghazzall uses quite Neoplatonic terms to maintain that

the corporeal world has no real existence [wujud haqiqi], but it is, in relation to the world of Order ['alam al-amr], like the shadow of a body; the shadow of a man is not the real substance [haqiqah] of that man, and so the individual being is not really existent but it is a shadow of the real substance.

(al-Ghazzall (1970): 62)

Even though deprived of metaphysical independence, the world is not a mere phantasm. Otherwise, we would not be able to understand the following statement: "All the beings of this world are the effects of God's omnipotence and lights of His Essence. There is no darkness more obscure than non-existence and there is no light more bright than existence. The existence of all things is a light of the Essence of God Most High" (al-Ghazzall (1985), 4: 398).

All the beings in the world receive their contingent illumination from God who is absolute Being and absolute Light. Indeed, God is completely manifest in the world, but the divine Light is so blinding that it conceals its original source (al-Ghazzall (1987): 136—7, in reference to the beautiful Names al-zdhir and al-bdtin). Analogically, the light of the sun, which is shining over the world, cannot be perceived by an observer who is looking only at the objects

and does not turn his or her eyes up to the sky. There is a mystical idea beneath this symbol: that is, all worldly things are nothing in front of the Creator according to the famous Qur'ānic verse: "All who live on earth perish, but the Face of your Lord will abide for ever" (55: 26-7).

The path we have hitherto followed may suggest that al-Ghazzall's thought is noticeably homogeneous. Perhaps this is quite correct if we consider the metaphysical problems, but the perspective is different if we consider the epistemological problems. We have already acknowledged al-Ghazzalf s trust in reasoning, but in the "Introduction" or muqaddimah to the Tahdfut al-faldsifah he argues that natural sciences and physical utterances cannot be judged by theological or scriptural counterarguments. Al-Ghazzall even suggests that whoever tries to contest the mathematical proofs by a literal interpretation of the Hadith and Sunnah damages religion, because the methods of religion are different from the methods of natural inquiry (al-Ghazzall (1928): 7—8). Here, al-Ghazzall seems to partake of the same epistemological positions Galileo maintained in his famous letter dated 21 December 1613 to Benedetto Castelli, that the Holy Scriptures are not suitable for scientific questions.[6] Anyway, the Muslim thinker immediately adds: "The theoretical value of natural questions, in relation to research about God, is like asking how many layers an onion or how many seeds a pomegranate has. The only really important thing to point out is that they are acts of God" (al-Ghazzall (1928): 8).

In the Ihyd written after the psychological crisis which led to al-Ghazzall's conversion to Sufism, natural sciences are said to be potentially dangerous for religion, save those practices,

like medicine, useful for caring for human life (al-Ghazzall (1985), 1: 27). Al-Ghazzall speaks about the intellect as the noblest human attribute, but the context shows that he regards intellect ('aql) as the privileged tool for receiving divine illumination and for grasping the mystic science of devoilement (mukdshafah), the science of opening the heart to the ecstatic knowledge of God (al-Ghazzall (1985), 1: 19 and 25).

Some hesitations are manifest, and the beginning of concealment after 488/1095 denotes a deep mental transformation. So a final judgment on al-Ghazzall's attitude towards knowledge and science must be
very tenuous. There is at least one thing for sure: the only important and true knowledge is the knowledge of God and His Acts, because the world is valuable only as an effect of God's Will. Moreover, even though a deep insight into the mystery of reality can be granted exclusively by an illumination coming from God, it would be silly to obliterate demonstrative reasoning. First of all, there is the necessity to defend religion against all its enemies, many of whom are dangerously skilled in persuasive demonstration. As we have already seen, philosophy can be used against philosophy, supposing that the apologetic aim is prevalent. As to the indispensability of science, from al-Ghazzali's point of view, knowledge of the world and its laws are worthwhile but, employing a strictly juridical vocabulary, supererogatory.

Learned men cannot but know God and appreciate his omnipotence and providence. But this learning is not fitted for the masses. There are many passages where al-Ghazzali argues against the desirability of the widespread divulging of esoteric knowledge among ordinary people (al-Ghazzali

(1970): 31; al-GhazzalT (1967a): 39ff.).[7] A deep insight into the mysteries of faith and theology does not help in obtaining eternal salvation. Al-Ghazzali wrote his very last work, the Iljam al-'awdmm can 'Urn al-kaldm ("Restraint of the Common People from the Science of kaldm") to show how many and how great are the hazards of propagating science among people not prepared to receive it. Although Ibn Rushd charged al-Ghazzali with the intention of divulging knowledge to the unlearned, al-Ghazzali's perplexity in regard to an uncontrolled circulation of science is at least equal to the reluctance of his great adversary from Cordova.

The mystical conversation with God is undoubtedly for al-Ghazzali essentially a soliloquium: the mystic finds in himself all the answers and certainties his soul needs. But the existence of other people and the necessity to relate to them cannot be ruled out. Al-Ghazzali is much too good a jurist to deny any of the pillars of Islamic behaviour and tradition, for instance the common prayer on Friday or the assertion that the Islamic community cannot agree on a mistake. In this sense, the knowledge shared by the 'ulama and fuqaha possesses an obvious social value determined by legal presuppositions. The statements of ahl al-sunnah wa'l-jamd'ah, namely the orthodox community, are binding for everyone. For Ibn Rushd too the pillars of faith are outstanding references for everyone, philosophers and common people equally. It is characteristic that al-Ghazzali often provides for the orthodox a "middle way" between opposite extremities (al-Ghazzali (1970): 16-27), a medietas which is coherent with the teachings of the Prophet.

The significance of al-Ghazzali's position is that he blames both the person who is blindly subjugated to the principle of

authority, and the person who exceeds in trusting reason. Both depart from obeying the law
and the juridical prescriptions of religion which are important because they have the task of determining social relations.

Al-Ghazzali is universally known as "the proof of Islam" (hujjat al-isldm) and this qualification is meaningful only if we admit that his work is a conscious synthesis of three main aspects of the Islamic conception of rationality: theoretical and philosophical inquiry, juridical legislation and mystical practice. Perhaps this kind of rationality appears quite distant from Western rationality. Yet, the breadth of al-Ghazzalf s thought means that he can be viewed as the prototype of the Muslim intellectual (Watt 1963).[8]

NOTES

1 There are many passages (for instance al-Ghazzali (1967a): 33, or al-Ghazzali (1928): 11—12) where he defends the authority of mathematical sciences; moreover he composed treatises such as Miydr aWilm ("The Standard of Science") to demonstrate the usefulness of logic for distinguishing true propositions from the erroneous and for establishing the inherent strength of a discourse.

2 It is important to remember that al-Ghazzali wrote only one treatise properly concerning $kalam_y$ namely al-Iqtisddfi'l-i'tiqad, composed the last time he stayed in Baghdad as a professor in the Madrasah Nizamiyyah.

3 It is the famous question of the balkafah or bild kayfah, especially characteristic of the Ash'arites (see Gardet and Anawati (1981): 52fï£; Caspar (1987): 174ff.).

4 It is likely (as Jabre argued) that the concealment of al-Ghazzali was provoked also, but not exclusively, by political reasons, for instance the fear of the Batinite threat or the hostility of the Sultan Berkiyaruq who succeeded his father Malikshah in 488/1094. But it would be misleading to undervalue the deeper religious motives.

5 About this problem in Western medieval philosophy, see T. Rudavsky (ed.), Divine Omniscience and Omnipotence in Medieval Philosophy (Dordrecht and Boston, 1985); W. Courtenay, Covenant and Causality in Medieval Thought (London, 1984); M. T Fumagalli Beonio-Brocchieri (ed.), Sopra la volta del mondo: onnipotenza epotenza assoluta di dio tra medioevo e eta moderna (Bergamo, 1986).

6 See G. Galilei, Opere, ed. by F. Flora (Milan and Naples, 1953): 988-9. Galileo's firm position in favour of the independence of science from religion scandalized the Church and the official authorities. On the contrary, it is noticeworthy that this – perhaps – accidental statement by al-Ghazzali has been neglected by the scholars who studied his thought.

7 In the Mizan al-'amal (al-Ghazzali (1945): 35) we read that the majority of people need action (namely, obedience to legal and religious rules) more than reasoning. What is important is the Truth, because "doctrine" is always changing (al-Ghazzali (1945): 148).

8 The necessity of considering al-Ghazzali as a prototype of a Muslim intellectual and thinker is underlined also by Veccia Vaglieri (1970), and it is important
for a correct understanding of al-Ghazzall's position, so that his Sufi creed does not obliterate the meaning of human legal acts and the historical value of Islam.

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III

Islamic philosophers in the Western lands of Islam

CHAPTER 20

Ibn Masarrah

Lenn E. Goodman

❧

Muhammad ibn 'Abd Allah ibn al-Masarrah was born in Cordova (Cordoba) in 269/883. His father, an ascetically inclined theologian, had journeyed to Basrah nearly thirty years before with a much older merchant son of his, reportedly to study the ideas of the Mu'tazilah. The school, then in its heyday, was soon to be widely condemned, with the ascendancy of its traditionalist rivals. For it ascribed human acts to human choices rather than to God's inscrutable power, and it held God responsible for doing justice to humankind and requiting unmerited sufferings, if not in this world then in the next. Ruddy-skinned and fair-haired, 'Abd Allah might have passed for a Norman or a Slav in Iraq. But he was a Spanish Muslim, client, by the fortunes of history, to a Berber from Fez. His close friend Khalll, branded by the orthodox with the sobriquet Khalll al-Ghaflah, "the intimate of indifference", had also travelled to Iraq and was, we are told, cross-examined on his return by an erudite of Islamic tradition: "What do you say of the balance in which God will weigh man's deeds?" His answer, defiant of the literalism that was now growing strident: "I say it is God's justice. So it is a balance that has no pans." "What do you say about the narrow

path that souls must walk to reach paradise?" "I say it is the straight way, the religion of Islam." Another slap at literalism, although couched in conciliation of the still ill-fitting faith. "What do you say of the Qur'ān?" Here, the hostile sources tell us, Khalll could only babble, "The Qur'ān, the Qur'ān", but it was clear from his silence that he held to the hated Mu'tazilite doctrine that the Qur'ān was created, not eternal. "And what do you say of destiny and the determination of human acts?" "I say that the good acts come from God, but the bad from man." This alone, the master seethed, would be grounds enough to denounce you as an infidel and make you pay with blood for all your impieties. In fact the young scholar was merely driven away and banned from his master's classes.

But at his death a mob of jurists ransacked his house and burned all but his law books.

The story of Khalll's questioning bears the marks of an apology for his acceptance by a revered master. But it vividly conveys the growing intolerance of the later ninth century C.E. In that atmosphere 'Abd Allah wisely kept his Mu'tazilite leanings to himself, entrusting them only to his son and imparting not a whiff even to his closest disciples. But the father was forced by debts to leave the West and settle in Mecca, where he died in 286/899, when Ibn Masarrah was only seventeen. The sources tell us nothing of the boy's maturation, but by the early fourth/ tenth century he was the leader of a Sufi retreat in the hills above Cordova, with a band of disciples trusted to keep his teachings to themselves. Rumour had it that the "mountain man" (al-jabali) favoured Mu'tazilism and denied the torments of Hell. Later it was said that he taught an atheism founded on the philosophy of Empedocles. In time the suspicions would grow to formal

charges, but, long before they did, Ibn Masarrah's teachings were denounced in a short book by the learned jurist al-Habbab.

The Umayyad caliph was in no position to take such denunciations lightly. For mystics of suspect orthodoxy often heard the schemes and voiced the grievances of dissidents and rival princes. Not waiting for the other shoe to fall, Ibn Masarrah judiciously left Cordova, accompanied by two close disciples, with the traditional pretext of a pilgrimage to Mecca. Visiting many masters of law and theology as he journeyed across North Africa, he sat as a simple student, we are told, at the feet of the successor of the great Sahnun in Kairouan, revealing his own greatness only in the dignity and sobriety of his answers to questions asked. He deepened his acquaintance with Mu'tazilite teachings at their source in Iraq. At Mecca he may well have met Abu Sa'ld, a traditionalist disciple of the great monistic mystic al-Junayd.[1] Abu Sa'id's teachings made Hadtth a vehicle of mystic speculation and allusion. Yet, like al-Junayd, he skirted the most extreme extensions of monism. In defence of his own repute, he later wrote a book condemning Ibn Masarrah's pantheistic tendencies.

Visiting the sacred sites of Arabia, Ibn Masarrah meditated in Medina on the Prophet's bench on the rooftop of the tiny cottage of the concubine Mariyah, mother of Muhammad's legendary lost son. His disciples saw him measure with his handspans the rooms of the little house, and he explained that he planned to model his new retreat in the Sierra de Cordova exactly on the plans of this sacred space. The accession of Abd al-Rahman III (ruled 299/912—350/961) made a prophecy of this hopeful, votive gesture. For the new caliph

promulgated a policy of tolerance, to ease the sufferings of his subjects from the near inquisition of the Malikite jurists, laying claim to a generosity of spirit that had grown unfamiliar among his rivals in Baghdad. Returning to Cordova, Ibn Masarrah, still

guarded about his inner teachings, used a subtle and suggestive imagery to avoid overt affront to orthodoxy, relying on paradox and allegory to convey his ideas by indirection. Much of what passes for mystery in mysticism, we must observe, much of the touted ineffability of mystic experience, stems not from any inner paradox but from the unaccept-ability of the construction put upon the experience by adepts and detractors alike, the holism or monism often taken to be its portent.

Secure under the new caliph, Ibn Masarrah taught, wrote and guided his ascetics. His tariqah, or Sufi path, modelled on those of the great Sufis Dhu'1-Nun al-Misri (d. 245/860) and the Meccan al-Nahrajurl (d. 330/941), followed the pietist contemplative theme of constant examinations of one's own conscience.[2] Despite his devout conduct and his circumspection, the publication of his books led to his denunciation by traditionists in the East. Of his writings, only the titles survive from two of them: The Book of Letters, a. title also used by al-Farabi; and The Book of Enlightenment, a title that resonated with the usage of al-Jahiz. But his books were apparently never burnt while he lived; and, unlike the monistic mystic al-Hallaj, crucified at Baghdad in 309/922 for his ecstatic cry, "I am the Truth!", Ibn Masarrah died peacefully at his mountain retreat in October 319/931.[3]

The gist of his teachings was reconstructed by the Spanish Arabist Miguel Asm Palacios,[4] relying on the criticisms

lodged against him and on testimonies from the mystic virtuoso Ibn Arabl, the doxographers Ibn Hazm of Cordova, Sa'id of Toledo, al-Shahrastanl and al-Shahrazurl, and the biographical encyclopedists Ibn Abl Usaybi'ah and Ibn al-Qiftl. The picture Asm drew from these sources represents Ibn Masarrah's thought as a confluence of pseudo-Empedoclean teaching and Mu'tazilism. But my teacher Samuel Stern[5] showed that Asin's linking of Ibn Masarrah's views to those of pseudo-Empedocles rested on a passage in Sa'id of Toledo's Tabaqdt al-umam[6] that was vague, polemical and, Stern believed, conjectural. What clinched the matter for Stern was his discovery of Sa'id's source in the philosopher al-Amiri (d 381/992),[7] where Ibn Masarrah is not mentioned, but the influence of "Empedocles" is ascribed generically to "Batinls" – a term that meant Isma'ills in the East, but tended to be used as a broad term of abuse in the Islamic West for heretical-seeming Sufis. Sa'id may have arbitrarily grafted the name of Ibn Masarrah to al-'Amiri's notions of Empedoclean thinking.

Influenced by Stern's work, Dominique Urvoy drew the conclusion that Ibn Masarrah was primarily an ascetic, somewhat anti-clerical figure, whose two lost works consisted essentially of imagery that did not bespeak an ordered line of argument. But Stern thought that apart from its reliance on the questionable pseudo-Empedoclean remark, Asin's account, based on the reports of Ibn Hazm and Ibn Arabl, was "of lasting value". So Urvoy may go a bit too far. For Sufis, like Kabbalists, often clothe or
conceal a tacit line of argument in their imagery. But to say this is not to impeach Urvoy's broader conclusion: "Il faudra attendre Ibn Gabirol (1020-1057) pour qu'apparaisse le premier 'systeme philosophique' andalou."[8] For surely the

highly disciplined, original and indeed deeply pseudo-Empedoclean Neoplatonism of Ibn Gabirol's Pons vitae sets a standard of systematic philosophy that Ibn Masarrah never pretended to meet.

What was the tenor of Ibn Masarrah's thought? The question is worth asking, since he represents a period at which Andalusian philosophy was in its infancy or, perhaps even more interesting, in an embryonic stage. Stern was an orientalist, one of the greatest of his generation, but, by his own confession, rather innocent of philosophy. His premature death from asthma prevented him from laying out his case about Ibn Masarrah in full, but he did write: "I can only say that I can discover in Ibn Masarrah's doctrines as reproduced in later authors no trace of pseudo-Empedoclean doctrines, and think that no one would have discovered such traces without the prompting of Sa'id's statement." In what follows, I may be able to show where later writers could have seen "Empedoclean" affinities in Ibn Masarrah. But I certainly cannot claim that the evidence would have thrust such notions before our eyes without Asm's prompting.

The Mu'tazilites were radical monotheists, describing themselves, somewhat combatively, as the advocates of monotheism and theodicy (Ahl al-tawhid wa'L-ta'dil). The early kaldm polemics against Zoroastrian dualists and Christian trinitarians had honed their sense of the absoluteness of God's unity. To concede that God's Attributes of Will or Wisdom might be distinct from His Identity was, in effect, to admit the reality of hypostases too readily transformed into persons of the Trinity. Similarly, an eternal Qur'ān would be the eternal Word and Wisdom of God – all too easily, the second person of the Trinity. Later

critics of the Mu'tazilah, for whom trinitarianism was in a very raw sense no longer a live option, cared little for the old dialectic and had not much use for negative theology. To them the eternity of the Qur'ān would become a dogma, not combating but absorbing Christian and Jewish notions of God's eternal Word, by which the Transcendent was linked with this world, through creation, governance, revelation and judgment. But, to the philosophically inclined, negative theology and monistic monotheism preserved an appeal beyond the immediate inter-confessional stimulus that had aroused them. The absolute simplicity of God seemed to mirror and indeed to argue God's ontic absoluteness as well. For surely what was simple and without opposite was also indestructible and uncreated, a suitable counterpart to the temporality of creation and a fitting correlative to the mystic's ecstatic sense of unity and power.

The Empedocles of al-Amirl was a sage and nobleman of Agrigentum, a subtle philosopher and devoted ascetic who had studied
with King Solomon and his legendary contemporary the Arab sage Luqman (Qur'ān 31: 12-19).[9] Writings in the name of this ascetic Empedocles were known to al-Shahrastanl and al-Shahrazurl, as well as al-'Amirf. He had, we are told, sought to explain the world's creation to his fellow Greeks but was rejected by most of them, because his theories implied denial of an afterlife. A treatise of his denying the resurrection was seen by Ibn al-Qiftl in the library at Jerusalem. Despite his horror at what he saw, Ibn al-Qiftl's account shows how the writings ascribed to a pre-Socratic philosopher might be deemed relevant to the concerns of a Mu'tazilite mystic. Ibn al-Qiftl writes of Empedocles, "He

was the first to grasp the unity of the meanings of the Attributes of God: All reduce to a single Identity."[10]

From the fragmentary appraisals in which our sources carefully preserved the record of what they took to be the writings of the ancient sage, we learn that "Empedocles" opened his text with praise of philosophy, the science with which ordinary people are least concerned. He argued that philosophy proves its worth through its luminous self-evidence and inspires us, as in Plato's Phaedrus myth, to flee this world for a higher one. Like Plato, the shadowy author addresses the would-be philosopher as though his goal were to become a mystical adept. He advises those who aspire to knowledge of higher things to begin not with the ultimate reality, which will no doubt elude them, nor with lower, physical beings, which will enmesh them in their coarseness, but with the intermediate, the human soul. From an adequate understanding of the self one may make one's way to both higher and lower realities. Such a path of self-exploration, based on the idea that the soul mediates between the material and the spiritual worlds, is the perennial course of pietists from Bahya to Pascal. Indeed, the idea that self-knowledge is the key to wisdom is the methodological basis of philosophy from Socrates to Descartes and Sartre.[11]

The soul, pseudo-Empedocles lays down, is a simple substance, not like fire, which has only the relative simplicity of the corporeal, but like light. The truth about the self reflects and reveals the truth about the simplicity of God. If we consider this, we will grasp what it implies but does not state: the attributes of the human psyche are what we are; they are not a thing apart. We are (in a sense well examined by the Mu'tazilite moralists, who held that our fortunes and destiny

are the product of our own acts and choices) what we make ourselves – although in a far lesser sense than is comprehended in the idea of God's self-necessity. Here we see a basis for the mystic quest for unity in God and with God, and a basis as well, perhaps, for linking mystic praxis with the search for immortality, through the Platonizing idea that it is only by the inner unification of the self, morally, intellectually and spiritually, that one can be folded into the Unity that is God.

God, whose absolute simplicity is approached by contemplation of the lesser simplicity of a perfect or perfected human consciousness, is His own pure being: He is his own knowledge, will, bounty, power, justice and truth.[12] As al-Amirl writes:

The doctrine of Empedocles as to the Attributes of the Creator is that he is described in terms of knowledge, existence, will and power; but there are no distinct notions in him identifiable by these diverse names. For just as we say that every being in the world is known by Him, is under His power, and is an emanation of His bounty without affirming thereby any plurality of notions in it, so too do we describe Him who gives them being in terms of knowledge, existence, will and power, even though He is one and indivisible.

And, just as His existence is unlike that of anything that exists in the world – for all worldly things realize a contingent existence, dependent on their creation, whereas His Godhead is necessarily existent and not dependent on creation – so is His unity unlike that of any existent in the world. For the unity of all worldly things is subject to division, by partition,

by conceptual analysis, or by having some counterpart. But His Identity transcends all multiplicity.[13]

"Empedocles", Abu'l-Faraj explains in his History, "was the first to deny that the essence of the Creator had Attributes, saying: 'The Essence of the Creator is His existence' and vice versa. His life and knowledge are two relative ideas that do not necessarily imply diversity in His Identity."[14]

Thus the "Empedoclean" theory of God's attributes sustains the Mu'tazilite doctrine of God's absolute unity: just as God has no parts but is uncompounded and indestructible, so His unity is indivisible even conceptually. For if there were attributes in God genuinely distinct from one another, it would be possible to ask whether God might have had a different nature than He has; it would be conceivable that this nature might have been differently compounded or composed, and the very existence of God would become contingent. For what can be broken down into its elements needs a cause to explain their combination. Any synthesis (any synthetic judgment!) is contingent. Further, if God had counterparts, as all natural particulars do, then God would have a plurality of genuinely distinct characteristics, some in common with others of His putative kind and others that differentiate Him from them. This too would make God contingent, no longer a necessary being, an effect rather than the ultimate cause, and so not God. Clearly, if God is necessary, He is absolutely simplex, not only in having no parts as an extended body has, but also in the sense of unanalysability, having no attributes distinct from His Identity or Godhead (Dhat), no nature or Essence
distinct from His existence. He belongs to no kind but is unique and therefore undefinable. As pseudo-Empedocles

argues, in the true spirit of rational mysticism, "Understanding is simple, but language is compound."[15]

In the work of "Empedocles" a Mu'tazilite could find conceptual roots and a historical pedigree, then, for the celebrated kaldm formulae that God was wise but not by wisdom (as though God's wisdom were something separate from Himself), powerful but not by power. Here too is rooted the idea that in a necessary being there is no differentiation of essence from existence. And beyond that we discern the goal of the mystic quest to share in God's unity and seek dissolution in it of the all too vulnerable, all too durable self. One can readily see how theological critics of Ibn Masarrah might link the Platonizing "Empedocles" with the charge that Ibn Masarrah denied the afterlife. For to such critics Platonic immortality would seem little more than spiritual dissolution in the divine; the Neoplatonic flight of the alone to the Alone would hardly be an acceptable substitute for physical resurrection, judgment and requital, as al-Ghazzali's scornful rejection of the purely spiritual immortality of the Philosophers makes very clear.[16] If Khalll thought that God's scales need no pans and that God's judgment marks no visible but a moral and spiritual path, was it not clear that Ibn Masarrah understood the resurrection as his contemporary al-Farabl and other philosophers did, as the pictorial symbol of a spiritual truth? Such affirmations would be hard to discriminate from denials.[17]

Similarly with creation, the accounts we have of pseudo-Empedocles link up with our sketchy knowledge of Ibn Masarrah's views and the charges made against him. The most striking doctrine of pseudo-Empedocles was his account of emanation based on the idea of intellectual matter.[18] The

problem that readers of pseudo-Empedocles identified as that of creation was the emergence of a physical and multifarious world from God's absolute simplicity and incorporeality. In Neoplatonic terms, how did the many arise from the One?[19] The problem parallels the mind—body problem acute in modern philosophy since Descartes. As with all questions of theophany, the issue was the interaction of the physical with a reality that is never adequately described in mechanistic terms. Creation was just a special case.[20]

It was the relevance of the mind—body interaction that led pseudo-Empedocles to recommend that one begins the philosophic quest from the examination of the self. For, in pseudo-Empedocles, mind is to body not simply as kick is to leg, nor even as pilot to ship, but in many ways as God is to the world:

God is the absolute originator. He did not create from something else. Nor was anything coeternal with Him. Rather, He created
the simple thing which is the first simple Idea, the primal matter or element ['unsur]. Then a number of simple things proliferated from that single, first, simple kind [naw. Then composite things developed from the simples. Thus He is the Creator of every thing and non-thing – intellectual, notional or supposed. Which is to say, the Creator of all opposites and contraries known to the intellect, the imagination and the senses.[21]

This passage requires a bit of glossing, as ShahrastanI himself, who is our source, is the first to recognize, for the last sentence is his gloss of "Empedocles'" obscure words. But once we see what the philosopher is driving at, we will

recognize a seminal thesis, the affirmation that the first reality to emanate from God is Intellectual Matter. The idea was soon to be rejected by many of the best medieval Neoplatonists, but it was never quite expelled from the core of Neoplatonic thinking. We know how irritated al-Farabl was by would-be philosophers who could not keep it straight what was matter (hyle) and what was element ('unsur),[22] but here we see some of the source of al-Farabl's irritation. Pseudo-Empedocles was relying on the Neoplatonic view that prime matter is a direct emanation from the One[23] and combining it with the view that the first moment of differentiation from divine simplicity is a hypostasis that Plato calls the Indefinite dyad, identified with the form of the Great and Small, and equated here with matter.[24]

In a bold appropriation of the historic Empedocles' reliance upon Love and Strife as the principles promoting combination and separation among the elements, fire, water, earth and air, pseudo-Empedocles assimilated these two quasi-naturalistic, quasi-mythic principles to the Platonic forms of the Great and the Small, setting them above the four elements and suggesting a dialectic of complementarity rather than mere opposition between them, by renaming them Love and Domination (al-mahabbah wa'l-ghalabah). As ShahrastanI reports:

The first Element ['unsur] is simple in relation to the Intellect, which is below it, but it is not simple in an absolute sense, i.e., not sheerly simple vis-a-vis its Cause. For any effect must be composite conceptually or perceptually, and the Element is compounded of Love and Domination. From these stem the spiritual substances that are simple and the physical substances that are compound.[25]

Opposition of some kind, we may reason, is necessary to differentiate the first effect from its Cause. But, in keeping with the spirit of monotheism, the otherness that differentiates Intellectual Matter from God is not called hate or strife, but dominance, an aggressive or outgoing self-assertion. The yearning by which what has been separated looks back
upon its Source is still called love, but now assimilated to the love that is the motive force of the Aristotelian cosmos and to the Platonic and Neoplatonic yearning for return. The two forces are now opposing aspects of the same one relationship, just as Aristotle's criticism of the historic Empedocles had implied they should be. These two moments become the explanations of the "still" movement, by which neo-Empedoclean counterparts of Aristotle's unmoved movers impart motion to all things – not merely physical movement but the prior movement of outflow and return that animates all Neoplatonic hypostases.[26] The same two principles, we can reason, will explain the differentiation of the Neoplatonic Intellects from one another and the yearning of the lower for the Higher in all things. Dominance will be a principle of rule and so of providence, never a Gnostic or Zoroastrian recalcitrance. These cosmic or metaphysical principles will function rather like the Kabbalistic divine attributes (middot) of Mercy and Justice; and the spirit of Domination, like the Rabbinic "evil impulse", will not be an ultimate force for evil but a necessary component in the self-assertion of all finite beings, to the extent that they are at all differentiated from the absolute unity of God.

Plato equated God or the One with the form of Sameness or Equality, and matter with the principle of otherness or difference. Matter in itself, of course, does not exist in any positive sense, since reality is actual only to the extent of its

realization by form. So there is no absolute matter but only the final darkness beyond which the light of emanation does not reach. Matter is always relative, and the highest phase of matter, pseudo-Empedocles inferred, is the pure emanation of the first simple hypostasis to emerge from God, a pure Idea, in fact, but one that can be called first matter, inasmuch as it is the first phase of otherness, differentiated from the absoluteness of God's perfect unity only by the relative partiality of its consciousness. From this "element" God produces the universal Mind, and, from these two, the universal Soul. All of these are simple, but by their mediation it is possible for God to produce composites: Universal Nature and secondary (i.e., physical) matter. Thus the complex emerges from the simple by the Neoplatonic expedient of mediation, the less simple providing a ground, a "material" basis, for the emergence of what shows still lesser unity or simplicity.

An account of this kind was exactly the sort of thing that al-Farabl and Ibn Slna found sloppy and repugnant and sought to replace with a more disciplined procession of disembodied intellects and celestial spheres. They eliminated the mythicism of Love and Domination. Clearly they objected to the unclarity as to how the Second and the rest emerge from the First. This emergence, they insisted, is a result of thought. They objected too to the manifest softness of the pseudo-Empedoclean account to the temporality of creation. It was against such softness and sloppiness, and not against rigorous Peripatetics, that Ibn Slna launched his critique of the philosophy of "the Westerners".[27] To both al-Farabl and Ibn Slna it was clear from the arguments of such Neoplatonists as Proclus and from those of Aristotle himself that temporal creation was an incoherent notion that

impiously dragged divine eternity down into the mud of temporality and irrationally compromised the timeless immutability of causal necessity. In reality, scriptural accounts of creation were simply the myths or noble lies that Plato had commended as means of mediating philosophic insights to those who still dwelt within the darkness and flickering torchlight of the cave.

Despite their distaste for all things even associated with the kaldm, and in part because of it, al-Farabl and Ibn Slna refined on and did not merely reject the emanative continuum of pseudo-Empedocles. For by insisting that matter in general was not, somehow, a thing apart, but merely the lower end of a continuum that began with God, that began, one might say, within God and in a sense never really left Him, followers of "Empedocles" could resolve at a stroke the problems of God's responsibility for nature, bridging the chasm that seemed to loom between the physical and the spiritual.

Like the historic Empedocles, pseudo-Empedocles is concerned with purifications (katharmoi),[28] as shown in an elaborate and rather gnostic exegesis of the historic Empedocles' notion that the body is a mere shell or husk (epikalummd). In the pre-Socratic philosopher there is a gnomic hint, a fragmentary phrase speaking of "Earth that envelops mortals" (Frg. 148). In pseudo-Empedocles, this hint has become an elaborate system designed to explain the alienation of humanity from its Source, and to show how such distance (bu'd), which is never absolute, can and will be overcome. The effect, "Empedocles" argues, is always subordinate and subsequent to its cause. This Neoplatonizing axiom alone shows both that the individual is never fully removed from the divine and that it is never self-sufficient or

co-equal with its cause. The diminished simplicity of the effect, as an effect, entails its lesser reality, signalled by the differentiation of lower beings in the procession of their advancing embodiment. The universal power of the One thus generates multiplicity without partaking of it, and each lesser hypostasis yields a still lower one, until we reach the heart of man (lubb), the spiritual heart that is the cynosure of all pietist attentions, encased in its bodily husk. The Aristotelian "vegetative" soul, concerned with growth and reproduction, is the husk of the "animal" soul, which gives us motility and sensibility. The animal soul is the husk of the discursive or dialectical soul (cf. Plato, Republic, 6.511b), which is in turn the husk (vehicle, sanctuary and prison) of the mind, the intellectual soul.

The core or heart at each level is the rind or husk of the next; for, like matter and form, the ideas of husk and heart are applied relatively, reflecting the ontic hierarchy, which is (if we look upward) a hierarchy
of progressive stages of realization. In any Neoplatonic scheme the degrees of reality are degrees of intellectuality, spirituality, remoteness from physicality. Thus the practical value of austerities and meditations like Ibn Masarrah's. Every "core" or heart precipitates from that above it. When these cores, which are Platonic essences, reach particularity, and their universality can differentiate no further, they give form to bodies. The Universal Intellect knows these, because it discerns the core within them. That is, by virtue of its affinity to what is spiritual/intellectual, it recognizes the form that gives being to each body. In the human case its very glance diffuses the beauty of an individual soul upon that body. This soul never loses its connection to the Universal Soul and so is the rightful and capable ruler of the body and

can rescue and redeem all that is spiritual or intellectual, all the forms trapped in physicality. Where human minds are led astray by the fractious animal and vegetative souls, they are redeemed by the superior rational soul of a prophet, again sent down by the Universal Soul, but subtler and purer than other souls. In every revolution of the Sphere the highest manifestations of the spiritual world on earth are distilled, as it were, in a single individual, charged with the salvation of the rest. But although the prophet and all souls and minds come from above, each human being must work out his or her own salvation and has the God-given means to do so. Salvation is by grace, but not by arbitrary election; and it is actively to be sought, not passively awaited.

From the doxography of Ibn Hazm (d. 454/1064), the brilliant, radically conservative theologian, jurist and belle-lettrist,[29] we learn of two scandalous doctrines of Ibn Masarrah. Firstly, the Mu'tazilite mystic discriminated an eternal and a created knowledge and power of God, lest God's omniscience and omnipotence exclude the free acts of humankind. As a proof-text for his shocking view, Ibn Masarrah called to witness Qur'ān 6: 73, 13: 9 and 32: 6, where God is said to know all things hidden and perceived ('dlim al-ghayb wa'l-shahddah). The plain sense of the text, Ibn Hazm insists, is that God knows human actions even if we seek to conceal them – past, present and future. But Ibn Masarrah glossed ghayb, the unseen, as a reference to the Platonic universal, which are beyond sense perception. These God knows by an eternal knowledge. But the realm of particulars, which we know by way of experience (shahddah), God knows temporally. He knows nothing about the contingent facts of Zayd's decision to believe or disbelieve in the mission of Muhammad, until Zayd's decision is actually

made. For without this (rather Socinian) doctrine, human freedom, our power to do otherwise than we will, might seem able to contradict God's perfect knowledge. To avoid such an outcome Ibn Masarrah distanced one part of God's knowledge from His Identity, making it a created and indeed temporal effect.

Corresponding to his bifurcation of God's knowledge, we learn from Ibn Hazm that for Ibn Masarrah God's power or sovereignty, the actual authority that rules the world, is His throne. Part of what Ibn Masarrah meant was undoubtedly that the scriptural throne of God (Qur'ān 7: 54, 9: 129, 10: 3, 11: 7, 17: 42, 20: 5, 21: 22, 23: 86, 27: 26, etc.) is a symbol of God's power. Al-Makkl (d. 386/996), an important source for al-Ghazzall, would write similarly that the throne of God was his will, a primal hypostasis in the differentiation of the many from the One, as Ibn Gabirol, for one, plainly understood. For, as al-Ghazzall and many others would argue, no mere procession of simplex emanations devoid of volition could ever account for the differentiation of divine simplicity. But the thrust of Ibn Masarrah's equation of God's power with His Throne cannot be understood without reference to his teaching that God's knowledge too was distinguishable from His Godhead.

The apparent separation of God's power and knowledge from His Identity may seem to consort poorly with the monistic thrust of Ibn Masarrah's theory of the attributes. But if we bear in mind Ibn Hazm's hostility we may perhaps glimpse what motivated Ibn Masarrah and find some measure of coherence here. As explained by Ibn al-Ru'aynl, the disciple who reported Ibn Masarrah's doctrine to Ibn Hazm, "God is too great to ascribe to Him" the mere governance of the

world. Or as Ibn Hazm put it, under the curtain of oblique discourse and with marked antipathy for Mu'tazilite essays at a theology of transcendence: "God is too great to attribute to Him the act of actually doing anything."

Al-Ghazzali himself would one day avail himself of the Neoplatonic notion that the transcendence of the Absolute is mediated by a lesser hypostasis, just as he set the husk/heart distinction at the core of his spiritual encyclopedia, the Revival of the Religious Sciences. The same idea, of a lesser hypostasis, to mediate between the Infinite and creation, would be a mainstay of the Kabbalah, under the name of the sefirot, the mystic numbers that are the archetypes of all things; the husks of pseudo-Empedocles would survive too in Kabbalah, as the klippot, vessels of alienation which the redemption of the cosmos must shatter. But, despite al-Ghazzall's reliance on a mediating hypostasis, and despite the survival of other pseudo-Empedoclean ideas within and around Neoplatonism, in the early days, when such methods were new and exotic among scriptural monotheists, Ibn Masarrah's approach would carry a certain shock value.

What aroused Ibn Arabl in Ibn Masarrah's teachings was their potential for visionary applications. As a visionary Ibn Masarrah would seem drab by an Ibn Arabl's standards. But his capacity to link visionary expressions (especially architectural images) to concepts and theories already grounded in argument was exciting. For if philosophy was a mystic quest, the adept would want a map of the terrain to be traversed
conceptually and experientially. And if the goal was to take up lodging in the house of God, one would need to know the layout and the furniture of the place. The traditional repertoire

of philosophy might supply navigational principles, but only the visionary imagination could supply the map.

Rather than explaining simply that the Throne is a symbol of God's power or governance, as an al-Farabl might do, Ibn Masarrah uses the symbolism, much as the Rabbis of the Midrash uninhibitedly enter into the scriptural conceit of God as king. Indeed, the affinity between Midrash and mysticism here, in method and matter, is no accident. Mysticism relies on poetry to clothe the Transcendent in the notional trappings of Glory, without commitment to the dangerous realm of direct, conceptual discourse. Midrash, more specifically, uses pictorial symbols that are "deniable" in their literal application, always preceded by an explicit or understood "as it were". Such disclaimers allow images to communicate with a precision that properly conceptual descriptions and attributions cannot attain by pretending faithfully to represent the Transcendent, for all but the narrowest laser beam of an analogy is excluded.

"It has been reported to us," Ibn Arabi writes, "as coming from Ibn Masarrah, one of the greatest masters of the mystic way in knowledge, ecstatic states, and inspiration, that the Throne which is carried is in fact God's sovereignty."[30] Ibn Arabi goes on to develop the image in an analysis of the powers by which God rules the temporal and the eternal worlds, embroidering his conceit upon the scriptural affirmation that on the day when God's sovereignty is most fully manifested "eight shall bear the throne of thy Lord" (Qur'ān 69: 17), rather than the four who bear it in this life. The bearers of the Throne, according to Ibn Arabi, are in effect carrying the universe. The sense Ibn Masarrah gives the image, in the gloss that Ibn Arabi expands, is clearer if we

hold in mind that philosophers of Peripatetic stamp identified the Throne with the outermost sphere of the heavens, at which are felt the first impulses attributable to the attractive force of the Prime Mover. Like all Neoplatonists, Ibn Masarrah is seeking to explicate the nexus between this world and Eternity, but he is doing so in visionary language.

The bearers, according to Ibn Arabi's testimony, are Adam and Israfil, who carry all bodily forms; Muhammad and Gabriel, who bear all spirits; Abraham and Michael, who bear provender; and Malik and Ridwan, who bear the promise and the threat, that is, our requital of recompense and retribution. Each pair but the last, the two angels who preside over Heaven and Hell, comprises a mortal and an angel, representing the outer (or phenomenal) and the inner (or timeless) dimension of human existence in its phases of creation, sustenance (i.e., providence), revelation, and (with the final pair) judgment. All eight are present only on the Judgment Day, when temporality and Eternity intersect.

In a related teaching, again reported and expanded by Ibn 'Arabi, Ibn Masarrah gives visual content to the unitive intuition of the mystic:

You must know that this ecstatic state, although its essential content is the intuition of God's absolute unity and transcendence, is at the same time manifested in the illumination of the soul by a concrete form. It appears in the guise of a house supported by five columns, covered by a raised roof that surmounts the walls, in which there is no open door, so that no one of those who contemplate it can penetrate it. But outside this house stands another column, fastened to the outer wall. This column the illuminati may touch, just as

they kiss and touch the black stone which God placed outside the sacred House.[31]

Syncretism with Kabbalistic imagery comes to the surface here when the Ka'bah at Mecca is denominated by the phrase "sacred House", as though it were the Temple in Jerusalem. In the Kabbalistic Heikhalot literature, which Gershom Scholem traces at least to the second century, Jewish mystics contemplated God's chariot and throne, the mansions of His house, and even the graphically envisioned parts of the divine "body". The kabbalistic theme of divine self-contraction (zimzum) took its rise in speculations about the theophanic condescension of the Infinite in occupying the circumscribed space of the Sanctuary, designated in Scripture as God's dwelling-place. That act of self-contraction becomes a paradigm for the finite manifestation of the Infinite, whether in the primal act of creation or in providence, revelation, judgment or any other theo-phany – all labelled, in accordance with rabbinic usage, under the problematic of Ezekiel's all too graphic "account of the Chariot".

Voiced in such terms, these speculations and the meditations surrounding them met and mingled with pagan ideas like Porphyry's about the consecration of idols, in which the god is invested in what would otherwise be inanimate matter. It would take us far afield to explore the full range of such theories and meditations, from the initiation rites of the pagan mysteries to the transubstantiation of the host, the charisma of the Shi'ite Imam, the perpetuum mobile of the alchemists (which moves by a spirit thaumaturgically inducted into it), the Kabbalistic tradition of the golem, and the alchemical magnum opus of the homunculus. Suffice it to say that such paradigms of theophany are rarely without philosophic

counterparts. For they spring not from un-mediated mystical contemplation but from efforts to wrestle conceptually with the Infinite in the here and now. Asm speculates that the outer column might be the Imam, and if the Imam is as charismatic as Shi'ism would suggest, actually bringing to earth something or more than merely something of the divine afflatus, that gloss seems more than credible. Similarly, in the Kabbalistic idea of zimzum, we see provision

not just for the specification of the Divine Law out of God's infiniteness, but also for human freedom, a central preoccupation of the Mu'tazilites. Shi'ism is often a vehicle of Mu'tazilite ideas, and clearly was so in the case of Ibn Masarrah. But the Neoplatonic portent of his imagined mandala is visible as well. For the conjunction of the outer column with the walls it abuts signifies the absence of any absolute division between the impenetrable mystery of the Infinite and its manifestation through the Active Intellect or mediating hypostasis, which may touch the mind of the devotee. The image, like that of the Greek mystic poet St Simeon, of sunlight shining on the grass, light mingling with matter in "union without confusion" voices the possibility of the mind's contact (ittisdl; cf. Plotinus, aphe) with the divine.

NOTES

1 See Ali Hassan Abdel-Kader, The Life, Personality and Writings of al-Junayd (London, 1962).

2 As we learn from the work of Bahya Ibn Paqudah, such self-scrutiny could have both moral and philosophical significance. See L. E. Goodman, "Bahya on the Antinomy of

Free Will and Predestination", Journal of the History of Ideas, 44 (1983): 115-30, esp. 122-4. For the Christian and Muslim parallels, see Asm Palacios (note 4): 89.

3 Closer to home, a religious preacher who claimed to be a faithful son of Islam was crucified under orders from Abd al-Rahman II after proclaiming himself a prophet in 237/851; Asm: 22-3.

4 M. Asm Palacios, The Mystical Philosophy of Ibn Masarrah and his Followers, trans. E. H. Douglas and H. W. Yoder (Leiden, 1972; first published in Spanish, Madrid, 1914).

5 S. Stern, "Ibn Masarrah, Follower of Pseudo-Empedocles – an Illusion", Fourth Congress of Arabic and Islamic Studies (Lisbon, 1968): 325—37.

6 Ed. L. Cheiko, p. 21 = R. Blachere's French translation, p. 59.

7 Al-Amiri's work on immortality has now been published: Abu'l-Hasan al-Amirl, Kitab al-amad 'ala'l-abad, ed. and trans. Everett K. Rowson, in A Muslim Philosopher on the Soul and its Fate (New Haven, 1988).

8 D. Urvoy, "Sur les debuts de la pensee speculative en Andalus", Melanges de TUniversite Saint-Joseph, 50(2) (1984): 707-17.

9 For Luqman, see Encyclopaedia of Islam, 2nd ed. (Leiden, 1965), 5: 811—14; for pseudo-Empedocles, Al-Amirl, ed. Rowson: 70—1, 78—81.

10 Ibn al-Qiftl, Tarikh al-hukama, ed. Miiller-Lippert: 16.

11 See Alexander Altmann, "The Delphic Maxim in Medieval Islam and Judaism", in his Studies in Religious Philosophy and Mysticism (Ithaca, 1969) and L. E. Goodman, "Crosspollinations: Philosophically Fruitful Interactions between Jewish and Islamic Thought", in Jacob Lassner (ed.) The Jews of Islamic Lands (Detroit, forthcoming).

12 Al-Shahrazuri, quoted in Asm: 47-9.

13 Al-Amirl, ed. Rowson: 78; the translation here is my own.

14
Abu'l-Faraj, Historia dynastiarum, ed. Pococke (Oxford, 1663): 50, quoted in Asm: 49.

15 ShahrastanI, Kitdb al-milal wa'l-nihal, ed. Cureton (London, 1842-6), 2: 261, 1. 3; cf. Maimonides on God's ineffability, Guide, 1.50-60. It is perhaps because of its impact on the theory of God's attributes that al-Ghazzall calls divine unity a vast and shoreless sea.

16 See al-Ghazzall, Tahdfut al-faldsifah, 18-20.

17 Not only did Neoplatonists confine immortality to the spiritual and tend, by their arguments, towards the Platonic view that the immortal soul, being disembodied (and only so being transtemporal), lost its individuality and merged with the Universal Soul. They also allegorized the torments of Hell, as the alienation of the worldly from the bliss of spiritual union. See Ibn Tufayl's Hayy ibn Yaqzdn, trans. L.

E. Goodman (Los Angeles, 1984): 153-4; cf. Asm: 57, and his account of the hybrid view of al-Jahiz: 150.

18 Asm: 87-8, notes that Ibn Arabl ascribes the (pseudo-Empedoclean) doctrine of a primal, intellectual matter to Sahl al-Tustari, a disciple of the Sufi Dhu'l-Nun, "from whose lips Ibn Masarrah could very well have learned it during his stay in Mecca".

19 See Arthur Hyman, in L. E. Goodman, Neoplatonism and Jewish Thought (Albany, 1992): 111-35; cf. Dillon, McGinn, Goodman, Novak and Popkin in the same volume.

20 See L. E. Goodman, Rambam: Readings in the Philosophy of Moses Maimonides (New York, 1976), Introduction: 18-27, and parts one and four.

21 ShahrastanI, ed. Cureton, 2: 260, 11. 11-15.

22 See al-Farabl, Kitdb al-huruf ed. M. Mahdi (Beirut, 1969): 159; cf. Asm: 66.

23 Proclus, Elements of Theology, prop. 72, corollary, ed. E. R. Dodds (Oxford, 1964; 1st ed. 1933): 68, 1. 24.

24 For intellectual matter in Plotinus, see Enneads, 2.4.1-5. As Asm notes, Plotinus stops short of objectifying spiritual matter as a hypostasis, as pseudo-Empedocles and Ibn Gabirol do. Maimonides sagely stays with Plotinus, as signified by his insistence that "the satan the principle of otherness and alienation, is not one of the "sons of God" (i.e., not a real "principle") but a concomitant of finite creation

("because he is in the throng of the csons of God'"); see Guide, 3.22.

25 ShahrastanI, ed. Cureton, 2: 261; the idea that the effect must be composite smacks of Proclus, see Elements of Theology, 2.4—5, ed. Dodds: 3-7.

26 See ShahrastanI, ed. Cureton: 261, 1. 3; cf. Asm: 50.

27 Dimitri Gutas, in Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition (Leiden, 1988): 249-52, finds a paradigm of Avicenna's targets in al-Amiri, who was a follower of the philosophy of al-Kindl. Al-Kindl had defended temporal creation and added the production of something out of nothing to the four kinds of change acknowledged by Aristotle. Ibn Masarrah may also typify Ibn Slna's targets in his aborted work on eastern philosophy: a true Westerner, whose works, published in al-Farabf s time, did not escape censure from the orthodox as far east as Ahwaz; see Asm: 41 n. 24. Sa'id al-AndalusI, himself a Westerner, is, as Gutas shows (212-14), a prime continuator of the traditions we find in al-Amiri about "Empedocles". If Avicenna read Aristotle's Metaphysics forty times, as he reports, he certainly knew that the Empedocles we meet in Sa'id al-AndalusI and al-Amirl, who would have been the Empedocles of Ibn Masarrah, was not the
Empedocles of Aristotle. Thus, perhaps, Avicenna's vagueness in naming of his targets: Western sources, clearly, and philosophers, but not exponents of the historical Empedocles.

28 Asm: 55-6.

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29 See A. G. Chejne, Ibn Hazm (Chicago, 1982).

30 Asm: 78-80.

31 Asm: 74-5. Maimonides does not fail to profit, in his parable of the palace, from Ibn Masarrah's type of approach; see Guide, 3.51; M. Kellner, Maimonides on Human Perfection (Atlanta, 1990): 14-31.

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CHAPTER 21

Ibn Bājjah

Lenn E. Goodman

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The Islamic West – that is, Andalusia (Muslim Iberia) and the Maghrib (western North Africa) – felt a cultural lag familiar to regions remote from the notional centres of economic and social influence. Umayyad dynasts, escaping the Abbasid onslaught that destroyed their house in the East in the mid second/eighth century, flourished in Spain until the fifth/ eleventh. Translation of Greek scientific works into Arabic, which had preceded the birth of Islamic philosophy in Baghdad in the third/ninth century, continued in Cordova, with the rendering, for example, of a brilliantly illustrated Greek manuscript of Dioscorides' Materia medica in 340/951. The original was a gift from the Byzantine Emperor Constantine VII to the Umayyad Caliph Abd al-Rahman III (fourth/tenth century), whose Jewish vizier Hasday ibn Shaprut (905—75), a scholar, linguist and physician as well as a statesman, personally oversaw translation and other learned activity under the auspices of the court. Abd al-Rahman's son al-Hakam II (ruled 350/961-366/976) founded seven schools in Cordova endowed with stipends for indigent scholars and amassed a library of some 400,000 volumes. But most of the books were gathered by his agents

in the East; and many, especially in logic and astronomy, were burnt by order of the Caliph Hisham (ruled 366/976-399/1009), during a popular reaction against "the ancient learning".

The philosophical tradition depended on the writings of Eastern figures: al-Farabi and Ibn Slna (Avicenna). Ibn Tufayl, a key exponent of Andalusian philosophy, wrote: "Before the spread of philosophy and formal logic to the West, all native Andalusians of any ability devoted their lives to mathematics. They achieved a high level in that field but could do no more. The next generation surpassed them in that they knew a little logic. But study logic as they might, they could not find in it the way to fulfilment."[1] Many of these mathematicians were physicians; their
astronomy laid the foundation for the "Andalusian revolt" against the Ptolemaic system.[2] 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Isma'll "the Euclidean" travelled east in search of learned books. The Cordovan astronomer al-Majritl (d. 398/1007), whose name marks his origins in Madrid, was trained by the geometer Abd al-Ghafir. He too travelled to the East and adapted the astronomical tables of al-Khwarazml, an eastern Persian, to the meridian of Cordova. He wrote a small book on the astrolabe and another on commercial arithmetic, applying computation, geometry and algebra to problems of sales, valuations and taxation. He apparently tried to break out of the mathematical mould, for he introduced the popular Neoplatonism of the Ikhwan al-Safa', or Brethren of Purity of Basrah,[3] to Andalusia. His disciple, al-Kirmanl, brought it to Saragossa, the birthplace of Ibn Bajjah.

The scientism rife among the mathematicians, along with a certain gingerly and prudent diffidence in speculative matters,

fostered a near positivism, still palpable in the verses Ibn Tufayl quotes from one writer, who lamented the polarity between the tantalizing wisdom of metaphysics and the trivial immediacy of mathematics:

How can it be that life's so small.

Two sciences we have – that's all.

One is truth beyond attaining.

The other vain and not worth gaining.[4]

Yet metaphysics was prized here; it was mathematics that seemed vain. Philosophy took hold strongly in the next generation. The best of its exponents, Ibn Tufayl writes, was Ibn Bajjah (Avempace, born in the late fifth/eleventh century, d. 533/1139). He was a creative and iconoclastic thinker, an instigator of the "Andalusian revolt", who operated an observatory of his own[5] and made original contributions to physical theory, with his account of projectile motion. He equated the velocity of a projectile with the difference between its "motive force" and the resistance it encountered – where Aristotle had made velocity directly proportional to motive force and inversely proportional to "resistance". Defended by Aquinas and Scotus, the view was rejected by Averroes (Ibn Rushd) and Albertus Magnus. But Galileo used it in his early critique of the Aristotelian view.[6] A true Neoplatonist, Ibn Bajjah treated gravity as a spiritual force. "He thereby removed the barrier between the heavens and the sublunary world", as Nasr remarks, not by terrestrializing the celestial, as Galileo was to do, but by finding spiritual

influences in all natural events, an approach that commended itself to Ibn Tufayl, Maimonides and others.[7]

Of Jewish ancestry, according to the redoubtable tenth/ sixteenth-century physician and traveller Leo Africanus, Ibn Bajjah grew up in Saragossa. He was a physician, musician, writer of popular songs and poet with "a real lyrical gift".[8] In 504/1110, Saragossa fell to the Almoravids,
Muslim revivalists from North Africa. Ibn Bajjah stayed in the city and, still in his twenties, emerged as vizier to the Berber governor Ibn Tlfalwlt, brother-in-law of the Almoravid Prince All. Sent on an embassy to the still independent former ruler, he was imprisoned, presumably for throwing in his lot with the conquerors. Released after several months, he travelled to Valencia, where he learned of the death of Ibn Tlfalwlt in 510/1117 and of the conquest of Saragossa in 512/1118 by Alphonso I of Aragon. Making his way to Seville, he supported himself as a physician, moving on to Granada, where his learning soon made him well known. Travelling through Jativa, he was imprisoned again, now by the Almoravid ruler Ibrahim ibn Yusuf ibn Tashfin, reportedly for heresy. He gained his release only by the intervention of the qddi, father or grandfather of the philosopher Ibn Rushd (Averroes), who knew well what he was about when he tried to draw a clear and firm line of demarcation between the claims of the faith and the aims of the philosopher.[9]

At Fez, Ibn Bajjah entered the court of the governor, Abu Bakr ibn Tashfin and again became vizier, this time for some twenty years, circulating among the cities of Granada, Seville and Oran. His friend and disciple Abul-Hasan ibn al-Imam was also to become a vizier, and is saluted as such in one of

Ibn Bajjah's works. Noted for his generosity (he reportedly donated over a quarter of his wealth to a destitute countryman), Ibn al-Imam paid tribute to his mentor as the first to give life to the philosophic manuscripts al-Hakam had collected.[10] Indeed, Ibn Bajjah's writings show a keen and living responsiveness to the philosophic problematics of Plato, Aristotle and Galen. Recognizing in his teacher the first creative philosopher of the Islamic West, Ibn al-Imam took care to copy his writings while serving as the chief fiscal officer of Seville, using the autograph of his teacher and under his supervision; his copy was copied in turn in the manuscript now preserved at Oxford.[11]

Among the logicians of Andalusia was Malik ibn Wuhayb, famed for his learning in many sciences, including astronomy and (judicial) astrology and known in his day as the Philosopher of the West. His name earns no mention by Ibn Tufayl, since his only philosophical writings were brief expositions of the rules of thought.[12] Yet he was celebrated for his brilliance and summoned from Seville to the Almoravid capital to confront the Almohad leader Ibn Tumart, whose movement would soon destroy the Almoravid regime. Long after, he was remembered as the only man in the West to see through Ibn Tumart's imperial designs when the Berber rebel debated with the clerics of Marrakesh in 515/1121 or 516/1122. He was mentor and patron to Ibn Bajjah at the Almoravid court and defended him when the philosopher was denounced as a heretic (zindiq), although Malik himself had turned his talents to divinity and given up open discussions of philosophy, as Ibn al-Imam reports, "because of the attempts on his life to which he was subject on their account, and

on account of his contentiousness in all discussions of scientific matters".[13] Ibn Bajjah died at Fez, still in his prime, reportedly poisoned at the instance of the man who had called for his execution, the rival physician and courtier Ibn Zuhr (d. 525/1130), who seems earlier to have denounced Malik, and who was the father of the famous Avenzoar (d. 557/1161), a friend, fellow student and collaborator of Ibn Rushd's.

Ibn Khaldun, the great Arab social theorist, names al-Farabl and Ibn Slna as the chief philosophers of Islam in the East; Ibn Bajjah and Ibn Rushd in the West. Maimonides too admires Ibn Bajjah, citing his commentary on Aristotle's Physics, following his lead in astronomy, epis-temology and the metaphysics of the soul. In a famous letter to the Hebrew translator of his Arabic Guide of the Perplexed, he calls Ibn Bajjah a great philosopher and ranks all his writings first rate.[14] But Ibn Tufayl complains of the disordered and incomplete state of Ibn Bajjah's works, surmising, since he never met the man personally, that worldly occupations left him little leisure for philosophy, "as he himself says, he was pressed for time with the trouble of getting down to Oran … he was so preoccupied with material success that death carried him off before his intellectual storehouses could be cleared and all his hidden wisdom made known".[15] Ibn Tufayl also complains of Ibn Bajjah's critique of mysticism. Yet his oeuvre ranged from The Art of Healing to commentaries on Aristotle, to the critique of Ptolemy's astronomy and Aristotle's physics, to a work on plants, and even one on hunting. Some thirty brief works, many indeed in unfinished state, survive in manuscript. They include commentaries on al-Farabi's logic, and essays on the aim of human life, the Active Intellect, The Regimen of the Solitary, and a valedictory Epistle of Farewell to Ibn al-Imam. He

contributes at least three philosophical themes to the repertoire of his successors – Ibn Tufayl, Averroes and Maimonides: his theory of ittisal, intellectual contact with the Divine; his subtle approach to the doctrine of monopsychism, and his ideal of the governance of the solitary.

Theory of Ittişāl

Like al-Farabl and Ibn Slna, Ibn Bajjah believes that knowledge is not acquired by the senses alone. Universal and necessary judgments, the predictive and explanatory meat of science and the foundation of all apodeictic reasoning about nature, are reached only with the aid of the Active Intellect, the governing intelligence of nature.[16] Casual readers of Aristotle might suppose that he intended no more than a remark about individual cognition when he spoke (in De anima, 3.5) of an active intelligence that moves our potential for thinking to actuality. But the Hellenistic Peripatetic Alexander of Aphrodisias (/?. 200) surely knew that

in the Eudemian Ethics (1248a) Aristotle argued that thought cannot simply start itself up by thinking but, like any process, requires a prime mover, which is indeed divine. So Alexander identified the Active Intellect with Aristotle's God, nous, untroubled by the quite Aristotelian thought that the Divine works immanently, within us, and unwilling to commit Aristotle to the absurd claim that the passivity in us that needs something to start it up might be said to actualize itself. Later Greek thinkers like Marinus (fifth century), the disciple and biographer of Proclus, preserving the transcendence of the Highest God, demoted the Active Intellect to a quasi-deity, daimonion. Al-Farabl and Ibn Slna, for similar reasons, treat

the Active Intellect as the disembodied intelligence that governs the terrestrial sphere.[17]

Its functions are manifold. Not only does it impart the forms which order nature and those which permit the mind to follow the hints of sensory images and construct concepts on the basis of experience, but it also sheds upon specially prepared minds that comprehensive and abiding flow of ideas which is the intellectual source of prophecy. Thus the Active Intellect of the faldsifah, or philosophers of Islam, is the reality answering to the symbolism of the Angel Gabriel, the vector of revelation. Al-Farabl argues that a prophet differs from a philosopher only in clothing the concepts received from the Active Intellect in symbols and rhetoric: it is the work of the imagination that transforms pure ideas into myths, rituals, laws and institutions. Avicenna calls a prophet a "sacred intellect", in whom all the ideas springing from the Active Intellect come together to light up a mind capable of internalizing those ideas sufficiently to become, as it were, a secondary source of light. Al-Farabl, the Ikhwan al-Safa'[18] and Ibn Slna all offer the same intellectualist model for mystical experience, philosophic discovery and prophetic revelation.

Avicenna is wary of the potential for pantheism latent or (among "drunken Sufis") sometimes patent, in mysticism. He is careful, in importing ideas from the repertoire of Plotinus (205—70), to choose the idea of "contact" (Greek aphe, Arabic ittisdl) rather than "union" (ittihdd) with the divine. He rejects the Plotinian notion of the divinity of the soul and inveighs against Porphyry, Plotinus' disciple (c. A.D. 232—c. 305), for holding that the soul unites with the Active Intellect. If that were so, Avicenna argues, then either the Active

Intellect would be divisible or the individual mind that knows anything would know everything.[19] In developing al-Farabl's intellectualist account of enlightenment, Ibn Bajjah stands forthrightly with Ibn Slna, for ittisdl, communion, over and against ittihdd, union.

In his note on "Recognition of the Active Intellect",[20] Ibn Bajjah sketches four arguments for the reality of this hypostasis:

Firstly, from the relationship of means to ends. Means are typically necessary to ends in nature; but in the realm of ideas, ends come first.
And ideas are naturally prior to bodies, or there would be no constancy surmounting (and directing) the otherwise ungoverned play of genesis and corruption.[21]

Secondly, from the processes of change. Things become what they are not; they do not become their causes but rather become like the causes that produce change in them. Thus change is governed by universal forms. Effects are produced not by a unique particular but by any cause of an appropriate nature. (So receptivities to change, dispositions in things, are formal and universal, not material and idiosyncratic.) "For example, if this clump of grass catches fire from some other fire, it takes nothing of the fieriness of that fire, which is the cause; nor does it catch fire from some particular fire only. Rather, it turns like the fire that started it, which might be any fire that comes along."[22]

Thirdly, from the faculty of imagination that guides the instincts of animals. Animals seek not some particular drink of water or morsel of food, as friend seeks friend, or parents

offspring, but any food or water answering to their natures. But beasts have no universal concepts. The ideas manifest in their behaviour must be present implicitly and objectively rather than explicitly and subjectively. Ibn Bajjah chides Galen (129—c. 199) here for treating imagination, which animals have, as though it were rationality (al-'aql), which they have not. No one, he argues, can claim that the crane, dove or sandgrouse truly grasps universal ideas. Yet such social creatures, indeed all that do not live in isolation, seek their own kind.[23] Without the discourse of reason (by which alone, as the work of Socrates shows) abstract concepts are discovered, how can the images that direct beasts to their needs aim true at specific classes? The only viable answer, Ibn Bajjah thinks, is that the relevant images are projected by the Active Intellect, much as it projects the forms that make our minds aware of universal concepts, and exactly as it projects the forms that impart natures to things, stabilizing their characters and rendering them intelligible.

Fourthly, from the work of the mind itself. We judge that we perceive a substance only in so far as we can ascribe predicates to it; without the predicates we know nothing of it and cannot say that we apprehend it at all. But predicates are necessarily universal, although their subject may be a particular. (Thus, without universals, perception of things would be impossible; radical empiricism would never get off the blocks.) Predicates are always signified by some noun or analogous expression, such as a definition that stands in for a noun.[24] These terms signify an idea in so far as they apply to a class. (So language too is impossible without universals.)[25] But how do we reach universals? A definition would normally be predicated of some subject. Suppose we start with bodies. These are the primary sort of objects of

apprehension, and the means by which they are apprehended is sense perception. But bodies, although
they are objects of apprehension, cannot be subjects of it. Now sense perceptions in turn are apprehended as images in the imagination. This (as Avicenna proved) is again something physical. But, for that very reason, images are not self-conscious. Indeed, given the passivity of matter, we must conclude that no physical organ or faculty can apprehend itself. But reason or intelligence does apprehend both its proper objects and its own act of apprehension by the same faculty or power. So plainly it is not anything physical.

This last argument, if sound, proves that human reason is not reducible to physicality or to any sensory function. From here Ibn Bajjah evidently thinks it an easy step to the hypostatic Active Intellect, as the source and support of human rationality. He mentions that there are various difficulties with the idea. But, perhaps typically, the surviving note does not list them. His first argument seems to parallel the Stoic sort of design argument, offering a spiritual immanence of the kind favoured by Peripatetics and Neoplatonists as an alternative to the physicalist immanence favoured by the Stoics in explaining the ordering of means to ends in nature. The second and third arguments similarly take issue with some form of nominalist reduction. They aim to establish the Active Intellect as the only credible solution to problems that materialism is unable to resolve.[26] Modern theists might cut to the chase, imputing design and governance in nature to God, rather than to some intermediary. But the Active Intellect, like Philo's logos or the angels of scriptural discourse, does protect God's transcendence, which remains as important a theological value to Ibn Bajjah as it was to his Neoplatonic predecessors.

The epistemology of the Active Intellect commits Ibn Bajjah to a Platonic realism, although, like other Neoplatonists, he houses the forms not in a realm of their own (risking Aristotelian arguments against the self-sufficiency of the Ideas) but in the Active Intellect, which the Ideas constitute, as a Peripatetic might have expected, since Aristotle himself had argued that, in the act of consciousness, thought, thinker and the act of thinking are one and the same. Drawing on Plato's Myth of the Cave, as an allegory of the condition of the masses, whose only contact with ideas comes by way of sensory surrogates and whose inexperience of light, uncoloured by shadows, leads them to deny the very existence of light itself, that is, the pure disembodied light of intelligence, Ibn Bajjah lays out a clear defence of realism about the ideas:

The forms that Plato posits and Aristotle denies are as I shall describe them: They are ideas devoid of matter and apprehended by the mind [dhihn], just as the senses apprehend the forms of sensory things. Thus the mind is like a faculty of perception for ideas; and [perception is] like reason in apprehending patterns [al-mutakhayyaldt].[27] It follows that the thought concepts of these

forms are simpler than the forms themselves. [For these thoughts are higher order abstractions, cutting away from the particularities of form in the particular just as the senses cut away from the matter of an object of perception.] So there are three items to be concerned with: sensory notions, forms and the ideas of forms. And the [Aristotelian] refutations of the forms apply only in this regard: that Plato gave the forms the name of the thing and assigned them its definition.[28] But we say that the spiritual form of a man, for example, is the form of Man, or the form of Fire. We do not refer to them as a

"realm". And so we can say that our idea of fire has no fire in it, and we do not say of that idea that it is fire. For if it were fire, it would burn. Socrates said of the form he posited that it was the Good and the Beautiful, and of the form of Man, that it was man. That was what implicated him in all the absurdities Aristotle mentions in the Metaphysics (eg., 1.9, 13.4, 8).[29]

Working in the tradition of al-Farabl and Ibn Sina, Ibn Bajjah is able to provide a rationale for the possibility of prophetic revelation and for the special knowledge of the intimates of God, that is the saints (awliyd'), among whom he counts the associates (sahdbah) of the Prophet. Through a special intercourse between reason and imagination such persons acquire from the angels, which is to say, in the language of the Philosophers, they acquire from the disembodied Intelligences that rule the spheres, an "insight of the heart", as Ibn Bajjah calls it, echoing the Socratic phrase about an inner eye. The resultant knowledge, he reasons, is abstracted from the temporal conditionedness of events, enabling these individuals not only to make moral and practical judgments but to anticipate the future and apprehend the unknown, to receive, as it were, the very intentionalities by which the spheres are directed to execute God's will in nature.[30] The key intermediary, of course, is the Active Intellect. But its primary role, as in al-Farabl, is not in inspiring prophets or instructing seers but in informing nature and the minds of the intelligent.

Some writers find Ibn Bajjah's account of human contact with the Active Intellect rather intellectual, as contrasted with the moral or spiritual ideals of, say, traditional mystical writers. They may relate this to Ibn Bajjah's criticism of mystics,

sensing a rejection of the religious significance of ittisdi But we must bear in mind both the roots and the goals of Ibn Bajjah's project if we want to understand it aright. Like Aristotle, he thinks that the best way to attain the goal of knowing God is to know as God does, understanding all things through their universal ideas. Like al-Farabi and Ibn Sina, he sees in the mystic quest no rival to the sciences but their culmination and fruition.

Scientific knowledge is constitutive of the comprehensive inflow of the forms that is the true goal of the adept. Further, science for Ibn Bajjah is not the value-free or value-neutral enterprise we may associate with the term. To understand a thing in the Platonic and Aristotelian context of a philosophy like Ibn Bajjah's, is to see its value and its perfection, its goodness, not just to us but in itself. For in that goodness it manifests God's goodness. Comprehensive knowledge here does not exclude moral and spiritual truths. They are, in fact, explications of our own nature and role and of our destiny among the intelligences that transcend the merely physical.

Ibn Bajjah does not, like many Sufis, merge mystic gnosis with a regime of pietist conventions. But the main reason, as we shall see, is that he has his own idea of a fitting regimen for the wise. Where he does take aim at mystic theory and practice is in regard to the blurring of identities between the aspirant and the Divine. He complements Avicenna's epistemic critique of monistic or unitive mysticism with a psychological analysis of what the enthusiasts of union actually attain: resolution of the data supplied by memory, imagination and the sensus communis (whose normal function is integration of the reports of the senses). Such resolution is in fact the work of the Active Intellect, which can bring divergent sense-based data into registry, projecting

spiritual forms "as though they were a sensory image". The effect is startling, and the Sufis, who fall short of the pure ideas, put these "spiritual forms" in their place and suppose the integrative experience they undergo to be "man's ultimate goal", and "highest felicity", speaking of it as "union" and even praying for such union for one another:

When these faculties converge they can produce strange shapes and potentially frightening apparitions, creatures far fairer than those that actually exist. So these folk suppose them to be the highest objects of apprehension. That is why al-Ghazzall said that he apprehended spiritual objects and beheld spiritual substances, resorting to the words of the poet to represent the enormity of what he experienced: "It was; what it was don't ask me to say. [31]

The same line of verse about the ineffability of the mystic experience is quoted from al-Ghazzall by Ibn Tufayl with more welcoming intent. Ibn Bajjah, he contends, should not have blamed the Sufis for pursuit of fruits he had not tasted. Perhaps, he reflects, Ibn Bajjah's remarks carry a savour of sour grapes: he must have seen the incompatibility of the Sufi life with his own "encouragement of amassing wealth and the use of various artful dodges to acquire it".[32] But Ibn Bajjah does not hesitate to commend the fruits of (rational) mysticism. His
discomfort is with the sensuousness he detects in Sufi practice. His concern is not that the object of the mystic's quest is illusory but that in seeking unity Sufis, with al-Ghazzali's apparent encouragement, may have substituted a phenomenal surrogate of suspect origin for the legitimate object of their quest.

Monopsychism

With still visible excitement, Ibn Bajjah reports on his discovery of a new line of argument about the soul:

Conscious as I am of how hard it is for us to meet at this time, I thought I should come right to the point and set out the theory whose proof I have found … A technical exposition would be too long, too explicit, too convoluted, and too costly in premises. I have been diverted from taking that approach by time constraints and a steady stream of other business. If I do get the leisure to lay out a formal proof, I shall directly send it to you. But I wanted to waste no time in communicating what I have now, for fear of losing it, given that it is as big and as unusual as it is.[33]

Ibn Bajjah goes on to describe the unity of the rational soul, as the principle of individual identity – and, the life principle in general, as the "prime mover" of all animals (and in a lesser sense, even of plants).

A child's teeth may fall out and new ones come in; he is still the same child. And the same would be true if he could grow new hands or feet in place of those that he'd lost: he'd still be the same person. Just as a carpenter who loses his adze or rule and gets another is still the same carpenter, so if it were possible for one to have other organs in place of these he would still be one and the same person.[34]

It is clear from this argument that the prime mover remains the same whether he loses some instrument and finds no replacement, like the toothless old man, or does find one, like

the youngster whose adult teeth are coming in. Once certain students of natural science understand this, it leads them to the theory of metempsychosis. This has been shown elsewhere to be absurd and untenable. But those who voiced this theory were reaching for a different idea but fell short of it. They took the prime mover of man to be an undifferentiated whole and treated as arithmetically one what is not one.[35]

Like Ibn Sina, Ibn Bajjah means to preserve the identity of the individual human soul, even when it no longer has any matter to individuate it. Sundered from the body, the rational soul, which Ibn Sina had argued would preserve its identity by virtue of its prior history of temporality, retains its individual consciousness, according to Ibn Bajjah, and "becomes one of those lights that gives glory to God. Singing his praise it joins the ranks of the prophets and saints, the martyrs and the blessed."[36] But although this soul remains unique and individual even without a body, it is (as we might put it) at one with all other souls, by virtue of its contact (ittisdl) with the Active Intellect. Likewise, it is at one with the Active Intellect itself. It is not identical with other souls, or with the Active Intellect. But it is not separate from them. For, Ibn Bajjah argues,

What is connected is said to be one as long as it remains connected; once it is divided it becomes multiple. Things that cohere are spoken of in the same way as things that are connected. Things that are linked are treated the same as those that cohere; and things that are tied together, like those that are linked. A collectivity whose parts are organized to serve a definite purpose is also called one, as Tabari's History [with its many volumes] is called one composition, and the

present discussion [with its multiple words] is also called one. Even a mixture is called one, as oxymel is, which is composed of vinegar and honey.

This point seems to be the breakthrough that excites Ibn Bajjah: not the unity of all souls, which was, as he perceived, the teaching of Plato, a corollary of the argument of the Phaedo that the soul would be immortal to the extent that it was like an idea (and therefore had shed not only materiality and temporality but individuality, becoming, as it were, a universal). Rather, the excitement is about the possibility of a unity among spiritual beings that retain their individuality. Ibn Bajjah senses a breakthrough here, because the approach he takes, based on the idea of an organic unity which preserves diversity, makes possible retention of Plato's intellectualist argument for immortality without discarding individual accountability, crucial in the Qur'ān – and in Plato himself.[37] Plato had wrestled with the implications of the intellectualism of the Phaedo in the Republic (609—17). He had clearly sought to establish the credibility of reward and retribution for individual human souls, relying on the argument that, if virtue is a strength, virtuous souls would be the ones to enjoy immortality: the experience and propensities of choice which together had formed their lives would set the stage for their condition in each new phase of their existence. But if souls were immortal, Plato reasoned (611), their number would never change, none would ever be created or destroyed. It was here that Ibn Bajjah saw transmigration as the apparent outcome of the Platonic line of reasoning: if each soul acquired an individual fate based on its own individual choice of destiny, would not immortality make individuality insurmountable? What seemed to follow was the "absurd and untenable" view that souls would flit

from body to body, even occupying the bodies of animals. Plato had enunciated such a view, but the truth that he and others were reaching for when they spoke in that vein, Ibn Bajjah urges, was not captured in the myth of metempsychosis. Rather, Ibn Bajjah caught sight of a solution in the Neoplatonic idea that the "prime mover" in each of us is the rational soul, groping for the highest good. This is what is one and undifferentiated, although present in a variety of embodiments and soul-settings:

The mind is a rational faculty, but "rational faculty" refers in the first instance to a spiritual form that is receptive to intelligence and so is called active or actual intelligence. It was of this that al-Farabl raised the question whether it was present in an infant but altered [and so made ineffectual] by the moistness [of a youthful temperament], or whether it arises later.

Ibn Bajjah answers al-Farabl's question by arguing[38] that a human being is like a plant while in the womb, growing and taking nourishment. At birth, beginning to move about and use one's senses, one is like an animal. One is only potentially human (rational) in infancy. This account of the realization of the potential for intelligence (and analogously, of the life principle in all things) applies an Aristotelian, developmental conception to the resolution of what is at bottom a Platonic question, that is, a question about innate ideas. At the same time Ibn Bajjah's reply avoids the suggestion that human intelligence is some sort of indestructible matter poured out and interchanged among individuals or even spilling across the boundaries of diverse species. The unity of rational beings, like the larger unity of beings in general, is functional, organic, not merely

qualitative, but not such as to negate the individuality of the diverse members of the over-arching whole:

If this mind is arithmetically one in every man, then clearly, from what has been sketched thus far, the people who exist and come and go would all be one arithmetically, although that might seem bizarre and perhaps absurd. But if they are not arithmetically identical, this Intellect is not one. And in short, if this Intellect is one arithmetically, then all the individual persons that have such an intellect are one arithmetically – as if you held a magnet, swathed it in wax and moved now this iron and now that, and then swathed it in pitch and it moved the iron the same way, and then swathed it in other bodies: all these moving bodies
would be arithmetically one, as with the master of a ship – except that bodies cannot be in several places at one and the same time, as these ideas can. That is what the transmigrationists believed, although they fell short of it.[39]

Strange as it might seem, then, all persons who share in the distinctive characteristic of humanity, a rational soul or intelligence, are identical – not just in kind but arithmetically.[40] They are the same individual. But this does not imply that they are the same person, nor that "soul stuff" is simply partitioned off from a single source of supply and distrib uted among individuals, as imagined by those who take literally the image of transmigration. For rationality is shared not by partitioning but by the realization of potential, the activation or actualization of matter, or in the present case, the "informing" of the animal spirit that here plays the role of matter. Individuals do not lose their identity in the spiritual unity that underlies intelligence, since unity has been qualified from the outset as an organic or functional uniting of

diversity. Diversity is maintained when each rational soul "becomes one of those lights that gives glory to God". Ibn Tufayl captured Ibn Bajjah's sense perfectly when he elaborated the same Islamic recension of Plato's vision:

Here too was an essence free of matter … Only this being had seventy thousand faces. In every face were seventy thousand mouths; in every mouth, seventy thousand tongues, with which it ceaselessly praised, glorified, and sanctified the being of the One who is the Truth … It was as though the form of the sun were shining in rippling water from the last mirror in the sequence, reflected down the series from the first, which faced directly into the sun.[41]

If the forms of all things are their reality, then in a sense all reality is one individual, as the idea of a macrocosm, so widely held among medieval philosophers, suggests. But what makes all beings one, Ibn Bajjah argues, is not that plants, animals and persons are indistinguishable or interchangeable or even that all are "parts" of a larger whole but that all (in their different ways) share a common source of life and movement; all are animated in that way, despite their diversity, by a common end – the Good Itself, as a Platonic philosopher would put it. Rationality in human beings, body heat or animal spirit in animals, and in the case of plants (as Ibn Tufayl writes), "whatever they have to fill the role of body-heat in animals"[42] is a principle of unity. Ibn Bajjah had closely studied the characters that plants have in common,[43] and what he found is again summed up by Ibn Tufayl: all things, even inanimate objects (as Ibn Bajjah's theories of motion and gravity reveal), "must have some special thing to make them behave in their own peculiar way, and give

them their particular qualities to the senses and their ways of moving. This is the form, or as philosophers call it, the nature of the thing."[44] Philosophers before Ibn Bajjah had held that all forms flow from above, and some had held that the unity of human beings, resultant from their partaking of rationality, made all humans (at least potentially) one individual, identical with one another, with the Active Intellect, and thus, for some, with God. But the distinction of Ibn Bajjah was to have shown how the unity of forms in general and of rational minds in particular left room for the differentiation of individual identities, as particulars united in a common movement towards the good.[45] Without such a possibility of differentiation, creation and emanation would have been impossible, and immortality would have been valueless.

The Governance of the Solitary

Ibn Bajjah was a close reader of Plato's Republic, of Aristotle's Nicomachaean Ethics and of al-Farabi's syntheses of the metaphysics of Neoplatonism with an Islamicized version of Platonic politics and Aristotelian ethics. He knows that the human being is a social, indeed a civil being by nature (zoon politikon) and that happiness is the life in accordance with the virtues. He also knows that the virtues are socially and civilly instilled, and that the mediation of imagination is crucial in the implementation of social policies by which moral virtues are inculcated and intellectual virtues fostered. Yet, like Plato and Aristotle, Ibn Bajjah is rather alienated from the society in which he lives. He is hardly

prepared to be its apologist. Like al-Farabi, Ibn Bajjah knows that a state might not always be fortunate enough to find and adequately empower its true philosophical ruler. There is an irony here, of course, like that of the Stoic Emperor Marcus Aurelius, who also felt powerless. For Ibn Bajjah was a vizier, as Aristotle was the tutor of Alexander and closest friend of Antipater, Alexander's regent; and Plato was born into the highest ruling circles of Athens. Yet it is characteristic of politics, in Machiavelli's and not in Plato's ideal sense, that even those who are placed structurally in the seats of authority may lack authority to alter the structures in which they sit. Clearly Ibn Bajjah was in no position to implement the rule of philosophy, which he, like Plato, saw as the ideal. And, while al-Farabi could rationalize the myths and rituals, laws and institutions of the Prophet and his followers as symbols mediating the way to realities best known by the philosophers, it would take a special gift of insensi-tivity for a philosopher at the seat of power to identify a regime like that of the Almoravids, or their Almohad successors, among whom Ibn Tufayl served, as a faithful expression of the Platonic ideal rather than an unhappy recurrence of all that was ugliest in, say, Plato's Syracusan disaster. Ibn

Tufayl clearly identified Islamic religiosity and law – and culture in general – as both more and less than symbolic entryways to philosophy. They were necessary evils, condescensions to the inadequacies of homo vulgaris. Law could draw a line around the worst of human viciousness, but only at the cost of making a minimal requirement seem somehow a standard of moral adequacy. And public piety raised up a symbol system that could point the way for the rare few who were almost capable of finding the truth for themselves, but at the cost of most peoples taking the symbols

for the reality, allowing, or even insisting that they search no further. Religion, then, the core of culture, pointedly including Islam, was, for Ibn Tufayl, a vehicle, yes, but also an obstacle to moral, spiritual and intellectual growth.[46] He confides his criticism to fiction, masked, as he puts it, only with the sheerest of veils;[47] but Ibn Bajjah pours his doubts into a reflective meditation, The Regimen of the Solitary.,[48]

A person may live well in the world, he writes, managing his affairs, staying healthy and maintaining homes and property, but "none of these things amounts to greatness or nobility, and we cannot convince ourselves that such things are the consummation of any sort of admirable life … they are simply the goals of a contentious soul … common to the irrational animals and thus bestial".[49] Summing up a line of reasoning found in Aristotle, Plato and Socrates, and later in Spinoza and Kant, he argues that it is only when we act rationally that we are free.[50] Our proper aim is spiritual knowledge, contact with the Active Intellect and thus, with the Divine. But the proper application of such knowledge is in rule, assigning priorities among competing values, especially when matters of dignity, nobility or honour are at stake.[51] In a just society, like that of the Republic, the wise are rulers; all human affairs are wisely regulated; no physicians or jurists are needed, since all individuals are governed by wisdom, their relations ruled by love. But, in a lesser state, the wise are "weeds" – "The name is borrowed from the plants that spring up of themselves among a sown crop"[52] – for they are deemed a blot on the landscape in the rare event that among a benighted polity someone does stumble upon the truth or recognizes the falsity of the conventional impostures. In the perfect society, of course, there are no weeds – just as there are no jurists or physicians – for there are no false views to be

rejected. But in the kind of state and city that we live in, and that Ibn Bajjah himself feels powerless to alter in this regard, we find all three of these classes, their presence, a symptom of dysfunctionality:

And it seems that if happy persons can exist in such states, their happiness must be solely private [mufrad], and the right sort of rule in such a case would be private, whether the party concerned was an individual or a group – unless the state or the nation as a whole shared their views. Such people are the ones that the Sufis
call strangers. For they are aliens in their outlook even in their own homelands, among their own comrades and neighbours. They have travelled, in their thoughts, to other planes. And these, in effect, are their homelands.[53]

NOTES

1 Ibn Tufayl, Hayy ibn Yaqzan, trans. L. E. Goodman (New York, 1972; repr. Los Angeles, 1990): 99.

2 See A. I. Sabra, "The Andalusian Revolt against Ptolemaic Astronomy: Averroes and al-Bitrujl", in Everett Mendelsohn (ed.) Transformation and Tradition in the Sciences (Cambridge, 1984). Other figures in the revolt were Ibn al-Haytham (d. c. 432/1040), Ibn Bajjah and Maimonides.

3 See Ian Netton, Muslim Neoplatonists (London, 1982); L. E. Goodman, trans., The Case of the Animals vs. Man before the King of the Jinn (Boston, 1978; reissued, Los Angeles, 1984).

4 Hayy ibn Yaqzan, trans. Goodman: 99.

5 Al-Bitrujl, a key critic of Ptolemy, names Ibn Tufayl as his inspiration; Maimonides (Guide of the Perplexed, 2.24) cites Ibn Bajjah. Seyyed Hossein Nasr writes, "Avempace, under the influence of Aristotelian cosmology, which then becoming dominant in Andalusia [as a counterforce to Ptolemy], proposed a system based solely on eccentric circles; Ibn Tufayl is regarded as the author of a theory [now lost] which was more fully developed by his student, the seventh/thirteenth-century al-Bitrujl (Alpetragius). This was an elaborate system of homocentric spheres, which has also been called the 'theory of spiral motion,' because in its view the planets appear to perform a kind of 'spiral' movement." Science and Civilization in Islam (Cambridge, Mass., 1968): 72; for Ibn Bajjah's observatory, p. 80. Ibn Tufayl specifies an understanding of the retrogradation of the planets as a benchmark of knowledge in the ideal inquirer of Hayy ibn Yaqzan, trans. Goodman: 130.

6 See Ernest Moody, "Galileo and Avempace: the Dynamics of the Leaning Tower Experiment", Journal of the History of Ideas, 12 (1951): 163-93, 375-422.

7 See Nasr: 315-16, and my "Maimonidean Naturalism", in L. E. Goodman (ed.) Neoplawnism and Jewish Thought (Albany, 1992): esp. 157.

8 D. M. Dunlop, "Ibn Badjdja", Encyclopaedia of Islam, 2nd ed., 3: 728.

9 See Averroes, Kitab fasl al-maqal wa-taqrir ma bayna'l-shartah wa'l-hikmah min al-ittisal ("The Book

Clearly Distinguishing the Discourse and Demarcating the Nexus between Religion and Philosophy"), ed. George Hourani (Leiden, 1959); trans, in Hourani's Averroes on the Harmony of Religion and Philosophy (London, 1967).

10 See D. M. Dunlop, "Philosophical Predecessors and Contemporaries of Ibn Bajjah", Islamic Quarterly, 2 (1955): 100-16; M. S. H. al-Masumi, "Ibn al-Imam, the Disciple of Ibn Bajjah", Islamic Quarterly, 5 (1959): 102-8.

11 Bodleian, Pococke 206. Other MSS survived in Egypt and in the Escurial. But
the Berlin MS used by some modern scholars was apparently destroyed during the Second World War.

12 Ibn Tufayl also slights Ibn Hazm, the ultra-conservative jurist, theologian and exponent of courtly love, an Andalusian whose learning was vast and whose radical opposition to rationalism and mysticism fired his highly original thinking but placed him outside the lineage to which Ibn Tufayl laid claim, that of al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, al-Ghazzall and indeed Ibn Bajjah.

13 See Dunlop, "Philosophical Predecessors": 100.

14 See S. Pines, translator's introduction to The Guide of the Perplexed (Chicago, 1969): lx.

15 Hayy ibn Yaqzdn, trans. Goodman: 98-9.

16 See L. E. Goodman, Avicenna (London, 1992): 123-49.

17 See L. E. Goodman, "Knowledge in Islamic Philosophy", in Indira Mahalingam and Brian Carr (eds) Encyclopedia of Asian Philosophy (London, forthcoming).

18 See L. E. Goodman, "Jewish and Islamic Philosophies of Language", in Sprach-philosophie (Berlin, 1992): sec. 1.2.1.

19 See Goodman, Avicenna: 164-72.

20 Al-Wuquf 'ala'l-'aql al-fa"al, ed. M. Fakhry in Ibn Bajjah (Avempace): Opera Metaphysica (Beirut, 1968): 107-9. In the manuscript the item is labelled: "Also among his discussions of the factors through which one can recognize the Active Intellect." It is discussed and very roughly translated by M. S. H. al-Ma'sumi in The Journal of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan, 5 (1960): 34.

21 See Aristotle, Metaphysics, 3.6, 4.4, 5 esp. 11-12, 9.8, 12.5-7.

22 Al-Wuquf ed. Fakhry, Opera: 108.

23 Ibn Bajjah's argument illuminates Saadiah's unusual gloss of Job 39: 13-18, The Book of Theodicy, trans. L. E. Goodman (New Haven, 1988): 392-4; it also illuminates Ibn Tufayl's interest in showing that Hayy ibn Yaqzan is capable of searching for and recognizing his own kind – among the disembodied intelligences.

24 Arabic semantics does not sharply distinguish nouns from adjectives, characteristically treating the same terms both attributively and substantively.

25 Maimonides uses this thought when he argues in the Guide of the Perplexed that human language can never signify what God is, since its terms are universal and God is unique.

26 Galen's discussion, with which Ibn Bajjah takes issue, has a Stoic tang, reminiscent of the Stoic claim that one can see animals using the undemonstrated syllogism (or schema) Either the first or the second; not the first, therefore the second, when a dog coursing a hare comes to a fork in the road and sniffs only one path before racing down the other. Ibn Bajjah reacts against the materialism latent in the Stoic idea that even dogs have a logic in their behaviour. The Stoics' intentions parallel those of the Neoplatonists: not that dogs reason but that an implicit surrogate of reasoning guides them. For Ibn Bajjah this marks the work of the Active Intellect. For the Stoics the logos will be immanent, but physical. Hence Ibn Bajjah's complaint against Galen – essentially for muddling a spiritual cause with its physical effect. A conversation with Julia Annas helped keep me fair to the Stoic intentions here.

27 I read with Asm here: M. Asin Palacios, "Tratado de Avempace sobre la union del intellecto con el hombre", Al-Andalus, 7 (1942): 1-47, see p. 20, para. 18, 1. 4.

28
Political Regime (Beirut, 1964): 87, 104. 53 Tadbir, ed. Fakhry, Opera: 43.

29 Ittisdl, ed. Fakhry, Opera: 169.

30 Pococke 206, fol. 120b-121 b; see M. S. H. al-Ma'sumi, "Ibn Bajjah on Prophecy", Sind University Research Journal, Arts Series, 1 (1961): 22-9.

31 Tadbir al-mutauiahhid ("The Governance of the Solitary"), ed. Fakhry, Opera: 55. Al-Ghazzall uses the verse in his spiritual autobiography, AI-Munqidh min al-/)alal ("Deliverance from Error"), trans. W Montgomery Watt in The Faith andPractice ofal-Ghaziili (London, 1963). Ibn Bajjah alludes to al-Ghazzali's references to the mystic's vision of the Pen and other furniture of the heavenly pleroma.

32 lfayy ibn Yaqan, trans. Goodman: 98.

33 Ittisdl al- 'aql bi l-insdn ("Man's Contact with the Intellect'), ed. Fakhry, Opera: 155. For the audience of Ibn Bajjah's presentation, see the MS note, ibid.

34 Cf. Ibn SIna's Floating Man argument and my discussion in Avicenna: 155-8.

35 lttisdl, ed. Fakhry, Opera: 157-8.

36 Ibid.: 162.

37 Ibn Bajjah seems to echo Plato's excitement about the unity of the virtues as diverse but interdependent strengths. But the unity of the virtues is chiefly that of species in a genus. What Ibn Bajjah posits here is an organic unity, service to a common end. Ibn Bajjah adapts the characteristically biological means by which Aristotle had united the diverse human goods by reasoning that all rational intellects are, in effect, pursuing the same goal. Maimonides

follows Aristotle (and traces the structure of Ibn Bajjah's argument) when he unifies the seemingly disparate ends of human activity under a single goal in "Eight Chapters", 5; see L. E. Goodman, "Maimonides' Philosophy of Law", Jewish Law Annual, 1 (1978): 72-107 and "Saadya's Ethical Pluralism", Journal of the American Oriental Society, 100 (1980): 407-19.

38 Fakhry, Opera: 159-60.

39 Ittisdl, ed. Fakhry, Opera: 161-2.

40 Ibid.: 156, 162.

41 lfayy ibn Yaqzdn, trans. Goodman; 153.

42 Ibid.: 123.

43 See M. Asin Palacios, "Avempace Botanico", AI-Andalus, 5 (1940): 255-99.

44 lfayy ibn Yaqzan, trans. Goodman: 123.

45 One can see the sense here of Spinoza's insistence that modes are differentiations of Substance, but not partitively.

46 lfayy ibn Yaqzan, trans. Goodman: 161-5.

47 Ibid.: 166.

48 See D. M. Dunlop, trans. in "Ibn Bajjah's Tadbiru'l-Muiaioahhid", Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (1945): 61-81 and the discussions in E. I. J. Rosenthal,

Political Thought in Medieval Islam (Cambridge, 1968); Oliver Leaman, "Ibn Bajja on Society and Philosophy", Islam, 57 (1980): 109-19.

49 Ibn Bajjah, "Fi'l-ghayati'l-insaniyyah ("On the Human Goal"), ed. Fakhry, Opera: 102.

50 Tadbir, trans. Dunlop: 79.

51 Tadbir, ed. Fakhry, Opera: 37-40.

52 Tadbir, ed. Fakhry, Opera: 42; I translate after Dunlop, p. 77. For the term "weeds", see al-FarabI, Siydsat al-madaniyyah, ed. F. Najjar as al-Farabl's The Political Regime (Beirut, 1964): 87, 104.

53 Tadbir, ed. Fakhry, Opera: 43.

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CHAPTER 22

Ibn Ṭufayl

Lenn E. Goodman

Born in the first decade of the sixth/twelfth century at WadI Ash (Cadiz), north-east of Granada, Ibn Tufayl (d. 581/ 1185–6) was trained in medicine, perhaps at Seville or Cordova (Cordoba), and studied philosophy, including the work of Ibn Bajjah, although he never met this founding figure of Andalusian philosophy. Practising as a physician, he moved in court circles and became secretary to the governor of Granada and then to the governor of Ceuta and Tangier, a son of 'Abd al-Mu'min, the military lieutenant and successor of the charismatic Ibn Tiimart (c. 473/1080–524/1130), who founded the Almohad dynasty in Spain and North Mrica. Ibn Tufayl served as court physician to the Almohad caliph Abu Ya'qub Yiisuf (ruled 558/1163–580/1184) and possibly as a qiirji in his regime. He is even named in one source, improbably, as a vizier. The ruler genuinely enjoyed his company, spending hours, sometimes days, in conversation with him. For Abu Ya'qub loved learning and books and took pride in assembling at his court more scholars and thinkers than any previous monarch in the Muslim West. A contemporary source describes Ibn Tufayl lining up for his pay, "with all the regular employees – medics, engineers,

secretaries, poets, archers, soldiers, etc.", and joking with them about the eclectic interests of the crown: "If they're in the market for musical theory, I can supply it."

Ibn Tufayl acted as a kind of culture minister, seeking out and bringing to court many men of erudition and science, including the young Ibn Rushd (Averroes), whom he presented to Abu Ya'qub around 564/1169. The historian al-Marrakushl has the story on the authority of Bundud ibn Yal)ya of Cordova, a disciple of Ibn Rushd's, who reported in Averroes' words how Ibn T ufayl sang his praises before the Commander of the Faithful, and how the caliph asked him about the views of the philosophers on the burning issue of the world's eternity or creation. Ibn Rushd was hard pressed to respond, since the Almohad regime was known
for its doctrinal stringency, and the philosophers of Islam were committed, to the extent of their Aristotelian rigour, to the eternity of the universe. Most treated scriptural accounts of creation as allegories of the eternal emanation of the cosmos from its divine source, condescensions to vulgar imagination, and surrogates for the subtler truth: that God timelessly caused the world's ordered but eternal motion. Al-Ghazzall, whom legend made the teacher of Ibn Tumart, had declared the philosophers of Islam atheists for holding that view, since an eternal world, as he reasoned in his polemic, The Incoherence of the Philosophers, would have no need of God.[1]

The young Averroes feigned ignorance at the caliph's questioning, but was soon put at ease by hearing Ibn Tufayl and the monarch discuss the issue between themselves with learning and sophistication. He joined the conversation and was sent home with a robe of honour and a splendid new

mount. This interview, we are told, was the first official notice taken of Ibn Rushd's talents. Later, at Ibn Tufayl's instance, he was commissioned to write the commentaries which eclipsed the fame of his sponsor and his patron alike. When Ibn Tufayl retired as court physician in 577/1182, he was succeeded by Ibn Rushd. But he continued to enjoy the favour of the caliph, and of his son, when Abu Ya'qub died in 579-580/1184, of wounds received at the siege of Santarem in Portugal. Ibn Tufayl died at Marrakesh the following year. But long afterwards, when Bundud had become a respected professor, he still repeated the story of Averroes' commission in the master's words:

Abu Bakr ibn Tufayl summoned me one day and told me that he had heard the Commander of the Faithful complaining about the disjointedness of Aristotle's mode of expression – or that of the translators – and the resultant obscurity of his intentions. He said that if someone took on these books who could summarize them and clarify their aims, after first thoroughly understanding them himself, people would have an easier time comprehending them. "If you have the energy," Ibn Tufayl told me, "you do it. I'm confident you can, because I know what a good mind and devoted character you have, and how dedicated you are to the art. You understand that only my great age, the cares of my office – and my commitment to another task that I think even more vital – keep me from doing it myself."[2]

The intellectual work Ibn Tufayl cited in excusing himself from the project that would become Averroes' monumental three-tiered commentary on the Aristotelian corpus, was his effort to reconcile scriptural religion with philosophy. He approached the task from a solid grounding in the natural

sciences, which were integral to the philosophic method and outlook. Beyond his work as a physician and authorship of two

medical treatises and a correspondence with Averroes about the latter's medical Kulliyyat, Ibn Tufayl was a key figure in the "Andalusian Revolt" against Ptolemaic astronomy, a critical movement which was continued by his friend and disciple al-BitrujI.[3] He wrote several works on natural philosophy no longer extant, including a philosophical treatment of the soul, which al-Marrakushi saw in Ibn Tufayl's own hand. But the key to the task of reconciliation was his philosophical fable Hayy ibn Yaqzdn, the story of a self-taught philosopher of perfect intelligence, growing up on an equatorial island without parents, language or culture, who discovers for himself all phases of knowledge, from the technical and physical to the spiritual truths underlying scriptural religions. Tracing the inquiries and discoveries of such a mind, unguided, but also unblinkered by tradition, Ibn Tufayl believed, could elucidate the truths of philosophy and mysticism and help compose the now century-old quarrel between religion and philosophy in Muslim lands.

As his talk with Abu Ya'qub the day of Ibn Rushd's "discovery" made clear, Ibn Tufayl knew well the issues that divided al-Ghazzall from the Neoplatonizing Aristotelians al-Farabl and Ibn Sina. In Hayy ibn Yaqzdn he sought a synthesis of their themes with al-Ghazzall's Sufi-influenced recasting of Islamic mysticism and pietism. For all these pathways, he believed, sought the same goals. Al-Ghazzall himself had drunk deep of Neoplatonic emanation theory and Aristotelian virtue ethics.[4] And the Muslim philosophers, as al-Ghazzall had acknowledged, were, at least in their

intentions, theists, muhaqqiqiln, thinkers dedicated to the Truth.

Hayy ibn Yaqzdn, like any fiction, is a thought experiment. It builds on the famous Floating Man thought experiment of Avicenna. The title is taken from one of the allegories Ibn Sina wrote while imprisoned in the castle of Fardajan near Hamadhan and refers to the living human intelligence, aroused by the ever-wakeful Active Intellect, the hypostasis by which God communicates His truth to the human mind, and indeed imparts all order and intelligibility to nature. In the Floating Man argument, recurrently used in Avicenna's non-allegorical writings, the philosopher demonstrates the substantiality of the human soul, that is, its independence or self-sufficiency, by calling on his readers to conceive themselves suspended in the air, isolated from all sensations, even from all sensory contact with their own bodies. One would still, he argued, have self-consciousness. Since one conceives of one's own awareness without positing the body or any bodily sensation, the idea of the self is not logically dependent on that of any physical thing; the soul, then, is not to be thought of in merely relative terms but as a primary given, a substance.[5] The argument was refined and simplified when Descartes recast it in epistemic terms: I can abstract from the supposition of all external things, but not from the supposition of my own consciousness.

Ibn T ufayl gave the argument a social twist, transposing the fictive situation of the mind from sensory deprivation to cultural isolation. It was not uppermost among his intentions to speculate about the empirics of the "wild boy" phenomenon – although his narrative does draw on the Romulus and Remus sort of motif, proposing a fallow doe as

the nurse of the castaway or neophytel:layy ibn Yaqan. His central purpose was to show what human intelligence can discover with no help beyond a divinely imparted insightfulness – the human receptivity to ideas and active penchant for inquiry that al-Ghazzall had claimed for himself and that Aristotle had set down as a premiss when he opened the Metaphysics with the words, "All men by nature desire to know."

The finding of Ibn Tufayl's thought experiment is that language, culture, religion and tradition are not necessary for the development of a perfect mind but may well impede its progress. This outcome voices a sharp reproof against existing social structures in general and institutional Islam in particular. The social critique, which complements Ibn Tufayl's irenic message, is not left implicit. It is spelled out in passages describing the encounters between the perfected l:layy ibn Yaqan and the members of a society governed under a prophetically revealed religion that is (in Ibn Tufayl's phrase) a "thinly veiled" generic counterpart of Islam.

Ibn Tufayl begins the story of l:layy ibn Yaqan by relating two rival accounts of his origin, suggestive of the rival scientific and religious accounts of the nature and origin of humankind. The scientific account ascribes l:layy's origin to spontaneous generation, relying heavily on the precise characteristics of the matter in which the new organism would take shape. The alternative account resorts to fable, positing a human society and a human drama in which a royal infant is conceived but cast away, like Moses in the bulrushes, to be borne by a providential current, after moving prayers by his tearful mother, to an uninhabited island, where he is cast up on a shore the tide would not reach for another year. In both

accounts, chance plays a role. But in the naturalistic version chance becomes the opportunity of nature; in the fabular version, which repeatedly echoes Qur'anic language, chance becomes the plaything of providence, anthropomorphically addressed.

Ibn Tufayl is careful to avoid saying that the two stories contradict each other. Those who tell the one story do deny the other. Yet neither account can exclude reference to the imparting of life, spirit and intelligence, "the spirit which is God's" (Qur'an 15: 28-9, 32: 6-9, 38: 71-2), and which is indissoluble from the body, not only in the purview of the senses, but also for the mind.[6] Clearly both stories are meant to be adequate and insufficient in complementary ways; those who affirm the one and deny the other are only depriving themselves of a portion of the truth which can never be fully expressed in human language, regardless of its sanctity.

Hayy ibn Yaqan, like Aristotle's ideal of all men, has an innate desire to know. Nursed and nurtured by his doe foster mother, he learns to rely on her and trust in her care. His desires and aversions come into focus much in the manner of the Stoic developmental psychology of moral consciousness; [7] and he learns shame, jealousy, emulation and covetousness – conditions of childhood in Ibn Tufayl's thinking. By adolescence l:Iayy has reached the age of practical reason, making clothes and weapons, tired of waiting for horns to sprout on his head and weary of fighting losing battles with the animals. As his foster mother weakens with age, he learns to care for her and discovers the active side of the love which had been mere passive dependency in childhood. When she dies, he tries to restore her, but then realizes that the vital

spirit has fled, and that the body which remains is a mere putrid mass without its ruling principle.

Ontogeny recapirulates phylogeny as l:Iayy discovers fire and uses it for light and cooking, associating its power with the missing life principle of his doe mother, becoming infatuated and ready to worship the flame. He dissects the bodies of animals and uncovers the workings of their anatomy and physiology, but increasingly his interests are spirirual, and at twenty-one he begins to think seriously about metaphysics. l:Iayy discovers the organic form and unity of the cosmos, the distinction between matter and substantial forms, and the ultimate Cause of all that he observes, working immanently, through the natures of things, as is figured forth in the language of the Qur'an (8: 17), where God informs his prophet of the unseen dimensions of a battle: "When you shot it was not you who shot but God." Advancing independently in the same path as the philosophers, l:Iayy discovers for himself proof of the world's finite size: if there were an infinite magnitude, then removing a finite part of it would either make it finite or leave it infinite; if the former, then two finite quantities combined would form an infinite; if the latter, then one infinity exceeds another, which is impossible (p. 129).

The argument, rooted in Aristotle, is used by Spinoza to prove not that the world is finite but that the world, being infinite, cannot really be divided into parts. If the universe had isolable parts, Spinoza argues, the dilemma would be inescapable: one would be forced either to admit that a whole is not equal to the sum of its parts or to regard one infinity as greater than another. (And then one would need to know by how much.) Ibn Tufayl's argument is rejected in modern

mathematics only as a result of Georg Cantor's showing in 1874 that coherent sense can (and must) be made of the notion that one infinity does exceed another. And that argument, in turn, rests in part on a Spinozistic reconstruction of the continuum – and, in a way, even on Ibn Bajjah's [8] idea of a continuity among distinguishable identities. For the undenumerable infinity of Cantor is mapped by the "irrational" numbers, the glue, as it were, connecting the discrete milestones of the set of all rational numbers. But, for Ibn Tufayl, Hayy's reasoning about the finitude of the cosmos represents the pinnacle of the attainments of pure reason – beyond which Ibn Tufayl believes the human mind still has some way to travel, its progress always guided by the reason that has carried it to this point, and the meaning of its discoveries left to the interpretation of reason, guided by divine grace and the virtue of humility.

The classic standoff between Aristotelian eternalism and scriptural creationism is recapitulated as an antinomy (it would become the first of Kant's four antinomies) in the reasonings of Hayy ibn Yaq?-an: if the world is eternal, its age would be infinite, subject to the same paradoxes that beset a world of infinite size – was it less than eternal a year ago? But if the world began, then (recapitulating the reasoning of Aristotle) there was a time before which there was no time. And the very notion of before which implies that this too was a time and that the notion of time's first moment is incoherent.

For some years Hayy pondered over this problem, but the arguments always seemed to cancel each other. Baffled and exhausted by the dilemma, he began to wonder what each of the beliefs entailed. Perhaps the implications were the same!

For he saw that if he assumed that the universe had come to be in time, ex nihilo, the necessary consequence would be that it could not have come into existence by itself, but must have had a Maker to give it being … Alternatively, he saw that if he assumed the eternity of the world, that is, that it has always been as it is now and never emerged from non-being, this would imply that its motion too is eternal and had no beginning, never started up from rest. Now every motion requires a mover. This mover can be either a force distributed through some body – self-moving or externally moved – or a force which is not distributable or diffusible in physical bodies … it has already been proved that every material body must be finite. Should we discover a force engaged in an infinite task, that force cannot belong to a physical thing. But we have found the motion of the heavens to be ceaseless and eternal, for ex hypothesi it has gone on for ever and had no beginning. Ergo the force that moves them must be neither in their own physical structure nor in any external physical being. It can only belong to some Being independent of all material things and indescribable by any predicate applicable to them.[9]

On either account then, that of the philosophers, who prided themselves on their science (for eternalism left no room for exceptions to the eternal rule of causal laws), or that of scriptural monotheists (who sustained God's free governance of the universe with the idea that God chose to create, with no prior condition or constraint), natural theology would still flourish: a scriptural appeal to the world's dependence on the act and choice of God, or an Aristotelian appeal to the Prime Mover – either would lead to a God who is incorporeal and unimaginable yet governs the world, as its creator or as the

emanative Source of the forms and dispositions that distinguish and energize all that is.

The resolution is a sharp rebuke to al-Ghazzali's claim not only that the two accounts were irreconcilable but that the eternal ism of the philosophers was incompatible with their would-be theism and that it made them atheists in spite of themselves. For al-GhazzalI had held, in opposing the teachings of al-FarabI and Avicenna, that no meaning could be found for the idea of the world's contingency and God's authorship of nature unless there was a time before which the world did not exist.

Ibn Tufayl's truce did not hold, even in the Islamic West. Averroes sought a line of demarcation between the claims of the philosophers and the aims of mass religion. But, within the territory still held by philosophy, he resolutely maintained the eternity of the cosmos, arguing in The Incoherence of the Incoherence, his riposte to al-GhazzaII, that it was not the eternalism of the philosophers but the sophistries of the theologians that were incoherent. But Ibn Tufayl's resolution did appeal to Maimonides, who ascribed much of the heat and confusion on the issue to the efforts of philosophers and mutakallimiin to prove creation or eternity a priori. The eternalism of the philosophers, he argued, resulted in an unwanted and untenable determinism, which, if taken at face value, would render change as well as choice impossible. The radical contingency of the mutakallimiin led to an equally untenable occasionalism, which left every event to the immediate agency and arbitrary discretion of God. One must confront the fact, he argued, taking his cue from Ibn Tufayl, that we cannot prove the point demonstratively one way or the other. But that does not leave us without reasons to guide

us: creation is preferable to eternity and more probable; more probable, because strict emanation, unguided by the sort of will or grace that we humans can grasp only in volitional terms, does not seem capable of differentiating divine simplicity into the multiplicity we observe; theologically preferable, because it makes more sense to speak of an Author of the world if the world is something that need not have existed, that once did not exist, but now does exist and has the nature it has because of the act of God.

The reasons are al-Ghazzali's, but the moderation is Ibn Tufayl's: the philosophers are not atheists; their arguments do work, although the eternity of the world is a postulate of theirs more problematic than they may care to acknowledge, not an axiom, and still less the conclusion of an apodeictic demonstration. But the alternative too is problematic, since creation posits a volitional side to God, which strict monotheists know to be undifferentiable in reality from divine wisdom. Radical
monotheists, those who follow through on the logic and dynamic of the idea of the Divine in all its absoluteness, know, as al-Ghazzall knew when he described a form of monism as the logical outcome of monotheism, that the distinction of divine will from wisdom, which theistic volun-tarists fought so hard to shield within the doxological bastion of the idea of creation, must in the end be absorbed in the transcendent unity of an absolutely simplex Being. Maimonides in fact treats all differentiation of God's attributes as an artifact of human subjectivity and finitude.[10] But this too is a strategy he shares with Ibn Tufayl, who argues at the climax of Hayy ibn Yaqzdn that the very notions of unity and diversity are compromised by the rootedness of our modes of thought in the physical world.[11]

Thomas follows Maimonides in holding that resolution of the dispute between creation and eternity lies beyond unaided reason. And Kant follows too, when he assigns a name and a cause to the antinomy, ascribing it, as Maimonides had done, to the overreaching of pure reason. What mattered, in Ibn Tufayl's view, was the integrated cosmos, "one organism whose parts are joined organically together" (p. 128), all clearly the work of the one God, the "eternally existing Being, Whose existence is uncaused, but Who is the cause of all existence" (p. 135), whose transcendence both the idea of creation and the idea of eternity endeavour to protect.

The discovery of God, as Ibn Tufayl's fiction shows, is the discovery of human vocation, salvation and felicity. It is also the discovery of the meaning of perdition:

If there is a Being Whose perfection is infinite, Whose splendour and goodness know no bounds, Who is beyond perfection, goodness, and beauty, a Being such that there is no perfection, no goodness, no beauty, and no splendour that does not flow from Him, then to lose hold of such a Being and having known Him to be unable to find Him must mean infinite torture, as long as He is not found. Likewise, to preserve constant awareness of Him is to know joy without lapse, unending bliss, infinite rapture and delight, (p. 137)

The project of the Sufis and the Neoplatonic philosophers is the same: pursuit of gnosis; and the perdition and paradise of Qur'anic poetry are but images by which mystic contemplation and its loss are figured forth as bliss or torment, to an audience not yet initiated into such intimate experience of the Divine, and perhaps not capable of it.

Hayy ibn Yaqzan discovers his own vocation before he knows what people in general are or what societies are like. He promptly sets about to pursue it, recognizing in such spiritual felicity the sole avenue and content of immortality. He devises his own, natural Sufi discipline –

ascetic, to minimize the distractions of the body that would call him away from concentration on God's unity. And he emulates the rhythmic circling of the heavenly bodies, whose luminous clarity and diaphanous substance seem to him clear evidence that they too, of all the beings in his world, are aware of the perfection of the Perfect Being and of fer recognition to it.

For Hayy ibn Yaqzan knowledge is obligation, and to know what manner of being he is and where he is situated in the cosmos is to know how he must live:

Seeing that what made him different from all other animals made him like the heavenly bodies, Hayy judged that this implied an obligation on his part to take them as his pattern, imitate their action and do all he could to be like them. By the same token, he saw that his nobler part, by which he knew the Necessarily Existent, bore some resemblance to Him as well. For, like Him, it transcended the physical. Thus another obligation was to endeavour, in whatever way possible, to attain His attributes, to imitate His ways, and remould his character to His, diligently execute His will, surrender all to Him, accept in his heart His every judgment, outwardly and inwardly … rejoice in His rule.

(p. 142)

Here the resignation and submission entailed by the very word Islam become the homoiosis theoi of Plato and the imitatio Dei of monotheism in general. But obligations stem not simply from resemblances. There is a definite directionality to the scheme, and that directionality is clearly Platonic. For there are some resemblances that Hayy must minimize. It is the spiritual that he, and the human beings whose situation he models, must maximize:

He recognized, however, that he was like the lesser animals in his lower half, the body, for it belonged to the world of generation and decay. It was dull and dark and demanded sensory things of him – food, drink, intercourse. Still he knew that this body had not been created for him idly … He must care for it and preserve it, even though in doing so he would do no more than any animal.

His duties, then, seemed to fall under three heads, those in which he would resemble an inarticulate animal, those in which he would resemble a celestial body, and those in which he would resemble the Necessarily Existent Being: he had to act like an animal to the extent that he had a dull, sublunary body with differentiated parts and conflicting powers and drives. He had an obligation to imitate the stars in virtue of the vital spirit in his
heart, which was the command point for the rest of his body and its powers. It was his obligation to become like the Necessarily Existent because he was (and to the extent that he was) himself, that is, to the extent of his identity with that self which brought him his awareness of the Necessarily Existent, (pp. 142—3)

Eating, drinking, and other bodily functions were distractions, but necessary to the maintenance of the vital spirit, which in turn enabled Hayy to emulate the celestial bodies. This meant three things. Firstly, to be like the stars he must adopt a role of stewardship over nature: he must not only minimize the demands of his body and interfere to the least degree possible with the fulfilment of every natural project set forth for living beings by God, but he must actively care for all natural kinds, to emulate the governance and benevolent influence of the stars, "never allowing himself to see any plant or animal hurt or sick, encumbered or in need without helping it if he could".

Secondly, "Hayy made sure always to be clean, washing frequently with water, getting all the dirt and grime off his body, cleaning his teeth, nails, and every nook and cranny of his body – even scenting it as best he could with plant fragrances and various pleasant smelling oils. He took great care to see that his clothes were always clean and fragrant, and soon he did begin to sparkle with vitality, cleanliness, and beauty" (p. 146). Here Ibn Tufayl appeals to the emulation of the stars to assimilate the toilet of Hayy ibn Yaqzan not only to the ablutions of Islam but further, to the courtly sparkle ascribed to philosophers like Avicenna, and prescribed by the courtly ethical philosopher Ibn Miskawayh, whose emphasis on dressing well, as a component of the virtue of personableness, al-Ghazzall had rejected in favour of a Sufi—Pietist asceticism of simple dress and an ideal of minimal attention to such externals.[12]

Finally, Hayy must emulate the motions of the heavens, whose perfection visibly manifests their adoration of God's absolute perfection, as Aristotle had argued. Hayy does this by spinning in place and circling his island – in effect,

recreating the rituals in which Muslims circumambulate the Ka'bah in the rites of pilgrimage and Sufi devotees spin to reach the ecstasy of vertigo in the practice of the dhikr, the whirling invocation of the name and thought of God, aimed at focusing consciousness on God alone by blotting out all sensory things and all promptings of imagination.

But it was in pure meditation, "submersion", obliterating the externality and otherness of the personality itself, leaving only "the One, True Identity" of the Necessarily Existent, that Hayy found his highest and most perfect emulation, the end to which all his other activities must be means. Even the whirling of the dhikr must here be left behind, as a vestige of physicality, and stewardship itself becomes a distraction from the perfect ecstasy the self-taught philosopher now seeks, as Muhammad had done, in a cave.

Practice of the discipline that his three forms of mimesis enjoined allows Hayy to become a mystic adept, capable of sustaining his gnostic contact with the Divine. With great labour the goal is achieved: "From memory and mind all disappeared … And with the rest vanished the identity that was himself" (p. 149), and Hayy ibn Yaqzan experiences the beatific vision.

His return to self confuses the mind and leads him to confound his own identity with the higher object of his knowledge, a pantheistic notion that Islam had battled among extremist Sufis and that Avicenna had battled among philosophers, blaming Porphyry, for example, for taking the mind's "contact" with the divine hypostasis known as the Active Intellect to entail the identity of the two.[13]

This specious thinking might well have taken root in his soul, had not God in His mercy caught hold of him and guided him back to the truth. He then realized that he never would have fallen prey to such a delusion unless some shadows of the physical or taint of sensory things still lurked within him. For "many", "few" and "one"; "singularity" and "plurality"; "union" and "discreteness", are all predicates applicable only to physical things, (p. 150)

Ibn Tufayl here relies on a Plotinian line of argument in order to show that the very categories of unity and difference themselves pertain exclusively to the sensory world, that in the spiritual or intellectual world, the question of the identity or difference of the perfected human soul with the divine simply does not arise.

Ibn Tufayl mounts Aristotle's argument that matter is the principle of individuation and that intellectual entities like Plato's forms therefore have a problematic arithmetic as a kind of canon for use against the Aristotelian fusion of thought, thinker and object of thought. True, he agrees, the mind is what it knows. But with intellectual things, there is no identity or difference. Similarly, Ibn Tufayl deploys Plotinus' idea that the intellectual realm (nous) is a "one/many" against Plotinus' own quest for the divinization of the soul, preferring Plato's more modest goal of homoiosis theoi, "to the extent that this is possible", echoing the very qualification Plato himself had used. And he relies on Ibn Bajjah's reconciliation of the individual immortality of Avicenna (and al-Ghazzall) with the loss of individuality in the disembodied or ecstatic soul, seemingly demanded by Plato's intellectualist arguments for immortality and by the Sufi theme of fand dying unto self. True again, he holds, the ecstatic transcends

mere selfhood. But in so doing, what he leaves behind are the limitations of the ego, not the consciousness of individuality.

What Ibn Tufayl takes from Ibn Bajjah here is the idea of contact among the souls that have managed to detach themselves from matter, a contact that does not negate their individuality. All such souls are members of a continuous whole, but that fact does not merge them with Divinity and annihilate the very awareness in which their bliss is consummated.[14] What Ibn Tufayl contributes to Ibn Bajjah's theme and argument is the image of the community of immortal souls, which here becomes part of Hayy ibn Yaqzan's ecstatic vision, his first direct encounter with other beings that are not merely like him, as are the celestial bodies, but of his own kind:

Passing through a deep trance to the complete death-of-self and real contact with the divine, he saw a being corresponding to the highest sphere … neither identical with the Truth and the One nor with the sphere itself, nor distinct from either … at the pinnacle of joy, delight and rapture, in blissful vision of the being of the Truth, glorious be His majesty.

Just below this, at the sphere of the fixed stars, Hayy saw another … like the form of the sun appearing in one mirror, reflected from a second … Thus for each sphere he witnessed a transcendent immaterial subject, neither identical with nor distinct from those above, like the form of the sun reflected from mirror to mirror with the descending order of the spheres … until finally he reached the world of generation and decay, the bowels of the sphere of the moon.

Here too was an essence free of matter, not one with those he had seen – but none other. Only this being had seventy thousand faces. In every face were seventy thousand mouths; in every mouth, seventy thousand tongues, with which it ceaselessly praised, glorified, and sanctified the being of the One who is the Truth, (pp. 152-3)

Functionally, as Ibn Bajjah would argue, we have unity here. But the individualities remain distinct, each enjoying the reward of its own quest, in communion with the Highest, and in community with one another. Reflection from mirror to mirror both preserves and differentiates the intellectual reality that is imparted from above or beheld from below. At the level of individual creatures and created species, refraction might be a more fitting metaphor than reflection. But, in keeping with Ibn Bajjah's argument, the unity of all disembodied souls does not compromise their Avicennan individuality. And their Platonic inviolability does not render them identical with – nor yet different from – the Divine. For, in the Plotinian terms that Ibn Tufayl adopts as the framework of his metaphysic, all being is by participation in the reality, unity and goodness of the Divine.

To lose contact with God absolutely would be to be annihilated. But even the souls of the damned do not undergo quite that fate. Rather, they are preserved in being, but distanced from the light that might have given meaning and fulfilment to their being. As Hayy's vision images the fact:

From this height he saw other selves like his own … more like tarnished mirrors covered with rust, their faces averted and their backs to the brilliant mirrors in which shone the image of the sun. They were ugly, defective, and deformed

beyond his imagining. In unending throes of torture and ineradicable agony, imprisoned in a pavilion of torment, scorched by the flaming partition … (p. 153)

The partition here is alienation, and the torments of Hell so vividly detailed in the Qur'an now belong to the imagery of separation, which can never be absolute while anything endures of creaturely existence.

It is only as a mature and practising mystic that Hayy ibn Yaqzan first encounters another living human being, in the person of the anchorite Absal, a philosophical refugee from an inhabited island long ruled under the laws of a scriptural religion. There are elements of pathos and parody when the two men first meet. Absal is sure that Hayy is another anchorite like himself. Hayy is curious about Absal's long black Sufi coat of wool, which he takes to be this creature's natural coat. He approaches for a closer look. But Absal, anxious not to distract the other from his devotions, runs away and must be caught and calmed by the powerful Hayy ibn Yaqzan.

Absal, like the theologian of Voltaire's Philosophical Dictionary, has studied many tongues, in his quest for subtlety and sophistication in the exegesis of scripture. When he realizes that Hayy has no language at all, "the fears he had felt of harm to his faith" from contact with this exotic person are relieved: "he became eager to teach him to speak, hoping to impart knowledge and religion to him, and by so doing earn God's favour and a greater reward" (p. 160). But what he learns, of course, is that Hayy already knows the truth, of which his own religion bears the mere symbols. Reward, to mention the case nearest to hand, is not a sort of salary for

winning hearts and souls to the one true faith, but the inner consequence of insight and spiritual advancement. Hayy, for his part, readily recognizes the true intentions behind the symbolic representations used by the prophet of Absal's faith. He willingly "accepts" it, fulfilling the formal conditions so welcome to the Islamic ideal of proselytization. But in fact, as their acquaintance deepens, it is clear that Absal is the convert and disciple, and Hayy the teacher.

As Absal tells his friend about his own culture, religion and society, Hayy finds two things incomprehensible. Firstly, "why did this prophet
rely for the most part on symbols to portray the divine world, allowing mankind to fall into the grave error of conceiving the Truth corporeally", imagining God Himself in physical terms, and supposing that reward and punishment are meted out in sensory pleasures and chastisements? And secondly, in laying out the obligations of humanity, "why did he confine himself to these particular rituals and duties" – which Hayy accepted gladly – "and allow the amassing of wealth and overindulgence in eating, leaving men idle to busy themselves with inane pastimes and neglect the Truth?" – when property meant nothing to Hayy, and, as he believed, "no one should eat the least bit more than would keep him on the brink of survival".

When he saw all the provisions of the Law to do with money, such as the regulations regarding the collection and distribution of welfare or those regulating sales and interest, with all their statutory and discretionary penalties, he was dumbfounded. All this seemed superfluous. If people understood things as they really are, Hayy said, they would forget these inanities and seek the Truth, (pp. 161—2)

Moved by compassion for humanity, so far removed from the truth that they must rely on surrogates and so undisciplined and blind that they become an easy prey to temptations and distractions, Hayy determines to accompany Absal to his own island, hoping "that it might be through him" that these people will be saved. The irony of Ibn Tufayl's allowing his hero to expect to "save" a populace already in receipt of a religion indistinguishable from Islam would not have been lost on a Muslim audience.

On the arrival of the two men in Absal's land, there is great interest, of course, in Hayy's novelty and great excitement at his story. But when the neophyte philosopher settles down to teach the people, "the moment he rose the slightest bit above the literal or began to portray things against which they were prejudiced, they recoiled in horror from his ideas and closed their minds" (p. 163). In the end, class by class, Hayy "saw 'every faction delighted with its own' (Qur'an 23: 55, 30: 31)" and realized that their appetites and passions made them incapable of following in his footsteps, let alone seeing what he had seen. Reluctantly, he reaches the conclusion that symbols and restrictive laws, rather than the unvarnished truth and the discipline of self-perfection, are the best that the mass of men are capable of receiving. Admittedly, symbols can be mistaken for the truth itself and the minimal restrictions of a civil and criminal code are readily taken as the substance of righteousness and fulfilment of God's will. But such confusions are a necessary evil. For without the prophet's wise condescension to the moral and intellectual inadequacies of humanity and the weaknesses of human culture, even worse confusions of spirit and
depravities of character than the Candide-like Hayy had observed would take hold, and they would grow far more

widespread than the moral and intellectual vices and spiritual weaknesses that he had detected in the recipients of civilization. Hayy and Absal return to their isolated island and continue their devotions: "Hayy searched for his ecstasy as he had before, until once again it came. Absal imitated him until he approached the same heights, or nearly so. Thus they served God on the island until man's certain fate overtook them" (p. 165).

Ibn Tufayl's indictment of religious culture and tradition in general and of Islam in particular is mild and oblique, compared to the severe and pessimistic evaluation of human nature at large from which it springs. But, like Ibn Bajjah, Ibn Tufayl places great faith in "weeds", those social and intellectual "misfits" who seek the truth for themselves, outside the bonds of established tradition, the confines of language and the imagery that invariably compromises and betrays the truth. Like Matthew Arnold, Ibn Tufayl believes that

moral rules, apprehended as ideas first, and then rigorously followed as laws, are and must be for the sage only. The mass of humankind have neither force of intellect enough to apprehend them clearly as ideas, nor force of character enough to follow them strictly as laws. The mass of humankind can be carried along a course full of hardship for the natural man, can be borne over the thousand impediments of the narrow way, only by the tide of a joyful and bounding emotion.[15]

The requisite emotion, for Hayy ibn Yaqzan, springs naturally from his God-given interest, curiosity, concern and eagerness for perfection. But in the mass of humankind, Ibn Tufayl

believes, such natural springs of interest are crusted over with the accretions of spiritual laziness and moral complacency. Humanity in general, with the exception of a few rare "weeds", to use Ibn Bajjah's term, are "engulfed in ignorance. Their hearts are corroded by their possessions" (p. 163).

Yet even in the midst of this melancholy appraisal, which is as much a backhanded rationale for the inadequacies of religion as it is an expression of disappointment with the human spirit in general, we must recall that Ibn Tufayl, unlike Hayy ibn Yaqzan and Absal, did not abandon society but continued to live in it, if not wholly of it. And his work voices a clear, if indirect, invitation to any like-minded spirit, to pursue the higher spiritual path and the supererogatory moral path, which the Prophet of Islam wisely saw were beyond the reach of most men.

For Ibn Tufayl argues from the very triviality of human pursuits and the revulsion that wholesome spirits might feel towards them, for a higher pursuit, into heights that are surmounted by no summit. Unlike Ibn Bajjah, he does not call such men weeds, perhaps because he takes
to heart the example of his persona, Hayy ibn Yaqzan, who made such a point of disentangling one plant from another, and transplanting those specimens that had been seeded by the wind in rocky or infertile soil into an environment where, like Ibn Rushd, they might flourish.

But the generality of the invitation should not be overlooked, even in the setting of the Arabic risalah form, the intimate essay in the guise of a letter to a disciple, in which the narrative of Hayy ibn Yaqzan is couched. Breaking out of his narrative at the point where Hayy realizes that most men are

trapped by their own passions and that in that sense, even while they were still living, "the torture pavilion already encircled them", Ibn Tufayl writes:

What weariness is heavier, what misery more overburdening than recounting all you do, from the time you get up to the time you go to bed without finding a single action that does not amount to seeking one of these vile, sensory aims: money making, pleasure seeking, satisfying some lust, venting rage, saving face, performing religious rites for the sake of honour, or just to save your neck! All these are only "cloud upon cloud over a deep sea" (Qur'an 24: 40).

Here, much in the spirit of Plotinus, alienation itself becomes an invitation to transcendence. Drawing upon a Qur'anic image that goes back to Hellenistic and New Testament times and was a favourite of Origen, the image of a marathon race, where every finisher is in some sense a winner, yet there is real merit and virtue in running hardest and fastest, Ibn Tufayl contrasts the ordinary human condition with the rare attainment of individuals who rise above the mass: "But 'those who run in the forefront, those who run in the forefront, they will be brought near' (Qur'an 56: 10-11)."[16]

NOTES

1 See Tahdfut al-falasifah, 3, 4, 9, ed. M. Bouyges (Beirut, 2nd ed., 1962): 89, 110, 154.

2 See R. Dozy, ed. (in Arabic), 'Abdu'l-Wahid al-Marrakushi, The History of the Almohades (Amsterdam, 1968): 174—5.

3 See Chapter 21 above on Ibn Bajjah. Al-Bitruji's Kitab fi'l-hayah was translated into Latin by Michael the Scot, whose version was published with critical comparison with the Arabic original by Carmody (Berkeley, 1952). A Hebrew version by Moses Ibn Tibbon (1259) was translated into Latin by Kalonymus ben David (Venice, 1531).

4 See L. E. Goodman, "Ghazali's Argument from Creation", International Journal of Middle East Studies, 2 (1971): 67-85, 168—88; "Did al-Ghazall Deny Causality?", Studia Islamica, 47 (1978): 83—120; "Morals and Society in Islamic Philosophy", in I. Mahalingam and B. Carr, Encyclopedia of Asian Philosophy (London, forthcoming).

5 See L. E. Goodman, Avicenna (London, 1992): 149-63.

6 Ibn Tufayl's Hayy ibn Yaqz, trans. L. E. Goodman (New York, 1972): 106-7. This translation is cited parenthetically in the text that follows. It contains cross- references to the Arabic edition of L& Gauthier.

7 See Cicero, De finibus, 3.5—8.

8 See Chapter 21 above on Ibn Bã©ah.

9 Trans. Goodman: 131-2.

10 See L. E. Goodman, "Matter and Form as Attributes of God in Maimonides' Philosophy", in A Straight Path: Studies

… in Honor of Arthur Hyman, ed. R. Link-Salinger (Washington DC, 1988): 86-97.

11 Trans. Goodman: 150-6.

12 See my discussion of Miskawayh and al-Ghazzã¬ on this point in Mahalingam and Carr (eds) "Islamic Ethics and Social Philosophy", in The Encyclopedia of Asian Philosophy.

13 See L. E. Goodman, Avicenna'. 163—72.

14 See Chapter 21 above on Ibn Bã©ah.

15 Matthew Arnold, "Marcus Aurelius", in Essays in Criticism (first series, 1865), ed., Sister T. M. Hocter (Chicago, 1964; 1958): 205.

16 Trans. Goodman: 165; cf. Origen, Deprincipiis (3.6.6, trans. G. W. Butterworth as Origen, On First Principles (New York, 1966; 1936): 251-2. Cf. Philo's athletic imagery, Som., 11. 130, 152, 165, where God is pictured as the Agonothete, the President of the games, who sets out an athletic challenge; and see David Winston, Logos and Mystical Theology in Philo of Alexandria (Cincinnati, 1985): 12.

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CHAPTER 23

Ibn Rushd

Domonique Urvoy

❦

Through his attachment to Greek thought and his scientific practice – especially in medical matters – Ibn Rushd (Averroes for the West) places himself in the line of the falasifah (Islamic philosophers). But he distinguishes himself from them through his participation in public life, not as an adviser of princes but as a lawyer in contact with daily realities. His family background led him to this position. His namesake Abu'l- Walld Muhammad al-jadd ("the grandfather") had been the leading qadi (judge) of Cordoba and had played an important role in the opposition of his city to Almoravid power to which it later submitted. He left some notable legal judgments on the permissibility of the leading dynasty's customs, on the Mozarabs, and so on, indicating his interest in public matters. His theoretical works demonstrate that he was an eminent specialist in legal methodology (usul al-fiqh) and in the study of the various solutions offered by the great legal schools (ikhtilaf). This connects him with a reform of Malikite law which advocated the integration of analogical reasoning. Although he did not leave comparable work, his son Abu'l-Qasim Ahmad was also connected to public life since he occupied the same position in 532/1137

and lost it only when Spain was occupied by the Almohads in 541/1145-6.

Abu'l-Walld Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Rushd al-hafid ("the grandson") was born in Cordoba in 520/1126, the year of his grandfather's death. He followed the Muslim curriculum, learning hadlth with his father. A chain of transmissions (isnad) shows that both were esteemed in that area. Biographical reports mention him more as a jurist than as a scholar and philosopher, but it is said that in the former role he preferred the science of law (dirayah) to the science of traditions (riwdyah). He was well known also in the science of legal controversies (khilaf), where he frequently refers to his grandfather (jaddt). By contrast his training in scientific and philosophical areas, on which his fame in the West rests, was very little known. The only indication is given by an Eastern historian of medicine, Ibn Abl Usaybi'ah, in the biography of one of his masters in the subject, Abu Ja'far ibn Harun of Trujillo. The latter had been very knowledgeable in philosophy and well read in the works of Aristotle and other philosophers of antiquity. No other contact is discernible with the philosophical circles of his time, and it is only on the topic of medicine that Ibn Rushd was in contact, at first by letter, with Ibn Tufayl.

The chief factor which specifically brought about the connection between law on the one hand and science and philosophy on the other is adherence to the Almohad movement. The Almohad reform was started by a Berber from south Morocco, Ibn Tumart (c. 471-4/1078-81 – 524/ 1130). The Sus, his home area, had been Islamicized by Kharijism, where the fundamental elements of his doctrine can be found. These are insistence upon "the divine promise

and threat", which connect human activity and revelation, the reduction of the attributes of God to simple qualities, and the internal necessity of divine action. He had been a pupil for a time in Cordoba of Ibn Hamdln who was the leading light in the opposition to the growing influence of al-Ghazzall. He had also studied in the East but one cannot precisely say what his influences there had been. A story that he was a disciple and defender of al-Ghazzall clashes with the absolute opposition between their respective doctrines, Eastern mysticism versus Maghrebi rationalism.

In effect his doctrine rests on two aspects which are apparently antagonistic but in fact are complementary, an entirely positive system of law and a rational theology, the latter justifying the authority of the divine decree and at the same time the positive character offiqh (jurisprudence). The legal activity of Ibn Tumart showed itself in his initiation of the practice of the "order of good and the ban on evil", recalling the exact prescriptions of the Shartah. Thus he extended the action of the Almoravids, but in place of looking for the norm in the authority of former jurists, Ibn Tumart looks for it in revelation itself. His contemporaries also qualified the Almohad "doctrine of thought" (madhhab al-fikr). His text on the "profession of faith" ('aqidah) is very short but philosophically very dense. It was restricted to the intellectual elite, the rest of the population having to content itself with "spiritual guides" (;murshidat) which summarize the essential dogmas. Later, the celebrated Eastern traditionalist Ibn Taymiyyah detected a deep affinity between the conception of the divine essence of falsafah and that of Almohadism. Departing from the sole requirement of purity of intention, Ibn Tumart goes back to a God established only by the demands of reason, according to a chain of reasons

where "divine promise and threat" play a pivotal role in the articulation of a rational Islamic theology. So Almohadism is the fusion of a theology relying on the analysis of the problem of inference and positing Absolute Being, and a practical philosophy which quite naturally takes the form of Islamic law, and which is entirely dependent upon divine transcendence.

Despite his family ties with the Almoravids, Ibn Rushd clearly opted for the Almohads. The intellectual perspective of his grandfather prepared him for this decision. One cannot talk about opportunism here since the new regime was not well accepted in Spain, and to present oneself as an adherent while staying in Andalus itself, unlike Ibn Tufayl who was based in the Maghreb, was a courageous act. But it was only indirectly, through the intervention of Ibn Tufayl, and also perhaps of his medical teacher, Ibn Harun, who was the doctor of the governor of Seville and future caliph, that Ibn Rushd came into contact with the government. The chronicler al-Marrakushl gives, following Abu Bakr Bundud (who conveys the words of the persons concerned), an important report of the first interview. Ibn Tufayl praised his young friend and the sultan, after having asked about the latter's family, asked him point blank, "What is the opinion of the philosophers on the heavens? Is it an eternal substance or did it begin?" Agitated, Ibn Rushd kept quiet, but the sultan and Ibn Tufayl started to discuss in front of him this topic in a very erudite way, and led him gradually to become part of the discussion. Another time Ibn Tufayl – or perhaps Ibn Harun – confided in him that the "prince of believers" had urged, "Let it please God that he meets someone who wished to comment on [the] books [of Aristotle] and clearly explain them in order to make their meaning accessible to men!", and, feeling

himself to be too old and too busy for this work, passed it on to him. These apparently simple reports are difficult to interpret. It is reasonable to place the latter around 554/1159, at the court of the governor of Seville, Abu Ya'qub, who was later to become caliph. The presentation described in the first account would have been made to the same person, in the same place, some years before. One imagines that Ibn Tufayl, concerned more with Illuminationist philosophy than with the technical explication of Aristotle, had refused the task proposed by the ruling Almohad, but the enthusiastic support of Ibn Rushd suggests a particularly deep harmony with the latter's point of view.

Still, it was first as a jurist that Ibn Rushd acted. In 565/1169 he was appointed qadi of Seville, which had become the capital of Andalus. He returned to Cordoba ten years later as qadi, continuing to make frequent trips to Seville and Marrakesh. Appointed a second time to Seville in 575/1179, he became chief qadi of Cordoba three years later. Some months earlier he had succeeded Ibn Tufayl as the sultan's doctor, and, after the accession to the throne of Abu Yusuf, the brother of the preceding sovereign, in 580/1184, he lived near him and became an intimate. During a ceremony he was placed symbolically at the level of the highest sectors of the Almohad hierarchy. These promotions were due
to his important writings, as much on law as on medicine, which he pursued together with his philosophical commentaries throughout his life. In law, for example, he added in 584/1188-9 a long chapter on pilgrimage to his great treatise. He also maintained contacts with the literary disciplines, which was useful for his commentary on Aristotle's Poetics, and there are many works by him on the Arabic language, which he especially used in his Fasl

al-maqdl by resolving many philosophical problems through linguistic analysis.

A short time before his death, however, he fell into disgrace. The chroniclers give many confused details on this subject. In fact, when confronted by an external threat, the government sacrificed to the mob many eminent people engaged in intellectual pursuits. Moreover, with one exception, the later biographies suggest that this disgrace was unjustified. Ibn Rushd had in spite of everything to submit to a humiliating exile in Lucena, a small town to the south of Cordoba, inhabited largely by Jews. He none the less continued his work, knowing that his case was defended by the important people of Seville. At the end of two or three years, the sultan summoned him to Marrakesh, where they died within a few months of each other. The most probable date of Ibn Rushd's death is Thursday 9 Safar 595/10 December 1198. Some sources speak of his death taking place in a house of detention, which signifies an ulti-mate disgrace. First of all buried there, his remains were returned to Corboba on a mule paid for by his philosophical writings. Among his sons many continued the family tradition and became qadis. One of them was the sultan's physician.

If his contemporaries speak little of his philosophical work, they all emphasize his human qualities and his disinterestedness. He wore frayed clothes and was never suspected of corruption. He carried out zealously his duties as a judge, remaining always courteous, generous and humble, as relaxed with the people as with the sultan. He liked also to give sermons in the mosque. The first Maghrebi to judge him philosophically is Ibn Sab'ln, who severely criticizes his apparent servility towards Aristotle, but adds "he was always

an excellent man, discreet, fair and conscious of his weakness" (p. 143). These qualities of modesty, exceptional in a Muslim intellectual, explain his attachment more than anything else to his work as a commentator, more than to law or science, or even to philosophy itself.

The legal work of Ibn Rushd is really far from being negligible, and embodies a philosophical point of view. Besides many occasional pieces of work, he left, in his major work Bidayat al-mujtahid wa nihayat al-muqtasid ("Beginning for Whoever Makes a Personal Effort and an End for Whoever is Contented") of which the greater part dates from around 564/1168, a monument of logical explication of Muslim law. It is a treatise of ikhtilaf (the science of comparing different schools of legal interpretation) considering at each point solutions proposed by small schools or significant individuals and not only by the major schools of interpretation. One could point out (Yate (1991): 21) that although ikhtildf is most often polemical, for Ibn Rushd it is a method in itself, a matter of bringing to light the principles which engender differences. It is the idea which one finds again in medicine in the Kulliyyat. In law, the principal consequence is that the doctrinal leanings of the author do not intrude. Each doctrine is given in its own terms, and it can even happen that one school is approved in terms of another school of interpretation.

Laws have been transmitted to people by the Prophet through the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Both give three types of expression of a rule: through a word, through an act or through tacit approbation. To this should be added the way of analogy (,qiyas), for topics which had not been considered by the Prophet. Analogy is the most important, since the

prophetic discussion is limited and the number of problems immense. Furthermore even the prophetic discussion needs qiyas in order to be usable in human societies. Against the use of analogy is the fact that it leads to the outbreak of divergences, limited only to the extent that there is consensus (ijma), but once such differences have been posited they are kept in existence by the spirit of imitation (taqlid). Also, from the start of the work, Ibn Rushd claims that he deals only with questions raised between the period of the Companions of the Prophet and that of the appearance of taqlid, without being precise about the latter.

The goal of the Biddy ah is to show what all jurists would have to see if they had not been blinded by allegiance to a particular school. This is exactly the Almohad approach, extended through the application of an Aristotelian formula. True jurists are conspicuous not because of what they know about facts but through their capacity to apply them to each concrete situation. The contents of the Bidayah ought to suffice to give them this capacity.

Ibn Rushd is a sincere believer, persuaded that the law in itself cannot be deficient. If there is a point of inconsistency, it must be due to differences of interpretation of the sources. The Bidayah is a commentary on the law which is supposed to deal with each point in an ideal order – in fact very rarely realized in the text – as Yate (1991: 34—5) has organized in this way:

1 Quick indication of common ground.

2 General indication of controversial territory.

3 The views of the individual jurists which have led to controversies are eventually pointed out.

4 An examination of the reasons for the differences.

5
The proposing of ways to understand these differences rationally, and also to harmonize them or at least to class them in order of admissibility.

6 An examination of the authenticity of hadith.

7 An examination of the impact of the text (for example: is it literal or metaphorical?) for each jurist.

8 An examination of texts and their use according to each jurist (general sense or specific).

9 The question of eventual abrogation.

10 The relative force of a text (for example, obligation or simple recommendation).

11 A consideration of the intellectual preferences (dhawq 'aqlt) of each jurist.

12 The occasional rejection of an opinion as devoid of meaning.

13 On some rare occasions, the declaration of his own opinion.

So the Bidayah takes place as part of an evolution of bringing a methodology to a system of universal claims. This wish to be logical goes very far since Ibn Rushd eventually suggests proofs for some solutions whose justification he ignores or which he finds feeble. Now, going by the number of his pupils and the audience he acquired, he appears in the biographies as a teacher of importance, if not of the first rank, but at least very appreciable status. If his philosophical work properly speaking did not have a large effect, the impact of his intellectual project remains considerable. It is advisable to return further to the detail of this project. The first point to raise is that even if the particular nature of the legal material imposes on Ibn Rushd the same method of reasoning as in later additions, in the scientific and philosophical domain by contrast he will follow a clear progression.

Some Spanish Arabists half a century ago sketched out a chronology of the works of Ibn Rushd (Alonso (1947): 51—98), which has recently been completed and verified by the Moroccan academic J. D. al-AlawI, working on all the texts preserved in Arabic. The latter distinguishes between seven phases in the succession of the writings as well as three levels of reading – philosophical/scientific, Aristotelian and Islamic or more precisely theological (kalam). But he thinks it is possible to synthesize these differences by schematizing the global evolution of the Cordoban in only two main stages, one where Ibn Rushd, still young, "aims only at reaching what is necessary in scientific knowledge for human perfection" (al-AlawI (1986): 205), and the other where, more mature, he wants "to really reach philosophy, that of Aristotle, and his triumph lay in defending it against the attacks as much of the ancients as of his contemporaries" (p. 214). This classification, however, does not take sufficient

account of the theological works, which are to be sure very much
in the minority in volume and which concern a very short period but which are still specific and major; it is in them only that Ibn Rushd used his own name. This leads us to suggest a tripartite chronology.

Firstly, Ibn Rushd concentrated on the small commentaries (jami) up to 567/1171, then on the middle commentaries (talkhis), from 564/1168 to 571/1175. The former are introductory works, with a general presentation of logic and physics, psychology, science and so on rather than the real Aristotelian teaching. They make possible access to the scientific work which Ibn Rushd elaborates elsewhere. First comes a consistent and impersonal commentary on the medical poem of Ibn Sina. Then there is the large medical synthesis of the Kulliyyat, and the treatise on the theriac (antidotes against poisons), where he adopts an original position on therapy. Physics, cosmology, psychology and the natural sciences are added and presented through the work of Aristotle. In effect, in his middle commentaries Ibn Rushd sets himself to follow the order of the text, by contrast with al-Farabl and Ibn Sina, or with himself in his short commentaries. But he does it in his own way, imposing his own structure and hierarchy on the issues.

Secondly, following 573/1177 his work took an aggressive doctrinal shape. It was the time when the religious authorities of the Almoravid era gave way to the new generation (Urvoy (1978): 177—81). The philosopher of law went off in another direction from that of the practical philosophers, writing a middle commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics. We do not know why this direction is abandoned leading up to 591/1194,

the date of the last middle commentary, dedicated to the Republic of Plato. In the meantime Ibn Rushd had made a trip to Marrakesh (574/1178) and then to Seville where he produced his three most independent works, dealing with religious issues – Fasl al-maqal, Kashf 'an manahij al-adillah and Tahafut al-tahafut. This was also the time of original philosophical writings, discussions of the intellect, reconsidering and correcting the problematic of Ibn Bajjah and the De substantia orbis.

Thirdly, once he was confirmed as the sultan's physician and the grand qadi of Cordoba, Ibn Rushd essentially concentrated on the great commentaries (tafsir). The first, on the Posterior Analytics, seems to have been taken up in 576/1180. The last, on the soul, was composed in 586/1190 and extended in a special tract, the De animae beatitudine. In what can strictly be called the commentaries he set about doing nothing else but explaining the text of Aristotle. If, on rare occasions, Ibn Rushd differs in opinion from him, or advances a view of his own on a question which the Stagirite had not settled, he points clearly to it. At the end of his career he takes up again some "questions" (masait), notably from logic, and one can raise the hypothesis that he thought in this way to start a fourth phase of his approach to Aristotle. He also completed his medical and political work.

One can say that after a logical and scientific preparation, our thinker elaborated a purely "Rushdian" thought for a brief period in order to draw out the ultimate consequences of trying to give the most complete picture possible of the universe of reason, through a deep analysis of what seemed to him to be the most excellent philosophy – Aristotelianism.

Ibn Rushd's scientific work is notable in two areas, astronomy/ cosmology and medicine. In the first area he made some observations in his youth, but he is especially interested in dealing with the consequences of an Aristotelian critique of the Ptolemaic system, a critique started already by Ibn Bajjah and Ibn Tufayl. In his commentaries he hardened the demonstrative side of the Aristotelian text, but he ended up only with a general hypothesis. This is that all the heavenly phenomena, notably the apparent variations in the speed of the planets, ought to be able to be explained by movement "along a helix" (lawlabi) or "along a screw" (halazuni), which Aristotle talks about many times. Since the Greek thinker has been far from explicit on this subject, Ibn Rushd suggests that it is a matter of the movement of the pole of a heavenly sphere on the axis of the poles of another sphere. It was only with al-Bitruji (Alpetragius) that the mathematical model for this was suggested, still in an a priori way, which did not find an audience until the tenth/sixteenth century.

The medical work, stemming from professional practice, is much more continuous. It consists of commentaries on Galen and Ibn Sina, and in a great synthesis, the "General Points" (Kulliyyat). These were written under the direction of the Almohad caliph, in order to examine minutely by rational analysis all the formulated opinions and to collect all those which are useful. Departing from the Aristotelian idea that real science is knowledge of the universal, Ibn Rushd insists that in medicine the general is to be found beyond observation, in the linking of phenomena to causes. With the exception of the purely empirical anatomy, the model to follow is the Physics of the Stagirite, and that presupposes in the reader a knowledge of logic. Ibn Rushd knows how to integrate a large part of medical teaching which has been

established through experience, but his criterion of selection remains rational analysis.

A curious paradox of this ideology which rejects the empirical in the name of the necessary is that it wishes to give a material substrate to the latter. The intellectual faculties have, as in Aristotle, their seat in the heart, but, not being proper organs, their "places" are in the brain where they appear. The heart makes possible the activity of the brain by passing heat to it, and the rational faculty, which is external to the individual and only occasionally instantiated, is embodied as a memory in society or in humanity. The order is thus "embodied", and that has two consequences. From a metaphysical point of view, the approach of the divine is made through observation of a scientific nature. From a moral point
of view, humanity and nature are based upon a similar teleological structure established by God.

A list of Ibn Rushd's works preserved in manuscript in the Escurial suggests that he composed a commentary on the Almohad profession of faith (Renan (1861): 73, 464). According to the biography of al-Ansarl, he also composed a work on Ibn Tumart himself (Yate (1991): 16, 62—3). Both are lost, but one can find in the Kashf 'an manahij al-adillah ("Discovery of the Methods of the Proofs") almost all the Almohad theses, without explicit reference to Ibn Tumart however, and following a quite different order, sometimes for doctrinal but mostly for pedagogical reasons (Urvoy (1991): 71-7).

The existence of God is established through a double experience. The life of beings presupposes providence, and

contingency presupposes a creator. But the proof is purged of anything which is not analytical. Ibn Rushd reintroduced here his scientific perspective, claiming that in order to know exactly that God exists one has to relate His existence to that of the substance of things. There are among others two types of understanding of these proofs, that appropriate for the masses who understand them only in accordance with their sense experience, and that appropriate for the intellectual elite who know how to see apodeictic proofs in them. The mutakallimun, by contrast, have a method which is inaccessible to the masses, without at the same time being able to reach a real demonstration. All the same, Ibn Rushd thinks that whoever tries to resolve the possible ambiguities of revelation through allegorical interpretation will succeed only in confusing personal opinion (ray), already condemned by Ibn Tumart. The wise and the masses will not find any ambiguity there, but the former regard it in a reflective manner and appreciate it thus as in perfect harmony with philosophy. In general, Ibn Rushd makes every effort, like Ibn Tumart, to preserve the letter of the revealed text together with the conclusions of rational meditation. He throws up a bridge between the two by borrowing from revelation expressions such as "God is light", which can be understood equally well literally as from an intellectual point of view, and by rejecting the false logical implications of the kalam which only serve to trouble the spirit. Al-Ghazzall is expressly labelled as the heir of all these agents provocateurs, as much theologians creating false problems as Sufis creating false solutions.

The Fasl al-maqal ("Decisive Chapter") is an introduction to the methodology of this philosophical and religious reflection. It states that it is the Qur'an itself (59: 2; 17: 184) which

recommends rational study. For this Ibn Rushd reintroduces allegorical interpretation, but within strictly defined limits in order to avoid arbitrary speculation. The methodological connection between the Fasl and the Bidayah is obvious and Ibn Rushd does not hesitate to defend philosophy against the accusation of impiety through a legal form of argument.

The conciliation of faith and reason is found in the Almohad perspective of a gradation of types of adherence, according to the intellectual level of each individual, from the simple "spiritual guide" to the elaborate "profession of faith". Ordinary religion is enough for the masses, but philosophy is necessary to satisfy the cultivated person. There are two languages, symbolic for the masses, and demonstrative for the philosopher, which do not oppose each other but which are no longer in touch with each other.

The Tahdfut al-tahafut ("Incoherence of the Incoherence") extends these two texts by refuting point by point the objections of al-Ghazzall. It is more flexible than the Fasl in affirming the superiority of a religion based on revelation as opposed to reason linked to a purely rational religion. But it is also faithful to the Fasl, which saw in the Prophet a man who had received the active intellect at the time in the form of rational representations, like philosophers, and who changed them through the use of the imagination into symbols appropriate for the masses. The religious rationalism of Ibn Rushd is thus not reductionist. It is, like all Almohadism, the belief in the possibility of reconstituting a posteriori the chain of reasons.

But Ibn Tumart is also useful to Ibn Rushd in order to resolve particular technical objections. On the question of the

creation, the mahdi had introduced the idea that it was the rupture between an unqualified state, pure potentiality, and a state qualified by beings. Ibn Rushd can in turn bring up the question of the appearance of time at the level of the action of an actual being on a potential being, that is to say on the level of the action of higher spheres on particular beings. Moreover, as he challenged emanationism, he is entirely within the Almohad perspec-tive where the act of creation is based on this absolute transcendence of God towards what He produces. Thus one can speak of the free will, or the knowledge, of God only metaphorically. In addition, God creates the metaphysical compound from matter and from form on which the secondary causes act in order to instantiate what was only potential, or in order to annihilate it. Nothingness appears to be secondary in relation to existence, and there is no real creation ex nihilo. Thus this priority of existence leads to refuting the Avicennan distinction between necessary being and possible being, and in establishing the negation of the independent reality of divine attributes on the basis of concrete being. God is the necessary being by comparison with beings in the world, but we cannot make statements about His essence. It is only from His actions ad extra that thought can relatively distinguish attributes, and by recognizing that the logic of those attributes is not, like ours, conditioned by the multiplicity of concrete objects. God thus does not behave through abstraction, and if He has a knowledge of particulars, it is not through a particular knowledge, but in so far as He is a creator who possesses entirely in Himself all that He creates. The authority of Aristotle on the opinion of Ibn Rushd can thus be seen. It is not absolute, but the Stagirite is for him the paradigm of human knowledge, and his task is only to complete, to systematize or even to correct some details. The thought of

Aristotle is not only for him what is given to us in the texts but everything which is coherent with them, even if it appears in religious guise. None the less it is necessary to restore correctly and cleanse the texts of Aristotle from all Neoplatonic additions. It is this idea which allowed Ibn Rushd to discover the fundamental axiom of the method of internal criticism, to know that a particular author "could" or "could not" make a certain point. His intuitions in the matter are admirable, for he worked on translations which were often defective, and he knew how to make corrections from among the different translations, how to fill in the gaps and even how to restore the authentic text by looking at the meaning.

Renan saw absolutely no originality in Ibn Rushd in connection with Aristotle. We, on the contrary, now stress the differences. But it is not easy to co-ordinate the points of detail which are isolated in this way. If one can speak of "Rushdian thought" in order to describe the unity of the three philosophical/theological texts, Fasl, Kashf&nahafut, which express a specific synthesis of Almohad Islam and Aristotelianism, it is above all on the commentaries on Aristotle that the Latin Middle Ages relied to speak of "Averroism". Why this word when the other commentators have not given their name to a school?

One might consider as characteristic five propositions:

1 The world is eternal.

2 God does not know particulars and there is no providence.

3 There is no free will.

4 The potential intellect is numerically one, as is the active intellect. It follows that there is no individual immortality or moral responsibility of the individual.

5 Philosophy and theology are contradictory, and the supernatural ought to be rejected.

This latter point, or the "theory of double truth", is a poor understanding of the hierarchical conception of our author. The rejection of the supernatural, and some of his other theses, rests only on the commentaries. Ibd Rushd's own thought has been indicated above and it is necessary to add here that his position on free will is mixed but remains flexible since he is clearly opposed to the predestinarianism of Ibn Tï¿½ from whom, as from others, he borrows so much.

There remains the fourth point, which St Thomas Aquinas has described as "the most shameful error". It is true that the synthesis of Ibn Rushd concerning this topic is different from the investigation undertaken by Aristotle. The latter is a naturalist who follows in each area (the
mechanisms of consciousness, the causation of beings) the logic of observation. Ibn Rushd is more systematic and unifies the noetic, the metaphysics of causality and astronomy. It seems that the reason for this unification ought to be sought in the necessity of moving from a noncreationist philosophy to a universe created by a mind. Aristotle, in effect, does not answer the crucial question, "Where does the form originate which receives the matter prepared to receive it?" Ibn Rushd challenges the Platonic vision of Themistius which returns to a soul of the world separated from matter. An immaterial being can act on matter and provide it with a form only through the intermediation of unchanging material

beings, the heavenly bodies. But then it is necessary to avoid the objection of al-Ghazzall to Ibn Sina that the first mover for the philosophers ought to be a body (the Sun, the highest Heaven or something else). Now Ibn Tumart had insisted on the action of divine Wisdom in order to bring about a perfectly organized world, and that only according to its own necessity, without an exterior model. So it is possible to conceive of the first mover in terms of intellect, for here philosophy and theology agree:

The philosophers … understand … by the differentiating principle only that which is determined by the wisdom in the product itself, namely the final cause, for according to them there is no quantity or quality in any being that has not an end based on wisdom, an end which must either be a necessity in the nature of the act of this being or exist in it, based on the principle of superiority.

(Van Den Bergh (1969): 248—9)

Divine wisdom establishes an organized world by permitting the potential forms to affect the act, and in this way they gather together the concrete individuals in terms of genus and species. Conversely the human spirit can, through the act of abstraction, bring about the separate existence of these forms. It is at once the most characteristic human act and what links us with the divine. This is not Neoplatonism, but it arises from the core of the Rushdian problematic. Only the concrete is real, and the intelligible being of the forms ought to correspond to a level on the hierarchic structure of the existent where they can have a purely intellectual status. Ibn Rushd finds it in the separate intellects, moving the heavenly bodies as the lover is moved by the one who is loved, and

with a universal and continuous movement without individual character which can come only from the senses and the imagination.

The status of the intellect thus rests on the scientific idea of the hierarchic structure of the universe. To understand is to conceptualize the real, that is to say to transcend the intelligible until we reach the organizing wisdom of everything. The doctrine of the unity of the intellect
unifies the themes of providence, of the hierarchic structure of the universe and of the role of the human intellect turning like a hinge around the idea of the eternity of the intelligible. The latter takes root in the struggle of Aristotle against the Megarians and against Plato, for he had demanded a repetition of contact with the concrete in order to justify the attribution of a concept by a single mind, just as Ibn Rushd requires us to go beyond individual experience so that the intelligible may always be thought. The material intellect, called thus because it can be turned into anything by primary matter, thinks always in the activity of the human species, assumed to be eternal, and through it the intelligible is eternal. The individual person loses contact only through the removal of the forms of the imagination which are corruptible.

Wisdom is then transcendent to the individual. The wise find their happiness in being the subject in which wisdom actualizes itself on occasion. Philosophy is the business of all humanity and what is personal in the thought of the individual is taken from the imagination and so is perishable. This sort of approach is quite naturally extended into political philosophy. Besides a commentary which is entirely theoretical on the Nicomachean Ethics, Ibn Rushd left us another commentary on Plato's Republic which contains

frequent references to current affairs. The choice of the Platonic dialogue is explained by the fact that Ibn Rushd did not know any translation of the Politics of Aristotle, and he deals with those parts of the text which contain only demonstrative arguments, leaving alone what he sees as dialectical or mythological, and rounding it off with psychological and epistemological themes from Peripatetic philosophy. That is remarkable since, in the rest of philosophy, Ibn Rushd is aware of divergences between Plato and Aristotle and does not try to make them agree, as did al-Farabl. He follows the latter in the way in which he treats the agreements between political philosophy and religious law, but being a faqih he emphasizes the supremacy of the latter. He accepts the essential conclusions of Plato's politics, corrected nevertheless by Aristotle, and even claims they are applicable, except that for Plato the required conditions were unrealizable unless there were enlightened rulers. He adapts the description of the degradation of political regimes to the recent history of his country. He sees in the continuing war a condition for the exercise of virtue by the city. He even prefers the most radical choices of Plato, not only with respect to Aristotle but also for Muslim tradition, and strongly condemns, for example, the forced uselessness of women in his period.

Political reflection is also the means of bringing together the analyses made before in the area of logic and rhetoric (which the Middle Ages made part of the Organon). Conforming to the Almohad way of forming a hierarchy, Ibn Rushd, who rejects for philosophy what is not convincing, retains for the masses most of the rhetorical arguments in order to help
them stick to good beliefs and so bring about good actions. The citizen summoned to responsibility ought then to struggle

against the persuasive arguments which initially trained him or her in order to rise up to demonstrative arguments. It is an opportunity once again to attack the methods of the kalam. For example, the theory of punishment ought to be interpreted carefully because, according to Ibn Rushd, if it is taken literally it is opposed to the stability of good and evil as it moves to action only if the reward appears to be sufficient or the fear dissuasive enough.

The Platonic assertion of the necessity of stable knowledge in order to safeguard a common language and so a social community is clearly at the basis of the Rushdian reflection, from the treatise on law to the commentary on the Republic. That includes not only the logical works but also the scientific work. Like Plato, Ibn Rushd compares the political ruler to the doctor, and the latter (according to the Kulliyydi) acts according to each case, while regarding the order of nature, in order to provide both with an approach regulated by the laws for the discovery of the truth. It all culminates in the affirmation of the unity of the intellect which "embodies" in humanity this stability of thought.

This synthesis remains none the less paradoxical. Paradoxical in itself, for it is public as well as elitist. Paradoxical in its expression, since Ibn Rushd himself succeeded in leading philosophy out of the ghetto in which it was confined, showing that he was a notably important teacher by the number of his disciples, but not succeeding in fitting in with the system of education and remaining isolated despite his fame (Urvoy (1978): 178—9). Even his disciples did not spread his philosophy, and the logician Ibn Tumlus, who seems to have been one of them, did not quote him and claimed to be a pupil of al-Farabl, or even of the combination

of Almohadism and the teaching of al-Ghazzall. Ibn Sab'ln pretends that he was ready to accept anything from Aristotle. Ibn Arab! for his part tells us a story in which he had in his youth beaten the old philosopher by ascribing to him words in contradiction with all his work. It was only in the thirteen th/ nineteenth century that the Arabs became interested again in Ibn Rushd, and in a polemical climate which for a long time distorted the meaning of this rediscovery. His fortune is only due to his reception outside the Muslim world, notably among Jewish writers, who contributed to transmitting him to the Latin West, which eventually was to betray him but which none the less knew how to accord him the respect to which he was due.

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(Translated by Oliver Leaman with the assistance of Yegane Shayegan.)

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CHAPTER 24

Ibn Sab'īn

Abui-Wafa al-Tajiazani and Oliver Leaman

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Abd al-Haqq ibn Ibrahim Muhammad ibn Nasr was a Sufi philosopher of Andalusia, known in Christian Europe for his replies to questions sent to him by Frederick II, ruler of Sicily. He is commonly called Ibn Sab'ln, and sometimes Qutb al-Dln (the pole of religion) or Abu Muhammad. Ibn Sab'in was of Arab extraction and came from a distinguished background. He was born in 614/1217 in Valle de Ricote, Murcia. There he studied Arabic language and literature, Islamic theology, Malikl jurisprudence, logic and philosophy. He became a Sufi and won many followers.

In 640/1242 he emigrated to North Africa with some of his disciples, settling in Ceuta. It was during his stay there that he received Frederick's four philosophical queries concerning Aristotelianism. He later travelled to Egypt around 646/1250. North African jurists had forewarned Egyptian jurists about what they considered to be his heretical belief in pantheism, which led to a hostile reception by thinkers in Egypt such as Qutb al-Dln al-Kastalanl. Ibn Sab'ln went on to Mecca, and kept a low profile. He had been accused of Shi'ism, and Egypt since Saladin's reign had become predominantly Sunni.

Ibn Sab'ln's tranquil life in Mecca gave him the leisure to accomplish some of his writings. It was there that he drafted the Meccan community's declaration of allegiance to the ruler of Africa, Sultan Zakariyya ibn Abu Hafs. He also corresponded with Ibn Arabl's disciple, Najm al-Dln ibn Israll. He was on good terms with the Yemeni ruler al-Muzaffar Shams al-Din Yusuf, but his relationship with his vizier, who was an anthropomorphist, was naturally rather strained. During the last two years of his life he came under such strong attack from the jurists in Mecca that he thought of moving to India. He died in Mecca in 669/1270. Some have suggested that he committed suicide while others think that he was poisoned by the vizier.

Ibn Sab'ln produced forty-one works, most of which are not extant. His greatest work is the Budd al-arif ("Escape of the Gnostic"). His Rasail ("Epistles") and his replies to Frederick II tell us a lot about his philosophical views. His style is highly esoteric and his reading was obviously very broad, covering Greek philosophy, ancient oriental philosophies such as hermeticism, Zoroastrianism and Hinduism. He was well read in the works of al-Farabl and Ibn Slna, from the east of the Islamic world, and among Andalusian thinkers he was familiar with Ibn Bajjah, Ibn Tufayl and Ibn Rushd. He was familiar with the Rasail ("Epistles") of the Brethren of Purity and was well grounded in both the Islamic sciences and Sufi thought.

Ibn Sab'ln was a follower of the Shuzi Sufi way founded by al-ShuzI of Seville. This was a continuation of the school founded by Ibn Masarrah (269/882—319/931), which was especially influential among those Sufis in Andalusia who had a philosophical tendency. Still, in his references to Ibn

Masarrah and his followers, Ibn Sab'ln was highly critical, as he was of Ibn 'Arabl, whose thought he described as "corrupted". Ibn Sab'ln founded a Sufi group which came to be known as the Sab'iniyyun. They followed an eclectic path which combined Greek, Islamic and ancient oriental elements. This form of Sufism survived up to the time of Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728/1328), who attacked its followers in Alexandria when he visited the city. His work The Book of the Alexandrian Issues in reply to the Sab'lnite pantheist heretic is directed at this form of Sufism. A follower of the Sab'lnite path was Abu'l-Hasan al-Shushtarl, who developed a distinct but related path of his own.

The pantheism of Ibn Sab'in is based on the concept of ivahdat al-wujud, the idea that only God really exists. There is no real basis to the distinction between the existence of God and of everything else. The existence of God is not a quality added to his essence, but existence is rather an essentially permanent single reality. This form of pantheism is distinct from other Sufi views on the unity of being in that Ibn Arabl, for example, admits the existence of contingent things. Ibn Sab'in designates his view as pure wahdat al-wujiid, or comprehensiveness, by which the notion of union with God and God himself is deprived of all description and names. The absolute existence of God is the source of all that he was, is and will be. Material existence is equivalent to absolute spiritual existence. Being is spiritual rather than material. He sometimes compares existence with a circle, with a periphery that is absolute existence and controlled or limited existence which is within the circle. In fact there is no real distinction between the two modes of existence, since their essences are the same. The absolute can be seen in the relative and the union of the two is complete. He sometimes considers the

absolute existence of God and contingent beings as the relation between form and matter. Ibn Sab'ln seeks support for his views in certain Qur'anic verses
such as "He is the First and the Last, and the Outward and the Inner" (57: 3), and "Everything will perish except his Face" (28: 88).

Ibn Safrln's pantheism is the basis of his concept of the genuine gnostic. This concept is quite similar to that of other Sufis such as Ibn 'Arabl and Ibn al-Farid when writing of the Muhammadan Reality (al-Haqtqat al-muhamadiyyah) or the Pole (al-Qutb), and Abd al-Karlm al-Jlll when discussing the perfect individual (al-insan al-kamil). Genuine gnostics are the most perfect of human individuals. They have achieved genuine oneness and are distinct when compared with all who have preceded them. They combine the perfections of the jurist, the theologian, the philosopher and the Sufi. They are greater than them in that they possess their own special knowledge, real gnosis, which is the gateway to the Prophet from whom everything derives. Ibn Sab'in is in little doubt that he himself enjoys the condition of genuine gnosis. In his The Escape of the Gnostic he seeks to undermine Aristotelian logic and replace it with a new "illuminative" logic. The logic of the gnostic is achieved not through reasoning but through intuition, and avoids the multiplicity of Aristotelianism. This logic leads to the conclusion that logical forms are innate, and that the six logical terms (genus, species, difference, property, accident and person) which give the impression of multiplicity are indeed illusory, as are the ten categories. Although these may be various, they really refer to the absolute unity of existence. He takes issue here with Ibn Rushd, who shares Aristotle's view that the categories cannot be identified as belonging to just one genus.

Ibn Sab'ln extends his pantheism to other areas of Sufi philosophical thought. For example, he argues that the soul and our rationality cannot have real existence as independent phenomena. Their existence derives from the One, and the One cannot be multiplied. Good and evil are the same from the point of view of existence. Since existence is One and is absolute Good, how can evil come about? Furthermore, the real gnostic cannot be described as happy or good or perfect since he or she is Happiness itself, Goodness itself and Perfection itself. Ibn Sab^n's main criticism of other thinkers is that they do not sufficiently emphasize the unity of everything which is implied in the wahdat al-wujud principle, since, if this principle is understood as he thinks it ought to be, the sorts of divisions and distinctions which we customarily make are merely indications of a greater and entirely unified reality. We can see this quite clearly when we look at the ways in which he analyses the concept of knowledge, which leads him to be highly critical of the approach of the falasifah. They suggest that the mind, and especially the intellect, is really just a means for the acquisition of knowledge. We can progressively purify our mind and gradually acquire more and more knowledge, eventually leading to contact with the active intellect, which represents the highest level of knowledge which the falasifah think can be realized.

Ibn Sab'ïn is contemptuous of this theory. He bases his argument upon the hadfth "The first thing that God created was the intellect, and God then told it to approach, which it did, and then he told it to withdraw, which it also did". What he takes this to show is that the intellect is nothing more than a divine creation, and so should have no problems in actually uniting and knowing that which created it. There is no need to

think of knowledge as consisting of the piecemeal process which the falã²©fah describe which may result in a gradual progress towards, but never actually to, God. Since we are divine creations, it is natural to expect that it would be possible for us to understand the deity, albeit obviously not in an unrestricted manner. In the Qur'an it says that God has taught Adam all names (2: 29) and has sent him to earth as a viceregent, in possession of information about the world and about God's intentions with respect to it. Clearly, then, we are in possession of divine properties, and if we wish to come closer to God, we need to engage in the process of trying to understand the secret which he has given us.

[Professor Taftazani died before he could finish his chapter, and it has been completed by Oliver Leaman.]

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CHAPTER 25

Ibn Khaldūn

Abderrahmane Lakhsassi

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Life and Work

Life

Abu Zayd Abd al-Rahman ibn Khaldun al-Hadraml[1] was born in Tunis in 732/1332 and died in Cairo in 808/1406 after having, five years earlier, met Timur (Tamerlane) outside the walls of Damascus. A contemporary of the Merinids in Morocco, the Banu Abd al-Wadid in the central Maghreb (Algeria), the Hafsids in Ifriqiya (Tunisia), the Nasirids in Granada and the Mamluks in Egypt, he was acquainted with all these regimes and lived in their respective courts. His different jobs within the sphere of these political powers gave him a valuable asset: they allowed him to experience the political game in the Muslim West and have direct contact with the tribal world in north-western Africa. From these two sets of experiences he drew theoretical consequences of tremendous importance broadly outlined in his Muqaddimah ("Prolegomena"). His whole life can be broadly divided into

two main phases: the period in the Muslim West and the Egyptian phase. Two predominant events affected his life during the first period: the Black Death (748—9/1348—9) which had taken most of his teachers and particularly his own parents; and the assassination of his friend and competitor Lisan al-Dln ibn al-Khatlb in 774/1374.

The young Ibn Khaldun was educated in a milieu strongly influenced by traditional culture. His grandfather was a minister at the Hafsid court in Tunis, and his father, without being a scholar, understood the times. Although he studied with his parents, his real intellectual education started with scholars brought to his birthplace from Fez and Tlemcen by the Merinid Sultan Abu 'Inan. Later on, in 755/1354, he joined the Sultan's court in Morocco as a member of his council of scholars ('ulama)
and ended up by being appointed one of his secretaries. There he spent eight years between serving the Sultan and learning from various scholars – mostly from Qarawiyln, Granada and Tlemcen – attracted by the Merinid court. The young and ambitious Ibn Khaldun did not miss the opportunity of taking advantage in Fez of the rich galaxy of 'ulama considered at the time to be among the most prestigious ones in the Muslim West. Three years earlier, he already occupied the post of chamberlain (hdjib) in Bougie (Algeria). Thus started Ibn Khaldun's diplomatic and political adventures in the Muslim West. If, in terms of his scholarly education, his stay in the Merinid court had been so crucial in acquiring a solid intellectual basis in juridico-religious, historical, literary and philosophical sciences, the following two years in Granada could be considered as ending his intellectual formation.

In 764/1362, Ibn Khaldun left for the first time for his ancestors' country, Muslim Spain. There he became the ambassador of the Sultan of Granada, Muhammad V, to Pedro the Cruel, king of Castile. During his sojourn in the Merinid capital, he was acquainted with Muhammad V as well as with his distinguished vizier, Ibn al-Khatlb. Two years later, however, he left for Bougie after feeling that his two friends no longer had warm feelings for him.

The following seven years (766/1365-774/1372) were spent between Bougie, Biskra and Tlemcen, before he returned to Fez for a second sojourn of only two years. Ibn Khaldun's period in the central Maghreb is probably the most unstable in terms of his political career and his experience with rulers and political adventurers. If this experience was for him the worst politically, it was not necessarily so in terms of his intellectual development. What he gained from these seven years is rather a direct knowledge of the tribal milieu. As a hdjib in Bougie he was charged with collecting taxes by whatever means from the tribes.

Initially, it was after his diplomatic failure in the Central Maghreb that Ibn Khaldun decided first to go to Morocco and then to Andalusia, only to find himself in the central Maghreb again after three years of absence. During the time preceding his final retreat to north-western Africa, he was once more responsible for the office of chamberlain in the court of Bougie. Concurrently, in 776/1374, Ibn al-Khatlb was strangled in his prison and, one year later, if not less, Ibn Khaldun went on his intellectual retreat.

When the Banu Arif tribe gave him protection and welcomed him in their fort, Qal'at ibn Salamah, south of Bougie

between Tlemcen and Biskra, Ibn Khaldun was forty-five years old. There he started reflecting on history and the Berber states and engaged in writing his Kitdb al-Hbar ("The Book about Events which Constitute a Lesson"), i.e. the Muqaddimah and the history of the Berbers. After four years, from 776/1374 to 780/1378, Ibn Khaldun completed his initial plan. He then
went to Tunis which he had left while still in his early twenties. But even in his home town he did not find the rest he was now longing for. Thus he went on pilgrimage and left for Egypt.[2]

For more than a quarter of a century, Ibn Khaldun was directly involved in the political turmoil the Muslim West was going through in the eighth/fourteenth century. He experienced court intrigues, prison, power and authority with glory and prestige as well as countryside and desert life with different tribes. His flight from his own world to the Arab East became vital. Two important events can be considered to have affected his life in Egypt: the loss near the Alexandrian coast of his family, who came to join him two years after his arrival there, and his encounter with the Tatar ruler in Syria.

Apparently Ibn Khaldun was already known to the Egyptians through his Muqaddimah before he arrived.[3] After being introduced to the sultan al-Zahir Barquq the following year, and before accomplishing his pilgrimage in 789/1387, he was appointed professor in Qamhiyyah Madrasah and Grand Maliki judge in Cairo. But his way of conceiving and settling juridical matters was soon criticized by the Egyptians, and after one year he was replaced in his juridical post. In the newly founded Zahirlyyah school he was then nominated Professor of Maliki jurisprudence.

After his return from Mecca, Ibn Khaldun was appointed Professor of Hadith in Sarghatmash Madrasah, and before meeting Timur he was designated in 791/1389 Shaykh to the Baybar Sufi Institute and relieved of this post in the same year. Once more, he was nominated Maliki judge and dismissed from his job after little more than a year. Between the time of his encounter with the Tatar ruler for negotiations in 803/1401 and his death, he retrieved his position as a Maliki judge four more times and lost it on three occasions.

During his life in Egypt, Ibn Khaldun continued to reflect on the state and was continuously in contact with the Muslim West. After writing for Timur a detailed descriptive report on the north-western dynasties, he took care to inform the Sultan of Fez about the Tatar ruler and his hordes, in a long letter. He even worked for the betterment of political relations between Egypt and the Maghrebi regimes. Besides his lectures – mainly on Hadith and Maliki fiqh – he also continued to study and carry on research. As a matter of fact, Ibn Khaldun never stopped to add to, correct and polish his "exhaustive history of the world" (Q, 1: 7; R, 1: 12) and particularly what came to be seen and known as the Muqaddimah and his autobiography were worked on up to only a few months before his death in 808/1406.

Works

During the Muslim West period of his life, apart from his diplomatic and political jobs, Ibn Khaldun spent his time studying, teaching and writing. Generally speaking, we can say that he incessantly tried to satisfy two basic needs: one for political action and the other for scientific knowledge (Nassar

(1967): 25—6). Whereas he failed to achieve the first goal to his satisfaction, he did succeed in attaining the second – but only relatively late in life, at Qal'at ibn Salamah. Before 776/ 1375, however, he had written many treatises, though of minor importance. The majority of his work then dealt with theologico-philosophical questions.[4]

The first book, Lubab al-muhassal ("The Gist of the Compendium"), was finished under the supervision of his favourite teacher, al-Abili, when Ibn Khaldun was only nineteen years old and still in Tunis. The last one, a commentary on a rajaz poem on the principles of jurisprudence (usul al-fiqh) by Ibn al-Khatib, was done probably in Granada, around 765/1363, when he was already thirty-two. The rest must have been done between these two dates, during his first stay in Fez.

There is still one more work before the Kitdb al-'ibar, that is Shifa' al-sa'il ("The Healing of the Seekers"), written during his second sojourn in Fez around 775/1373 (Perez (1991): 17-20). He did not breathe a word about this text (which is a real contribution to Islamic mysticism) in his autobiography. Both those who are surprised at his silence about these works as well as those who deny his authorship for the same reason often forget that an autobiography is necessarily subjective, and is not a biography. Whereas the latter tries to be objective, the former looks mainly to the self as the author would like others to perceive him.[5] Ibn Khaldun probably wanted to be known only for his work on history, and, for him, nothing more is worth mentioning in his autobiography which, as a matter of fact, is deliberately linked, in the form of an appendix, to the Kitdb al-'ibar.

Be this as it may, in his retreat from the political chaos of the Muslim West, the now cynical and ambitious politician spent nearly four years reflecting and writing. The result, Kitdb al-'ibdr, is a monumental work on medieval world history centred on the Muslim powers and preceded by a long introduction (muqaddimah). This independent book constitutes the first of seven volumes. The six remaining volumes can be seen as forming two significant sets: book two (volumes two to five) deals with universal history up to the author's era, and book three (volumes six and seven) concerns the history of the Western Muslim world.[6]

What can be said about Kitdb al-'ibar is that Ibn Khaldun's initial plan is to write the history of north-western Africa (book three) of which – as he himself says – he has a direct knowledge (R, 1: 65; Q, 1: 52). Later on, during his first and only return to Tunis, and particularly while
in Egypt, he added to his text the history of the Muslim East (book two). No historian of the Maghreb since and particularly of the Berbers can do without his historical contribution.

Philosophy of history and social theory

Even more original is Ibn Khaldun's book one, the Muqaddimah. In this methodological work "he has conceived and formulated a philosophy of history which is undoubtedly the greatest work of its kind that has ever yet been created by any mind in any time or place" (Toynbee (1935): 322). One sometimes wonders if Toynbee's judgment still holds true today. But the fact that remains is that the author of the Muqaddimah explicitly claims to be the founder of a new

science of history with "its own peculiar object – that is, human civilization and social organization. It also has its own peculiar problems – that is, explaining the conditions that attach themselves to the essence of civilization one after the other" (Q, 1: 61; R, 1: 77). Particular attention was given to the interaction between natural and non-physical factors underlining human culture which, in turn, presupposes political and social organization centred on a power-state. In the Muqaddimah he also investigated human phenomena and social institutions which culminate in crafts, sciences and their transmission. The driving force behind the historical process is, in his mind, to be found in 'asabiyyah. This "social group feeling" gives rise to political action leading to the seizure of the state apparatus.

The general structure of Ibn Khaldun's historical theory spinning around that of the state – where religion plays a crucial role – is concisely schematized by Gellner who calls it "the theory of the tribal circulation of elites" as three concentric circles:

In the inner circle, the tribes of government, those tribes connected by kin links or otherwise with the ruling dynasty, exempt from taxation and employed as a kind of taxation-enforcing army against other tribes. The middle circle consisting of those tribes who have taxes extracted from them, and finally the outer circle of those who do not allow taxes to be extracted from them. Urban life generally exists only within the inner two circles, and the towns are protected not by their own effort but by the governmental, central tribes.

(Gellner (1986): 10)

These central tribes, further pictured as sheepdogs, were once wolves of the outer circle absorbed in antagonism and local feuds. But once united under the leadership of a group having an [4]asabiyyah with a religious message 0dawah), they are able to assault the central government. Thus
the death of the state is imminent and a new dynasty takes over. Later on, the wolves, now turning themselves into sheepdogs, move to the middle circle (Gellner (1968): 13). The sheep occupy only the inner space. In Ibn Khaldün's mind, it takes three generations of forty years each for the wolves to become sheepdogs and guard sheep.

These three stages correspond to the "natural" age of the state. Each generation is marked by certain features. The first is characterized by the naturally necessary (darüri and tabVÌ© related to some psychological aspects pertaining to the nomadic life while the second generation is marked by the humanly necessary. Simultaneously, its most positive aspects such as the militant spirit of the nomadic personality are weakened. As to the third generation, it is characterized by conveniences and luxuries (kamâlt) which go with the complete loss of that spirit of cohesion intrinsic to 'asabiyyah. As can be remarked, these respective characteristics of the three generations are in fact the same as those pertaining to the human soul in Greek thought. They are in turn related to its three principles as ascribed to it by Plato and Aristotle: the concupiscent, the irascible and the speculative. Indeed Ibn Khaldün's theory of human organization ('umrdn), revolving around the state, takes the concept of the soul as its core pattern.

Though Ibn Khaldun analyses various natural, social and human factors in predicting the death of the state and human

culture, he does take into account a basic extraterrestrial element. His philosophy of human history and civilization constantly has in the background what he terms mashiyyat Allah (God's plan for the world). God creates conditions for social and historical change. As he put it, even "prophets in their religious propaganda depended on groups and families, though they were the ones who could have been supported by God with anything in existence, if He had wished, but in His wisdom He permitted matters to take their customary course" (Q, 1: 287; R, 1: 324). However, terrestrial and celestial determinisms do not come into conflict for the simple reason that the divine will is always the definitive and inevitable factor (Fakhry (1970): 369). The faqth in Ibn Khaldùn never loses sight of the philosopher of history to whom it can never occur to step outside the predestined decree of Allah.

As to his social theories, the following passage can help us appreciate the vastness of their framework as well as their comprehensiveness.

Civilization may be either desert (Bedouin) civilization as found in outlying regions and mountains, in hamlets (near suitable) pastures in waste regions, and on the fringes of sandy deserts. Or it may be sedentary civilization as found in cities, villages, towns, and small communities that serve the purpose of protection and fortification by means of walls. In all these different conditions,
there are things that affect civilization essentially in as far as it is social organization.

(Q, 1: 67; 7?, 1: 84-5)

In comparison with other living beings, Ibn Khaldun characterizes humankind with certain basic qualities peculiar to it: (1) human efforts in acquiring the means of life; (2) the need for a restraining authority; and (3) the sciences, crafts and arts, i.e. civilization. As can be noticed, these qualities actually correspond to the three basic dimensions (the economic, the political and the cultural) found in any human organization, once more related to the three principles pertaining to the human soul mentioned above. What is unique in Ibn Khaldun's social theory is its large view concerning human society and particularly the interrelationship between these three levels.

Philosophical Ideas and Contribution

Before considering Ibn Khaldun's philosophical ideas in the Muqaddimah, we should first see his contribution to Islamic thought in the two minor works written before that masterpiece. Though he showed in Lubdb al-muhassal ft usul al-din a great mastery of theological as well as philosophical knowledge, he admittedly added to it "little from his own". His personal efforts consisted in summarizing and uprooting all unnecessary elements for its comprehension, adding corresponding answers to its questions by using Nasr al-Dln al-Tusl's ideas and objections. Even al-Razl's original outline is kept untouched (Z: 3).

In Shifa' al-sa'il, however, his achievement is more substantial.[7] Ibn Khaldun's point of departure was an open

public question posed by his Sufi contemporaries in Granada: whether or not it was possible to attain mystical knowledge without the help of a Sufi master leading the novice in the difficult Path. The issue requires a legal opinion (fatwa) but Ibn Khaldun, in addition to his religious opinion on the matter, developed a whole treatise on Islamic mysticism. His main efforts can be seen as being in the line of al-Ghazzall pushed to its ultimate conclusion. Like al-Ghazzall in his often quoted Ihyd' 'ulum al-din, he involves Sufism in theology and distinguishes the science of practical behaviour, considered to be lawful, from that of revelation, believed to be illicit. But unlike the author of Ihya who speaks of the science of batin versus the science of zahir, Ibn Khaldun prefers to talk about fiqh (jurisprudence) in his batini!zahiri distinction, thus absolutely enclosing Sufism within the juridical category. By the same token, he openly opposes al-Ghazzall in separating the domain

of the jurisprudent (faqih) from that of the Sufi. For the author of Shifa al-sail, it is possible for the jurisprudent to possess both the exoteric and the esoteric fiqh (Sh: 13).

Moreover, Ibn Khaldun classifies the three types of mujahadat (spiritual struggles) under the science of practical behaviour. From tasawwuf he excludes the revelation of the so-called modern Sufis which he relates rather to the science of the secrets of letters (Sh: 70). He writes that Sufism is

a particular path different from the general path of the Shari'ah found by the righteous people who followed it for the sake of higher degrees [of satisfaction]. They learned – after having experienced through spiritual taste its realities and discovered by intimate experience its perceptions – how the five legal qualifications apply to this particular path.

(Sh: 95)

His conception of the Sufi Shaykh itself is rather close to that of the theologian being the legal heir of the prophets (Sh: 99 and 102).

There is no question that Ibn Khaldun's view of the Islamic philosophical enterprise is more theological than philosophical. As Fakhry concisely noted, "the fourteenth century may be called the century of Neo-Hanbalism" (p. 359). And Ibn Khaldun, whatever his genius and interesting contribution to modern human thought, falls within this cultural framework. We can even go further and maintain that – apart from his personality – it is probably the fact of standing on such purely theological ground that helped him to avoid the now sterile question that preoccupied medieval philosophers, whether Jewish, Christian or Muslim: how to reconcile faith with reason. Such avoidance led him in opening a hitherto unknown and completely new field in human knowledge and thus in founding the science of 'umran.

In Ibn Khaldun's attack on the philosophical sciences we can discern two basic targets: formal logic and Neoplatonism. As a matter of fact, his classification of the sciences follows two criteria: that of their sources according to which he separates positive (religious) from intellectual (rational) disciplines and that of their raison d'etre according to which he distinguishes instrumental and preparatory sciences from sciences studied for themselves. Formal logic, studied by the "moderns", is criticized for transgressing the second criterion. The first criterion allowed him to assign to each category of sciences a separate realm. On that basis, philosophy, as a rational

discipline, went beyond its domain and claims to surpass the possibilities of reason as a means of cognition. Here can be recalled Ibn Khaldun's conception of human reason, which he compares to a balance meant for gold but sometimes misused for weighing mountains.[8]

The intellect, indeed, is a correct scale. Its indications are completely certain and in no way wrong. However, the intellect should not be used to weigh such matters as the oneness of God, the other world, the truth of prophecy, the real character of the divine attributes, or anything else that lies beyond the level of the intellect. That would mean to desire the impossible. … [The fact that this is impossible] does not prove that the indications of the scale are not true [when it is used for its proper purpose].

(Q, 3: 30; R, 3: 38)

In his chapter entitled "A Refutation of Philosophy and the Corruption of its Students", Ibn Khaldùn selects the Neoplatonic thesis according to which there is a hierarchy of being, from the sensible (particulars) to the supra-sensible culminating in the First Intellect identified with the Necessary One (God) and the idea that the human mind is capable of arriving at knowledge without the aid of revelation. Moreover, to the knower, knowledge produces happiness.

On the one hand, for Ibn Khaldùn all metaphysical reasoning rests upon "second intelligibles". Even the conformity we find between primary intelligibilia (particulars) and the individual existentia (propositions describing them) is not logically necessary but only empirically attested. Referring to Plato against the pseudo-Aristotle of Theologia, he says that

in this realm we can only obtain conjectures.[9] Additionally, in claiming to expose and reveal the divine nature, Neoplatonic theories have pernicious effects on political entities since they can dislocate religion from its proper function which is necessary not only for the state but also for social organization. Indeed, as Gellner (1968: 6) noted, "Islam appears to be a cement of empires, and not an acid corroding them." The social theorist of the eighth/fourteenth century is fully aware of this particular fact and is not ready to accept the tremendous and dangerous consequences of damaging the glue.

On the other hand, philosophers claim that "happiness consists in coming to perceive existentia as they are". Such conjunction (ittisdl) between the knower and the active intellect – reached solely by means of logical arguments – produces felicity, "identical with the promised happiness" (Q, 3: 121, 215, 218; R, 3: 152, 253, 255). For Ibn Khaldùn, this claim wrongly supposes "that anybody who has perception comprises (the whole) of existence in his perceptions". But for him, neither existence, which is too vast for human intellect, nor the promised happiness can be encompassed.

When [pseudo] Aristotle and his colleagues [al-Fàràbï and Ibn Slna] speak about union and perception in this way, they mean the perception of the soul that comes to it from its own essence
and without an intermediary, but such [perception] is attained only by the removal of the veil of sensual perception.

(Q, 3: 217; R, 3: 255)

If we are to summarize Ibn Khaldün's attitude to philosophy in general, we would say that, for him, although this discipline is natural to people and useful to the historian, it is none the less dangerous to faith. Moreover, it is inadequate in achieving its goal which it sees to be the perception of reality per se.

Another point where Ibn Khaldün criticizes Muslim philosophers is their political theories. He dismisses the Ideal City of al-Fà³¡bl as a simple hypothesis not worth discussing.[10] The rational government (siyasah 'aqliyyah) is based on a law consisting of a mixture of the divinely revealed Prophetic Law and of the ordinances of the ruler.

To be sure, this firm opposition to the political philosophy of the falasifah can be expected from such an empiricist who is more interested in political reality as it was and as it is than in what it ought to be ideally or in the future. Theoretically however, the religious government (siyasah sharlyyah) is far more comprehensive than both rational politics and political utopianism (siyasah madaniyyah) "because the lawgiver knows the ultimate interest of the people and is concerned with the salvation of man in the other world" (Q, 2: 127; R-, 2: 138). But the fact that such regimes based on principles derived from the divinely revealed Law were supposed to have gone with the Prophet and his guided caliphs means they were the lost ideals which were as non-existent for him as the Virtuous City of the philosophers. Thus Ibn Khaldün's political philosophy is more concerned with what he calls the second type of rational politics (since the first type had gone with the pre-Islamic Persians) where public interest is secondary to the ruler's concern and is practised by both Muslims and non-Muslims, except that the Muslim regimes

mix it with religious laws "as much as they are able to" (Q, 2: 128; R, 2: 139).

At this stage one may legitimately inquire about Ibn Khaldün's position in Islamic thought in general. If we take for instance the al-Ghazzali/Ibn Rushd controversy on philosophy as our starting point, there is no doubt that Ibn Khaldün sided with the first against the second. For one thing the author of the Muqaddimah did not even mention the fact that Ibn Rushd responded to the author of Tahdfut al-falasifah when he speaks about al-Ghazzall's book (Q, 3: 121; R, 3: 153). Be this as it may, there are some basic common points between al-Ghazzà and Ibn Khaldün worth mentioning. Both accept reason to be a just balance when used within its limits, and logic as a valid instrument of thought. Both reject secondary causality for being incompatible with some Qur'à–©c verses, and dismiss the Neoplatonists' pretensions for being religiously ruinous for humanity and its organization (Fakhry (1970): 365).

Since Ibn Khaldün assigns to reason and revelation respectively a separate and different domain, there would be no possible conflict between the two. Whereas Ibn Rushd, following the Aristotelian line, tried to merge the two means of cognition, Ibn Khaldün did his best to clarify once more the resulting confused situation. His attack on both "modern" dialectical theologians and the extreme Sufis for mixing up their respective disciplines with metaphysical propositions falls within this preoccupation (Q, 3: 122; R, 3: 153).

There is, however, a basic difference between their respective assaults on philosophy. Al-Ghazzà—'s goal is religion itself as an answer to his thirst for certitude iyaqiri), while Ibn

Khaldün's reflection has the state as its centre and his attack on Neoplatonism is intended mainly to protect the function religion holds in society. The fall of religion means for Ibn Khaldün that of the state.

Additionally, Ibn Khaldün is more influenced by Ibn Slna than by Ibn Rushd in the sense of having reacted against the first and almost ignoring the second. But the link between the two is not necessarily always direct. It is often through Fakhr al-Dln al-Rà– who responded to Avicenna's philosophy before him that Ibn Khaldün indirectly espoused many an idea of the latter.[11] On this point, it is worth remarking that his refutation of Ibn Slna's theory of emanation and his rejection of the Avicennan doctrine that God does not know particulars are also al-Razl's (Fakhry (1970): 357). Even the Khaldünic refutation of the Platonic view of knowledge as reminiscence can be traced back to al-RazI.[12] However, if he moves closely in the latter's wake while assaulting Islamic Neoplatonism and particularly Avicennan philosophy, Ibn Khaldün does not fail to criticize the author of Mabahith al-mashriqiyyah ("Oriental Disputations") himself or the "modern" theologians when they amalgamated rational with religious knowledge.

Ibn Khaldün's way of thinking can be characterized as that of orthodox theology which started to take the upper hand in the eighth/fourteenth century, that "century of Neo-Hanbalism". Notwithstanding Ibn Rushd's reaction to al-Ghazzà—'s attack, philosophy lost the final battle in the Islamic milieu to both the dynamic orthodox fiqh and theosophy. What is particular to Ibn Khaldün's way of reasoning within this victorious ultra-orthodoxy is that it tries to extend juridical thought to embrace domains other than the traditional space

hitherto reserved for Islamic jurisprudence. This is what we have seen him already doing in Shifa al- sail. In the Muqaddimah he warns students of the harmful and ruinous aspects of philosophy, putting as a prerequisite condition for its study the mastery of religious sciences and particularly tafslr (Qur anic exegesis) and fiqh (jurisprudence) (Q, 3: 220; R, 3: 257). Furthermore, in the last chapter of the Muqaddimah, like al-Ghazzà before him, he clearly

evaluates the Islamic sciences and their classification from a purely theological angle, leaving aside – surprisingly enough – his theory of knowledge developed at the beginning of his masterpiece.[13]

One should admit by now that a man of genius such as Ibn Khaldùn can easily combine diverse and "contradictory" trends in such a complex and multifarious civilization as the Islamic one. He was amazingly conscious of the crucial period of his culture which was going through a "general change of conditions … as if the entire creation had changed and the whole world been altered" (Q, 1: 52; R, 1: 65). In that sense all the conflicting aspects of the era were reflected in him. The man occupies a critical point in the history of Muslim thinking which ended a big phase and started another and totally new one – lasting until the thirteenth/nineteenth century if not until today. In terms of philosophical history we can say that Ibn Rushd majestically closed the first period and Ibn Khaldùn had the opportunity to outdistance it and could contemplate that phase with ease and from a panoramic position. At the same time, from his retreat in Qal'at Ibn Salamah, he foretold future trends with equal lucidity.

NOTES

1 Before Arab nationalism took solid roots in northern Africa in the late 1930s, Egyptian scholars such as Taha Hussein (Etude analytique et critique de la philosophie sociale d'Ibn Khaldoun (Paris, 1917)) and Abdallah Tnàn (Ibn Khaldün, hayâtuhu waturâthuru al-fikrï (Cairo, 1353), translated into English as Ibn Khaldün, His Life and Works (New Delhi, 1984)) doubted Ibn Khaldun's Arab descent. They both think that, at a certain point, Ibn Khaldùn himself suspects the authenticity of his own genealogical tree based on Ibn Hazm's (d. 457/1065) work. "This doubt is strengthened by our knowledge of the circumstances of antagonism and rivalry between the Arabs and the Berbers in Andalusia" (Tnàn (1984): 3—4). Indeed, we are told that Ibn Hazm's family suffered a great deal from the Berbers' rebellion against the Umayyads in 403/1013 and was himself "expelled from Cordova and his property was confiscated" (Fakhry (1970): 348). However, in 1943, one of the ideologues of Arab nationalism, Sati' al-Husrl, considered the issue so crucial that he tried to refute, point by point, these claims of Ibn Khaldün's father's Berber descent; see Dirdsdt 'an muqaddimat ibn Khaldün (Cairo and Beirut, 3rd ed., 1967): 552—60.

2 Ibn Khaldün's life in Egypt is well documented. Here we have many Egyptian biographers, students and contemporaries to check the discourse of his autobiography. See W. J. Fischel's two studies, "Ibn Khaldün's Activities in Mamluk Egypt (1382—1406)", in Semitic and Oriental Studies Presented to William Popper (Berkeley and Los

Angeles, 1951): 103—24, and Ibn Khaldün and Tamerlane (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1952). But his proper work like Shift and particularly the Muqaddimah is much more helpful in representing his way of thinking.

3 In a letter addressed to Ibn Khaldun in 769/1368, Ibn al-Khatlb says that he has sent his book al-Ihatah fî akhbâr Gharnatah ("History of Granada") – where a biography of Ibn Khaldï¿½ given – to Egypt. See his autobiography (T) translated into French by A. Cheddadi as Le Voyage d'occident et d'orient (Paris, 1980): 107. This explains his post as a lecturer in al-Azhar immediately after his arrival.

4 These are: (1) Lubdb al-muhassal, (2) a commentary on Burdah, (3) commentaries on Ibn Rushd, (4) a summary book on logic, (5) a book on logic and arithmetic, and (6) a commentary on a rajaz poem on jurisprudence by Ibn al-Khatïb. On these works listed by Ibn al-Khatïb (History of Granada, quoted by al-Maqqari, Nafh al-Tib (Cairo, 1886—7), 4: 11), we have only the first. We also ignore the question of which of Ibn Rushd's books, theological or philosophical, Ibn Khaldï¿½mmented on. For Ibn al-Khatib's translated text see Rosenthal's Introduction to the Muqaddimah in R, 1: xliv and also xxx, note 3.

5 See T. Kroeber (Isbi, le testament du dernier indien sauvage (Paris, 1968): 453) quoted by J. Poirier, S. Clapier-Valladon and P. Raybaut, Les Rè¢©ts de vie (Paris, 1983): 116.

6 In his own foreword to the Muqaddimah, Ibn Khaldï¿½ites: "I divided the work into an introduction and three books: the Introduction deals with the great merit of historiography, (offers) an appreciation of its various methods, and cites

errors of the historians. The First Book deals with civilization and its essential characteristics, mainly, royal authority, government, gainful occupations, ways of making a living, crafts and sciences, as well as with the causes and thereof. The Second Book deals with the history, races and dynasties of the Arabs, from the beginning of creation down to this time. This will include references to such famous nations and dynasties contemporaneous with them, as the Nabataeans, the Syrians, the Persians, the Israelites, the Copts, the Greeks, the Byzantines and the Turks. The Third Book deals with the history of the Berbers and of the Zanatah who are part of them; with their origins and races; and, in particular, with the royal authority and dynasties in the Maghreb" (Q, 1: 6; R, 1: 11-12).

7 After a long introduction composed of four preliminary discussions on the human soul, its natural inclination to mystical knowledge, the Islamic aspects of such legitimate aspirations and the happiness derived from Sufi revelation, Ibn Khaldï¿½stinguishes three stages in the Sufi path. Each stage is a spiritual struggle called a mujdhadah (al-taqwd, al-istiqdmah and al-kashf). From this tripartite division, his answer to the initial question is clear: in order to attain the first two stages there is no need for a Shaykh. Books on Sufism, such as al- Ghazzall's, al-Muhâsibï's and al-Qushayri's, are enough. As to the last stage, a Shaykh is necessary.

8 As rightly remarked by Nassar (p. 90 n. 1) and others, Ibn Khaldï¿½ike the majority of his predecessors, does not always distinguish between reason, intellect and thought.

9 As to his attitude towards physics, Ibn Khaldï¿½es his criteria of conformity (mutabaqah) existing between primary (but not secondary) intelligibilia, defined as abstractions derived from the sensibilia (Q, 3: 211; R, 3: 247) and the individual existentia and concedes to philosophers their claims in this respect. He
admits that "judgment becomes unequivocal, comparable to judgment in the case of sensibilia, since the primary intelligibilia are more likely to agree with the outside world, because they conform perfectly (by definition, to the individual manifestations of the existentia)" (Q, 3: 214; R, 3: 251).

10 The fact that he did not include politics among the practical sciences is a much more complicated issue. In fact history is not included either in his classification of the sciences. On this last point see A. Lakhsassi, "Ibn Khaldün and the Classification of the Sciencefs]", The Maghreb Review, 4(1) (1979): 21—5.

11 Ibn Khaldün knew of al-Razi not only al-Muhassal but also al-Mahsül – of which he says that it is an abridgement of four books on kaldm (Q, 3: 22; R, 3: 28-9) – and particularly al-Mabahith al-mashriqiyyah (Q, 3: 122; R> 3: 153). Al-Razl s encyclopedic knowledge is mastered by Ibn Khaldün under his highly praised teacher, al-Abill with whom he has studied logic, principles of jurisprudence and kaldm (mantiq wa-as lay n). In his introduction to Lubab al-muhassal, he calls him "Fakhr al-dunya wa 'I-din, hujjat al-islam wa 7- m usli min

12 See A. Lakhsassi, The Epistemo logical Foundations of the Sciences in Ibn Khaldüns Muqaddimah, unpublished thesis, University of Manchester, 1982: 49—53.

13 This point has been fully developed in my thesis, op. cit.

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BKitäb al-ibär wa-dïwân al-mubtada' wa'l-khabar ft ayyäm al-larab wal'ajam wa'l-barbar wa-man 'äsarahum min dhawï al-sultän al-akbar, ed. Nasr al-Hürlnl, 7 vols (Cairo, 1867).

LLubäb al-muhassal ft usül al-dïn, ed. L. Rubio (Tetouan, 1952).

QMuqaddimat Ibn Khaldün (Les Prolèmçs d'Ebn Khaldoun), ed. E. M. Quatremç, 3 vols (Paris, 1858).

RThe Muqaddimah, trans. F. Rosenthal, 3 vols (Princeton, 1958, 2nd ed., 1967).

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IV

Philosophy and the mystical tradition

CHAPTER 26

Introduction to the mystical tradition

Seyyed Hossein Nasr

❧✦❧

In order to speak of the mystical tradition of Islam, it is first of all necessary to understand the meaning of mysticism in the Islamic context, especially considering the nebulous nature of the meaning of this term in English today. We can speak of Islamic mysticism only if we understand by this term its original meaning as that which deals with the Divine Mysteries. One must recall that silence or the closing of one's lips is the root meaning of the Greek verb muo from which the word mysterion and mysticism derive. As such, one might relate it in the Islamic context to such terms as asrar (mysteries) or bat in (the inward or esoteric), remembering that the Sufis refer often to themselves as the people who are the guardians of the Divine Mysteries or asrar. In the Islamic context mysticism means the esoteric dimension of Islam identified for the most part with Sufism but also with Shi'ite esoterism, both Twelve-Imam and Isma'111.[1]

Moreover, Islamic mysticism understood in this sense is primarily a path of knowledge (al-ma'rifah, 'irfdn) to which

the element of love is attached in accordance with the structure of the Islamic revelation, but it is very rarely the sentimental and individualistic mysticism found in many circles in the Christian climate since the Renaissance. That is precisely why Islamic mysticism has had a close rapport with Islamic philosophy over the ages; and one might say that despite the criticism made by many Sufis against Islamic philosophers, particularly from the sixth/twelfth to the ninth/ fifteenth centuries, the Islamic philosophers, especially those of the later period, belong to the same spiritual family as the Sufis, both being concerned with the attainment of ultimate knowledge.[2] It did not take too long before the intellect (al-'aql) of the Islamic philosophers became identified with the rüh al-qudus, the Holy Spirit,
and the angels of the religious universe with the intelligences of the philosophers. Nor must one forget that some Sufis were given the title of Ibn Aflâtün, literally the son of Plato.

What is most essential to emphasize is that Islamic esoterism and especially Sufism have remained alive and vibrant over the centuries, providing practical means for the realization of the Real and the activation of the potentialities of the noetic faculty within human beings. They have continued to provide the possibility for the attainment of a realized knowledge, a sapience or gnosis, which the Islamic philosophers could hardly ignore. In fact, in the same way that from the Scientific Revolution onwards Western philosophy became more and more the handmaid of a science based on the empirical data drawn from the outward senses, Islamic philosophy became wedded even more closely to the fruits of that other way of knowing which is based on the inner senses and the opening of the "eye of the heart" ('ayn al-qalb in Arabic and chishm-i

dil in Persian) which can "see" the invisible world hidden to the outward eye.

The first notable Islamic philosopher in whom one observes direct interest in Sufism is al-Fàràbl, who was in fact a practising Sufi. The influence of Sufism on his writings is, however, not evident except in the Fusüs al-hikmah ("Bezels of Wisdom"), which some have attributed to Ibn Sïnà. The presence of Sufism is to be seen mostly in the personal life of al-Fâràbï, which needless to say must have influenced his thought, and also in his musical compositions. Few realize that some of these compositions are sung and played in Sufi orders to this day in both Turkey and the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent.

The rapport with Sufism is more evident in al-Fârâbï's chief successor in the Peripatetic (mashshat) school, Ibn Slna. Although the account of his meeting with Abü Said Abi'l-Khayr, the celebrated Sufi of Khurasan, is considered by most contemporary scholars to be apocryphal, there is little doubt that Ibn Slna was greatly interested in Sufism,[3] and his "Oriental philosophy" (al-hikmat al-mashriqiyyah) is impregnated with mystical ideas.[4] Moreover, in the ninth book (namat) of his last masterpiece, al-Ishdrât waÌ–tanbïhât ("Directives and Remarks"), entitled Fï maqâmdt al-'ârifïn ("Concerning the Stations of the Gnostics") he provided the most powerful defence made of Sufism by any of the Islamic philosophers. There he admits openly the attainment by gnostics or intellectually inclined Sufis of knowledge of the spiritual world and the possibility of discovering its hidden mysteries.[5] This chapter of Ibn Sïna s enduring work which has been taught for the past millennium in Persia and elsewhere is not only a testament of the influence of Sufism

upon Islamic philosophy but has been itself influential in furthering this influence.

In the same period as the advent of early Peripatetic philosophy and the rise of such men as al-Fàràbl and Ibn Slna, one observes the rise of
Isma ill philosophy, which reached its peak in the fourth/tenth and fifth/eleventh centuries with such figures as Hamid al-Dln al-Kirmanl and Nasir-i Khusraw. This whole school identifies philosophy with the esoteric dimension of Islam.[6] Such basic doctrines of Isma ill philosophy or theosophy as hermeneutic interpretation (ta'wtl), the rapport between the imam and the human intellect, initiation, cycles of prophecy and imamology as well as cosmogony and anthropology bear witness to its close rapport with a certain dimension of Islamic esoterism. Moreover, such Greco-Alexandrian mystical teachings as those of the Pythagoreans and Hermeticists found an echo in Isma ill philosophy, as we see in the Rasail ("Epistles") of the Ikhwan al-Safa (Brethren of Purity) with their great emphasis upon the mystical significance of numbers.

While Peripatetic philosophy was being criticized by both Ash'arite theologians and Sufis such as al-Ghazzall and Sana I in the Eastern lands of Islam, the flourishing of Islamic philosophy in the Western lands of Islam was again marked by its close affiliation with Sufism. In fact the whole phenomenon of Islamic philosophy in Spain was to bear the early imprint of Sufism upon philosophical thought given by Ibn Masarrah. Nearly all the notable Islamic philosophers of Spain, with the exception of Ibn Rushd (Averroes), had a strong mystical dimension which is clearly reflected in their writings. One needs only to recall the mystical love of Ibn Hazm, the mathematical mysticism of Ibn al-Sld of Badajoz,

the doctrine of intellectual contemplation of Ibn Bajjah and the role of the Active Intellect in Ibn Tufayl to confirm this assertion. But it is most of all in the last of the great Andalusian philosophers, Ibn Sab'ln, that one can observe the clearest manifestation of the rapport between Sufism and philosophy. At once a Sufi and philosopher, Ibn Sab'ln created one of the major syntheses between Sufi doctrine and philosophy in the history of Islamic thought.

In the sixth/twelfth century it was back in the Eastern lands of Islam and especially Persia that the most significant and influential synthesis of mysticism and philosophy was to take place in the hands of Shihab al-Dln Suhrawardl, the founder of the School of Illumination (al-ishraq). A Sufi in his youth who also mastered the philosophy of Ibn Slna, Suhrawardl created a new philosophical perspective which is based on knowledge through illumination and the wedding between the training of the rational mind and the purification of one's inner being. Suhrawardl was himself fully aware of the centrality of this synthesis between rational knowledge and mystical experience and included the Sufis along with the Peripatetic philosophers as constituting the categories and stages leading to that of the "theosopher" (hakim muta'allih) who is the ideal of ishraql doctrine.[7] Through Suhrawardl, Islamic philosophy became inextricably bound to spiritual realization and inner purification associated with the mystical life during nearly all later periods of Islamic
history. Subsequent ishrdqï philosophers such as his major commentators Muhammad Shahrazùrï and Qutb al-Dln Shlrâzï as well as major later representatives of his doctrines such as Ibn Turkah Isfahânl were at once philosophers and mystics.

The close nexus between philosophy and mysticism characterizes in fact nearly all later Islamic philosophy. The reviver of Ibn Sïnâ's Peripatetic philosophy in the seventh/thirteenth century, Naslr al-Dïn al-TüsI, who was at the same time one of the great mathematicians and astronomers of history, also wrote Awsdf al-ashrdf ("Descriptions of the Nobles") on Sufi virtues. His contemporary Afdal al-Dn shnl, at once philosopher and poet, was a Sufi whose tomb is visited by pilgrims to this day as that of a saint, and Jalâl al-Dln Dawânï, at once philosopher and theologian, was also seriously interested in ishrâqï and esoteric doctrines and even commented upon Suhrawardl.

In the Safavid period with the establishment of the School of Isfahan in the tenth/sixteenth century, the relation between philosophy and mysticism came to be taken nearly for granted by most philosophers and the experience of the Real through practice and intellection became almost inseparable from the philosophical discussion of the Real; hence the importance in the Islamic metaphysics of this period of the relation between haqïqat al-wujüd (the reality of being) and mafħüm al-wujüd (the concept of being).[8] The founder of the School of Isfahan, Mir Dàmàd, one of the most rigorously rational philosophers, also wrote mystical poetry under the pen-name Ishraq and composed a treatise on ecstatic mystical experience.[9]

The major figure of this school, Mullâ Sadrâ, underwent a long period of inner purification along with formal learning and considered illumination and revelation as vital sources of knowledge along with ratiocination. The new intellectual perspective established by him and called "the transcendent theosophy" (al-hikmat al-mutadliyah) is based on the three foundations of revelation, inner illumination and

ratiocination, and many of the most basic doctrines mentioned in his works are considered by him to have been unveiled to him by God. Therefore, he refers to them by such terms as hikmah arshiyyah (wisdom descended from the Divine Throne).[10] Some of the works of Mullâ Sadrâ, such as al-Shawahid al-rubübiyyah ("Divine Witness"), have a strong 'irfdnï or gnostic colour, and the author was a strong defender of the great Sufis of old such as Ibn 'Arab! whom he quoted extensively in his magnum opus, al-Asfar al- arba'ah ("The Four Journeys"). Mullâ Sadrâ also wrote a biographical work, the Si asl ("The Three Principles"), and Kasr al-asndm al-jdhiliyyah ("The Breaking of the Idols of the Age of Ignorance") in which, while attacking some of the deviant, popular forms of Sufism, he defends strongly the authentic Sufis and their doctrines. In fact Sadrian philosophy or theosophy cannot be understood without the immense influence of
Ibn Arabian doctrines and other Sufi teachings including those of al-Ghazzâli upon Mullâ Sadrâ.

Islamic philosophy was to continue this close relationship to mysticism especially as far as later proponents of Mullâ Sadrâ's school were concerned. His immediate students, Abd al-Razzâq Lâhljl and Mullâ Muhsin Fayd Kâshânï, distanced themselves somewhat from Mullâ Sadrâ because of the political climate of the day and devoted themselves mostly to the religious sciences and theology. But they did write some works inspired by their teacher and both composed mystical poetry. Kâshânï also wrote a number of important mystical prose treatises such as Kalimat- i maknünah ("The Hidden Words"). Their student Qâdï Sa'ld Qummï also composed important mystical treatises and must be considered a notable mystical philosopher.[11] Likewise, the Qajar philosophers who

revived Mullâ Sadra s teachings were at the same time mystics and philosophers, notable among them being Hâjjï Mullâ Hâdï Sabziwârï, who composed, in addition to logical and philosophical texts, mystical ones in both prose and poetry. He must in fact be called a philosopher-saint, being considered by his contemporaries and later generations as at once a towering philosophical figure and a mystic saint.[12]

This trend was to continue into the fourteen th/twentieth century. Many of the most emiment Islamic philosophers of Persia of the past century such as Mlrzâ Mahdï Ashtiyânl, Sayyid Muhammad Kâzim Assâr, Allâmah Tabâtabâ'l and Mahdï Ilâhï Qumsha'ï were at once philosophers and mystics, many following rigorously a spiritual path. There are thus witnesses in this period of an age-old rapport and later wedding between philosophy and mysticism going back to Ibn Sïnâ, Suhrawardl and Mullâ Sadrâ.

Nor is this situation confined to Persia. In India where Islamic philosophy began to flourish, especially during the Mogul period, the same close relation between mysticism and philosophy is to be observed among many of the major figures, chief among them Shah Walïullâh of Delhi, perhaps the greatest Islamic thinker of the subcontinent. In reading his works, it is difficult to decide whether he is a theologian, philosopher or Sufi. The truth is that he was all three at once, a thinker who created yet another synthesis of these disciplines. One can likewise observe figures of this type in the Ottoman Empire and also in the Arab world in modern times. One of the most important religious figures of Egypt during the fourteenth/twentieth century, Abd al-Hallm Muhmüd, who was also Shaykh al-Azhar, was at once a Sufi

and an Islamic philosopher and wrote important works on both subjects.

In modern times the influence of Western thought has drawn many people in the Islamic world away from both Sufism and traditional Islamic philosophy. But to the extent that this philosophy, grounded in a twelve- hundred-year-old tradition, survives, the nexus between mysticism and
philosophical thought continues. In any case the nature of Islamic philosophy as it has developed over the century cannot be fully understood without grasping the significance of that reality which can be called Islamic mysticism and its influence upon many of the leading figures of Islamic philosophy from al-Fâràbï and Ibn Slna to those of the contemporary period.

NOTES

1 See M. Lings, What is Sufism? (Cambridge, 1993); T. Burckhardt, An Introduction to Sufism, trans. D. M. Matheson (Wellingborough, 1990); see also S. H. Nasr, Ideals and Realities of Islam (London, 1994).

2 On the relation between Sufism and Islamic philosophy in the context of Persian culture, see S. H. Nasr, "The Relation between Sufism and Philosophy in Persian Culture" (trans. H. Dabashi), in S. H. Nasr, The Islamic Intellectual Tradition in Persia, ed. M. Aminrazavi (London, 1995).

3 See also the important study of F. Schuon, Sufism – Veil and Quintessence, trans. W. Stoddart (Bloomington, 1981), chapter 5, "Tracing the Notion of Philosophy" : 115-28.

See Nasr, An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines (Albany, 1993): 19Iff.; and B. Forouzanfar, "Abü All Slna wa tasawwuf", in Dh. Safâ (è¢®), Le Livre du millè–¡ire dAvicenne, 2 (Tehran, 1953): 188ff.

4 See H. Corbin, Avicenna and the Visionary Recital, trans. W. Trask (Irving, 1980).

5 See Ibn Slnâ, al-Ishdrdt wa'1-tanbïhdt, ed. Mahmud Shahàbï (Tehran, 1960): 151. The last chapters of this work dedicated to Sufism and related subjects have been translated into English by Shams Inati and are to appear soon. See also the French translation of this work by A.-M. Goichon, Le Livre des directives et remarques (Paris, 1951): 467ff.; and A. F. von Mehren, Traitè±mystiques … dAvicenne (Leiden, 1889-91).

6 The works of Corbin deal extensively with this subject. See especially his L'Homme et son ange (Paris, 1983); Corbin (with S. H. Nasr and O. Yahya), A History of Islamic Philosophy, trans. L. Sherrard (London, 1993); also his Cyclic Time and Isma 'Hi Gnosis (London, 1983).

7 See "Suhrawardl", in Nasr, The Islamic Intellectual Tradition in Persia-, Nasr, Three Muslim Sages (Delmar, 1975), chapter 2: 52ff.; H. Corbin, En Islam iranien, 2 (Paris, 1971); I. R. Netton, "The Neoplatonic Substrate of Suhra-wardï's Philosophy of Illumination: Falsafa as Tasawwuf in

L. Lewisohn (ed.), The Legacy of Mediaeval Persian Sufism (London, 1992): 247—60.

8 See T. Izutsu, The Concept and Reality of Existence (Tokyo, 1971).

9 See H. Corbin, "Confession extatique de Mir Dàmàd", in his En Islam iranien, 4 (Paris, 1972): 9ff.

10 See J. Morris (trans.), Mulld Sadra's Wisdom of the Throne (Princeton, 1981); and Nasr, Sadr al-Dïn Shïrdzî and His Transcendent Theosophy (Tehran, 1977), especially chapters 4 and 5: 69ff.

11 On these figures see H. Corbin, La Philosophie iranienne islamique aux XVII et XVIII siç¢es (Paris, 1981): 96-115; 179-87; and 245—91. Corbin has also
devoted a major separate study to Qummi's work on the symbolism of the Ka'bah. See his Temple and Contemplation, trans. P. Sherrard (London, 1986): 183-262.

12 See "Sabziwârï", in Nasr, The Islamic Intellectual Tradition in Persia; and M. Mohaghegh and T. Izutsu (trans.), The Metaphysics ofSabzavarï (Delmar, 1977).

CHAPTER 27

'Ayn al-Quḍāt Hamadānī ana the intellectual climate of his times

Hamid Dabashi

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At the commencement of his recuperative reading of Thomas Aquinas' Aesthetics, Umberto Eco took strong exception to Benedetto Croce's hasty dismissal of Aquinas as a serious philosopher and aesthetician, accusing the medieval theologian "not [of] false, but extremely general" ideas. Croce had decreed that "The essential thing is that the problems of aesthetics were not the object of any genuine interest, either to the Middle Ages in general, or to St. Thomas in particular." Opposing this judgment, Eco produced a sustained, highly relevant and brilliantly enabling reading of Aquinas' theory of aesthetics based on the preliminary assumption that "It is true that these theories were entangled in their theology as well as in their philosophy, but to disentangle them all one has to do is to read their theology in a philosophical light. This way of reading them is quite in keeping with their own intentions."[1] Suspending Eco's own unexamined, logocentric, privileging of "philosophy" for a moment, much of what he says about

the disentangling of medieval theories from their surrounding theology remains thoroughly valid, and not just for Christian theology. But whereas, in his innately Christian hermeneutics, Eco can visualize only "philosophy" in binary opposition with "theology", in the intellectual context to the east of the Mediterranean basin a much richer and intellectually more complex picture exists which requires an even more careful distinguishing of theories expounded by a medieval Persian from their fabric of historical presence. At a time by one century younger than that of Aquinas, Ayn al-Qudat HamadanI s theoretical concerns, his theory of aesthetics included, were delivered in a narrative context much richer than a mere dichotomy between "theology" and "philosophy". But Eco's corrective should remain constant in any attempt to disentangle 'Ayn al-Qudat's theoretical concerns from an innately theocentric narrative.

In this exposition of Ayn al-Qudat's theories on a range of issues, I shall first give an account of the political and intellectual forces operative in his time and then place him and his modes of writing in that context. The disentangling will then fall into place.

Life and Times

Ayn al-Qudat HamadanI was one of the most remarkable figures in Islamic intellectual history whose life and thought has been seen mostly only within the "mystical" tradition while less attention has been paid to him as part of the Islamic philosophic tradition.[2] He was born in 492/1098 in the city of Hamadan, then under the rule of the Seljuq Prince Mahmud,

and was executed in the same city at the prime age of thirty-three in the year 525/1131. Scores of treatises and "letters" have been attributed to him, not all of which are from his pen. Scores of other texts, of which we have no trace, are reported to have been written by Ayn al-Qudat.

Not much is known about Ayn al-Qudat's life and circumstances in Hamadan.[3] In comparison to a number of scattered references in sources close to him, from which a schematic biography may be sketched out, there is an avalanche of hagiographical sources which, feeding on each other, are of no biographical use but of considerable significance in charting out the narrative and institutional appropriations of Ayn al- Qudat into the "Persian mystical tradition".[4] By far the most reliable sources of information about Ayn al-Qudat are his own writings. In chronological order, Ayn al-Qudat's writings which with a degree of certainty can be safely attributed to him are Zubdah al-haqaiq (516/1122), Maktubat (between 517/1123 and 525/1131), Tamhtdat (521/1127) and Shakwa' al-ghanb (525/1131). Four other extant treatises have been attributed to Ayn al-Qudat, but almost certainly are not his: Sharh-i kalamat-i Baba Tahir, Risdlah-yi yazdan-shinakht, Ghayah al-imkan fi dirayah al-makdn and Risdlah-yi lawayih.

Ayn al-Qudat was born during a tumultuous and exciting period in Iranian social and intellectual history. The year of his birth, 492/1098, coincides with the height of the Seljuq rule (429/1038—590/1194) over much of the Iranian territory and beyond. The Seljuqs controlled much of the eastern Islamic Empire, from Transoxania to Mesopotamia. Originally from the Qin'iq clan of Oghuz Turkish people, the Seljuqs came into the Iranian plateau as slaves and

mercenaries from the steppes north of the Caspian and Aral Seas. Their first principal warlord, Toghril I (ruled 429/1038—455/1063), took a considerable chunk of Ghaznavid (ruled 366/977—582/1186) territory, from Khwarazm to Azarbaijan and Baghdad, and established the initial territory of the Seljuq Empire.[5] At the birth of Ayn al-Qudat in 492/1098, the Seljuq Empire was more than half a century old. Two major warlords who before and in the wake of Ayn al- Qudat's birth would expand the territories of the Seljuqs from the Mediterranean to Transoxania were Malikshah I (ruled465/1072— 485/1092) and Sanjar (ruled 511/1118-552/1157). The warlord under whose immediate reign Ayn al-Qudat was born was Rukn al-Dln Barkiyaruq (ruled 487/1094-498/1105) who spent much of his reign fighting against his brother Muhammad I (ruled 498/1105—511/1118). But Ayn al-Qudat's early youth and education in Hamadan was under the direct rule of Mughlth al-Dln Mahmud II (ruled 511/1118—525/1131) who succeeded his father Muhammad I with a claim over the entire Seljuq Empire, and yet his aspirations were thwarted by his uncle Sanjar who as the most senior member of the Seljuq clan, with a long history of ruling over the easternmost part of the empire, punished Mahmud and sat supremely at the throne of the Seljuq Empire for a long time.[6]

Despite their massive and almost unbridled power, these Seljuq warlords were not the sole custodians of power in the realm. At least two other, court-affiliated, centres of power ought to be identified if we are to have a full grasp of the political circumstances under which Ayn al-Qudat was born and raised. The Persian vizierate, in a long tradition of institutional authority that preceded and succeeded the

Seljuqs, was a principal source of power, rivalled very closely by what may be termed Turkish "Khatunate", or the unending power of Seljuq queens and princesses. The principal vizier who served the Seljuqs with remarkable statesmanship was the legendary Nizam al-Mulk (d. 485/1092), perhaps the most brilliant political mind of medieval Persia. Nizam al-Mulk was instrumental in organizing the structural foundation, the operative bureaucracy, as well as the political ideology of the Seljuqs. He was equally instrumental in keeping the chief menace of the Seljuq realm, the Ismalll movement, at bay. Nizam al-Mulk served Alp-Arsalan (ruled 455/1063—465/1072) and his son Malikshah I (ruled 465/1072— 485/1092) with remarkable tenacity. Among his principal achievements, at the service of the Seljuqs' political/religious legitimacy, was the establishment of the multi-campus Nizamiyyah colleges, in the Baghdad campus at which Abu Hamid al-Ghazzall (d. 505/1111) taught, whose writings Ayn al-Qudat read voraciously and whose younger brother Ahmad al-Ghazzall (d. 520/1126) he befriended half-way through his (i.e., Ayn al-Qudat's) tragically short life.

Before his brutal murder at the hand of Abu Tahir, an Ismaill assassin, Khwajah Nizam al-Mulk was outwitted and outmanoeuvred by Malikshah's shrewd and ambitious Queen Tarkan Khatun, the daughter of Tamqhaj Khan ibn Bughra Khan. This Tarkan Khatun was by far
the best and most distinguished representative of the institution of "Khatunate" (and I submit that the power of these queens was crucial and considerable enough to merit the coinage of a term for them). As the end of Malikshah's life and reign was in sight, and having lost two of her sons as heir-apparent to her husband and king, Tarkan Khatun campaigned gallantly for her third son Mahmud. In the

meantime, Nizam al-Mulk and many of Malikshah's generals had their eyes on Barkiyaruq (ruled 487/1094-498/1105), Malikshah's older son from a different marriage. Tarkan Khatun's campaign against Nizam al-Mulk was successful and resulted in Malikshah's dismissing the old Persian vizier from his post and replacing him with Taj al-Mulk Abu'l-Ghanaim al- Qumml, the private secretary of Tarkan Khatun.[7]

When Ayn al-Qudat was twenty, Muhammad I (ruled 498/1105-511/1118) died and his son Mughlth al-Dln Mahmud succeeded him in the western part of the Seljuq Empire, under the supreme rule of his uncle Sanjar. Two high-ranking officials at Mahmud's court in Hamadan were closely connected to Ayn al-Qudat, albeit with two diametrically opposed attitudes. Mahmud's treasurer, Aziz al-Din al-Mustawfl (d. 525/1131), was a close friend and confidante of Ayn al-Qudat, while Abu'l-Qasim al-DaragazInl (d. 525/1131) was a sworn enemy of al-Mustawfl and then, by extension and the logic of "the friend of my enemy is my enemy", a staunch enemy of Ayn al-Qudat. The animosity between DaragazinI and Mustawfl was rooted not only in the usual rivalries among high-ranking Seljuq officials but also in an endemic financial crisis. The details of this financial crisis apparently have to do with a substantial dowry that Sultan Sanjar gave to his daughter Mahmalik Khatun when as part of a political settlement with his nephew Sultan Mahmud he gave her in marriage to him. After giving Mahmud a son, Mahmalik Khatun died at a very young age. Sultan Sanjar sent another of his daughters as a political bride to Mahmud but asked him to return to his court in Khurasan the substantial dowry he had given the first bride. Mahmud accepted the second cousin as his bride but, having entirely

spent it, was unable to return the dowry to his king and uncle Sanjar. As the treasurer of Mahmud, Mustawfl was of course the chief person who knew that the dowry had been wasted. At this point, DaragazinI intervened and turned these unfortunate events into his advantage and against the treasurer. Mustawfl was immediately arrested and imprisoned, an event which had dire consequences for Ayn al-Qudat, as I shall explain.[8]

The Seljuqs' political power was of course executed under the supreme, however ceremonial, authority of the Abbasid caliphs who continued to preside nominally over the "Islamic Empire" and dispensed salvation and benediction in the form of titles to Seljuq warlords. As new converts, the Turkish Seljuqs were extremely conscious of their religious legitimacy at the court of the Abbasid caliphate. Although their own court and administrative apparatus was very much modelled on pre-lslamic Persian monarchy, the ideological legitimacy of their role was in effect an extension of the central authority of the Abbasid caliphate. The result of this political necessity was an inordinate amount of attention paid by Seljuq warlords, their viziers and their queens to matters of religious legitimacy. The Seljuq warlords, and their court, were Hanafl Muslims and as such gave full political support to Hanafl law in their domain. As a result, the nomocentric doctrinaires of the faith then had their heyday under the Seljuqs. As Hanafl Sunnis, the Seljuqs fully recognized the authority of the central caliphate and in return received their legitimizing blessings. The Seljuqs, as indeed the Ghaznavids before and contemporaneous with them, reciprocated by brutally suppressing sectarian movements, particularly the Isma ills. The political necessity of sustaining the Abbasid caliphate in power by the Seljuq warlords resulted in a

symbiotic relationship between the two political apparatuses: the Seljuqs necessitated and legitimated the Abbasids by the power of their swords, and the Abbasids responded by bestowing their blessings and legitimizing authority on the Seljuqs. By defending the Abbasids against the onslaught of the Crusaders, the Seljuqs in effect extended their authority beyond the Islamic lands and on to the boundaries of Christendom. The father of Salah al-Din al-Ayyubl, the legendary general who fought against Richard the Lionheart, was a prison guard in Tikrit where Aziz al- Dln al-Mustawfl, the chief political supporter of Ayn al-Qudat, was imprisoned.[9]

The triumphant ascendancy of nomocentrism (the primacy of law) in the Islamic religious tradition is evident in the final consolidation of the four major schools of law in this period. Although the legal schools of the Hanafis, the Shafi'ls, the Malikis and the Hanballs were all present and active in the Seljuq realm, the Hanafis and the Shafi'ls were in the majority and principally located in the easternmost part of the empire. There were pockets of Shi'l communities in the West, and the Isma ills were of course aggressively active throughout the realm. The two prominent Seljuq viziers, Amid al-Mulk Abu Nasr al-Kunduri (d. 456/1063) and Nizam al-Mulk, were Hanafl and Shafi'l, respectively. The result was that the law schools that the Seljuqs and their viziers established, the multi-campus Nizamiyyah system chief among them, were principally devoted to Hanafl and Shafi'l law. The three principal centres of power under the Seljuqs – i.e., the sultanate, the vizierate and the khatunate – competed with each other in establishing and funding law schools devoted to Hanafl and Shafi'l jurisprudence.

In these schools, a variety of subjects and disciplines was studied, all giving momentous institutional and epistemic power to the nomo- centricity of Islamic thought, 'ilm al-qiraah ("The Science of the Reading

of the Qur'an"), 'ilm al-tafsir ("Qur'ānic Hermeneutics"), 'ilm al-fiqh ("Jurisprudence"), Him al-kalām ("Theology") all produced prominent scholars in their respective fields. Abu'l-Qāsim Mahmüd ibn 'Umar al- Zamakhsharl al-Khwārazml (d. 538/1143) wrote an influential Qur'ānic commentary, known as al-Kashshāf, and in it propagated the theological positions of the Mu'tazilites. Among the Sufis, Abü Abd al-Rahmān Muhammad ibn Husayn al-Sulami (d. 412/1021) and Abu'l-Qāsim Abd al-Karim al-Qushayri al-Nishāpüri (d. 465/1072) wrote influential commentaries on the Qur'an from their respective points of view. In 520/1126 al-Maybudi joined his Sufi brethren and wrote a monumental commentary on the Qur'an in beautiful Persian prose. Among the Shlc Is, Shaykh al-Tā'ifah AbüJaTar Muhammad ibn Hasan al-TüsI (d. 460/1067) singlehandedly established the principal textual foundations of Shn law. Another luminary Shf I authority, Abü All Fadl ibn Hasan ibn Fadl al- TabarsI (d. 548/1153), wrote his monumental Qur'ānic commentary, Majma ' al-bayān, in this period.

The most influential of all theologians and jurists of this period, a man whom Ayn al-Qudāt read voraciously, was Abü Hāmid Muhammad al-Ghazzāli (d. 505/1111) whose treatises on law and theology were principal texts of study throughout the Seljüq realms and beyond. In such seminal works as al-Iqtisād fi'l-Vtiqād and al-Jāmi al-'awāmm an 'ilm al-kalām, al-Ghazzāli summarized the principal theological position of the Ash'arite school. Al-Ghazzāli wrote also copiously against the Ismā^lls. Fadaih al-bātiniyyah is his

famous treatise against the position of the Isma ills.[10] Another major theologian and historian of religion at this time, someone that Ayn al-Qudāt undoubtedly knew and read, was Abu'l-Fath Muhammad ibn Abu'l-Qāsim Abd al-Karim al-Shahrastānl (d. 548/ 1153). His al-Milal wai-nihal is an encyclopedic compendium of world religions in this period. Shahrastānl was an Ash'arite theologian, and a Shāfi'1 in his legal predisposition. He entered the services of Sultan Sanjar in Khurasan and there he wrote al-MusarVah on Ash'arite theology. The production of a text like al-Milal wai-nihal and the comprehensive universality of Shahrastānl's vision should not be interpreted as a sign of tolerance under the Seljüqs. The same period witnessed the appearance of Abu'l-Faraj ibn al-Jawzi's (c. 508/1114-597/1200) Talbts iblts, a visceral condemnation of all "heterodox" tendencies, including attractions to philosophy and a pervasive phenomenon generally dismissed as "Sufism". Be that as it may, the ultimate sign of the success of nomo- centrism in Ayn al-Qudāt's time was the attraction of such eminent philosophers as Imām Fakhr al-Dln al-RāzI (d. 606/1209) to theology.

As all other periods in the history of Islamic metaphysics, during the time of Ayn al-Qudāt philosophy received the brunt of the legalistic attack against logocentrism. Shaykh Shahāb al-Dln 'Umar Suhrawardl (d. 632/1234), a prominent Sufi, was also opposed to the philosophers and
wrote Rashf al-nasaih al-imaniyyah wa kashf al-fadaih al-yundniyyah in which, as the title suggests, he juxtaposed "the guidance of faith" against "the travesties of the Greeks". Almost a century before him, Abu Hamid al- Ghazzall (d. 505/1111) had issued the most damning condemnation of the philosophers in Tahafut al-falasifah.[11] The impact of

al-Ghazzall's views was so strong that even such indirect students of Ibn Slna as Imam Farid al-Dln 'Umar ibn Ghaylan al-Balkhl, who had himself studied philosophy with Abu'l-'Abbas al-Lukarl, a student of Bahmanyar, who was an immediate student of Ibn Slna, joined the chorus of condemnation of philosophy. Outside the Seljuq realm, the greatest and most enduring defence of philosophy came in the eloquent voice of Ibn Rushd (520/1126-595/1198) who was born five years before Ayn al-Qudat's death. Closer to Ibn Slna and 'Ayn al-Qudat's homeland, Abd al-Karim al-Shahrastanl (d. 548/1153), whose generosity of spirit had made him write a thorough chapter on philosophy in his al-Milal wa'l-nihal, singled out Ibn Slna for an exclusive attack.[12] Anti-philosophical sentiments in Ayn al-Qudat's time extended to poetry. Sana I and KhaqanI, two prominent poets of this period, among scores of others, composed heartfelt poems against the Greeks, their philosophies and the primacy of reason. They placed unconditional faith in the Prophet and his religion at the top of a hierarchy that included all that was necessary for happiness in this world and salvation in the next.

Such visceral condemnation of logocentrism in favour of a nomo- centricism that had lawful answers for everything drawn from the Qur'anic master narrative does not mean that prominent philosophers with strong political connections did not exist at the time of Ayn al-Qudat in the Seljuq period. One of the most distinguished philosophers of this period in the eastern part of the empire was Abu'l-'Abbas Fadl ibn Muhammad al-Lukari al-MarwazI who as a student of a student (Bahmanyar) of Ibn Slna became a major proponent of Shaykh al-Ra'is' philosophy. Lukari trained a whole new generation of Peripatetic philosophers who read Ibn Slna

closely and commented on his works extensively. In the western part of the empire, closer to Ayn al-Qudat's homeland, Abu'l-Barakat al- Baghdadl (d. 547/1152) wrote extensively on Peripatetic philosophy, some of whose tenets he criticized. He was Jewish but converted to Islam when captured by Sultan Mas'ud in a battle he waged against al-Mustarshid, the Abbasid caliph.[13] One generation after Ayn al-Qudat, Shaykh Shihab al-Dln Yahya Suhrawardl (549/1154—587/1191) initiated a major shift in Ibn Slna's metaphysics and through a radical re-reading of ancient Persian sources in conjunction with Neoplatonic and Hermetic ideas founded the school of Ishrdq or Illumination. His radically daring expositions, and the hybrid nature of his metaphysics angered and antagonized the clerical establishment in Aleppo, and the great Salah al-Din al-Ayyubl, anxious to secure the help of the clerics in his battles against the Crusades, had Suhrawardl executed.[14] In the same generation of Suhrawardl, but with

a radically more critical mind, was another prominent philosophical theologian, Imam Fakhr al-Dln al-RazI (543/1148—606/1208) who made a reputation by taking no one less than Ibn Slna to task and raising serious issues with his philosophical positions. A generation later, Khwajah Naslr al-Dln al-TusI, while at the services of the Isma ills, in Alamut, wrote a commentary on this commentary and defended Ibn Sina's position, calling Razi's text a "diatribe" rather than a "commentary".

Philosophy was of course not the only version of the dominant logocentrism operative in this period. An array of distinguished mathematicians, biologists, physicians, astronomers and physicists carried on the work and research which had started generations earlier. Among the

distinguished scientists of this period was Baha al-Dln Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Abl Bashar al-Kharaql al-MarwazI (d. after 536/1141) from the Kharaq village of Marv. He wrote extensively on mathematics and theoretical astronomy. His major work in astronomy is Muntaht al- idrak ft taqsim al-aflak. His other text on the same subject is al-Tabsirah ft 'ilm al-hay'ah. Another major mathematician—astronomer of this period, at the service of Nizam al-Mulk and the Seljuq court, was Omar Khayyam, whose just reputation as a poet supersedes his equally just reputation as a scientist and philosopher. Another major scientist of this time was Abu'l- Hasan All ibn Zayd al-Bayhaql (d. 565/1164), who was known primarily as a mathematician but had a wide range of interests. He wrote a history of science and philosophy, Tatimmah siwan al-hikmah as an addendum to the Siwan al-hikmah of Abu Sulayman al-Mantiql al-Sijistani. He wrote a three-volume textbook on astronomy in Persian, Jawdmi' ahkam al- nujiim. Among his interests were history and biography. His Tdrikh-i Bayhaq is a compendium of historical, biographical, literary and scientific information about Bayhaqi's birthplace.

Against the grain of both logocentrism and nomocentricism of Ayn al-Qudat's time stood Sufism, which opposed and negated the reign of reason with almost the same tenacity that it challenged the exclusively legalistic interpretation of Islam. Against the logocentrism of philosophers, Sufism launched its anti-rationalist rhetoric, and against the jurists' nomo-centrism it launched its critical approach. For both it proposed a theo-erotic doctrine in which "love" ('ishq or mahabbat), "ecstasy" (shawq), "light" (niir), "fire" (ndr), and "unity" (wahdah) are set against the categories of rational philosophy and jurisprudence. Being, in this theo-erotic vision, was of an

undifferentiated unity interrupted by material creation which resulted in the separation of humanity (as lover) from God (as Beloved). The purpose of creation was the realization of this amorous urge in being. Through ascetic and ecstatic exercise (fasting, invocation, Sufi dancing, singing, poetry, etc.) human-as-lover has to emulate the moment of unison with God-as-Beloved, until such time that the final union shall occur.[15] Mansur al-Hallaj and Bayazld al-Bistaml, the former in particular, continued to be the chief champions of generations of Sufis who propagated these ideas. Among the most prominent Sufi masters of this period were Shaykh Abu Sa id Abi'l-Khayr (d. 440/1048), Shaykh Abu'l-Qasim al-Qushayri (d. 465/1072), Khwajah Qutb al-Dln Mawdud al-Chishti (d. 527/1132), and Khwajah Abd Allah Ansarl (d. 481/1088). They wrote treatises and hagiographies, and some formed powerful orders. The power, prestige and some of the outlandish behaviour of the Sufis created much anger, anxiety and hostility among the nomocentric jurists in particular. Abu'l-Faraj ibn al-jawzl al-Baghdadi (d. 597/1200) devoted a good portion of his Talbfs iblls to condemning the Sufis and their, in his judgment, blasphemous behaviour.

Beyond the philosophers, the jurists and the Sufis, Ayn al-Qudat's intellectual world was also filled with the literary humanism of poets and literati who were principally affiliated with the various Seljuq courts. Seljuq warlords, princes, viziers and courtiers not only patronized such prominent poets as Anwari and Sana I, but themselves were occasionally first-rate poets. Poets were chief among the instruments of political legitimation. In the words of one historian of Persian literature:

The princes of this period were eager to have prominent poets in their court. This was particularly due to the fact that poets and their powerful panegyrics were the instruments of the monarch's fame and reputation. The presence of poets, men of knowledge, and the literati was considered among the apparatus of leadership. Thus even local leaders and members of the gentry were attentive to the presence of poets at their court. Occasionally the insistence on this matter [even] led to competition among the princes.[16]

Naturally panegyrics was the most prevalent form of poetry in these, as in the previous, times. Mucizzl (d. c. 521/1127), Anwari (d. 583/1187), Zahlr Faryabl (d. 598/1201), Mujlr (d. c. 586/1190), Athlr Akhsikatl (d. c. 570/1174) and Tmadl (d. c. 582/1186) were among the most prominent panegyrists of this period. The necessary complement of panegyrics was satire: the Seljuq warlords loved themselves praised almost as much as they liked their enemies and adversaries mocked, and the poets were the best instrument of this mode of effective propaganda war. Suzani Samarqandl (d. c. 562/1166) and Anwari were prominent satirists of this period. More pious poets like Sana! began to give institutional definition and authority to a mode of didactic poetry delivered for the proper edification of their royal or regular audience. Persian lyrical poetry began to take momentum from such earlier lyricists as Rudakl and Shahld-i Balkhl. Sana'l and Mu'izzl were two of the most masterful lyricists of the Seljuq period. By the middle of the sixth/twelfth century, Persian literature benefited much from the beautiful imagination of Anwari, Zahlr Faryabl, Khaqani, Nizami, and Jamal al-Dln Abd al-Razzaq, and the
road was thus paved for the master practitioners of the genre – Sadi, Rümi and Hāfīz – to crown it in the seventh/thirteenth

and eighth/ fourteenth centuries. Persian lyricism very soon attracted Persian Sufism and such poets as Sana I, and later 'Attar, used amorous expression of "The Lover", "the Beloved", "Separation" and "Union" to construct a vision of togetherness—separation—togetherness for what they thought was a false extreme separation between God and humanity, opting for the moment in pre-eternity when God—human was not yet separated.

But perhaps the most powerful genre of Persian poetry in this period, with a wide appeal to a diverse group of readers/ listeners and with an equally powerful command over the creative imagination of its composers and propagators, was narrative poetry with an irresistible urge to tell a story. Drawing from pre-Islamic Persian, Indian, Chinese, Greek and Arabic sources, a remarkable array of stories were set into an unbelievably beautiful and engaging poetry. Early in the fifth/eleventh century, 'Unsuri rendered Wāmiq wa Ã¤hrā, a beautiful love story, into poetry. These stories were not just the idle pastime of the courtiers. Such prominent men of science as Abü Rayhān al-Birunl found them important enough to translate quite a number of them from Persian to Arabic.

One of the most beautiful pre-Islamic Iranian love stories, Wis wa Rāmin (composed in 446/1053), was translated and rendered into a haunt- ingly beautiful poetry by Fakhr al-Dln As'ad GurgānI.[17] Even the Qur'an was not immune to poetic renditions. A singularly romantic story in the Qur'an, Yüsuf wa Zulaykhā, was rendered into a full poetic narrative at the court of Shams al-Dawlah Abu'l-Fawāris Tughānshāh ibn Alb Arsalān and erroneously attributed to Firdawsl. Persian narrative poetry went through a significant period of

maturation in Ayn al-Qudāt's century, coming to a magnificent conclusion in the poetry of Nizami, in whom were gathered Homer's taste for the epic with Shakespeare's penchant for drama. The epic poetry proper was in full swing under the Seljüqs. Under the long shadow of Firdawsi's Shāh-nāmah$_y$ epic poems of lesser significance but of nevertheless equal narrative attraction were composed in this period, among them Garshāsp-nāmah of Asadi Tüsl (d. 465/1072), Bahman-nāmah of Iranshāh ibn Abi'l-Khayr, and Bānü gushasp-nāmah. The last one was an imaginative story about Bānü-Gushasp, the daughter of Rustam, the chief protagonists of Firdawsl's Shāh-nāmah.

Philosophical Style

Ayn al-Qudāt was a creature of this age, full of power and energy from its inner possibilities and impediments. He was empowered to think and write in the context of a full participation in the politics of his time. He mastered philosophy and then rejected its rationalism. He mastered and practised law and then denounced its exclusive legalistic interpretation. He enjoined the Sufi sentiments and practices of his time and took full advantage of its "theo-erotic" doctrines to challenge the power-based production of merely rational or juridical knowledge. But his transformative urges, working through an ironic mode, went beyond all these diverse discourses and reached for the very act of narrativity, the mysterious urge of "Truth-telling" which he exposed and de-narrated via a deliberate, potent, and masterfully ironic mode of "writing" which is exclusively his.

Even a fuller picture of Ayn al-Qudat's time would draw a sharper image of his narrative presence in the midst of issues and anxieties that engaged him and his contemporaries. In the absence, or rather scarcity, of contemporary material about Ayn al-Qudāt, we should have a rather complete picture of his time in order to be able to place him in the social and intellectual currents of his time. It is not until well into the ninth/fifteenth century, i.e., some three hundred years after the death of Ayn al-Qudāt, that hagiographical material began to appear about him. The principal function of these Sufi hagiographies is to assimilate and appropriate Ayn al-Qudāt into the pacific pantheon of "Persian Sufism".[18]

As already mentioned, by far the most reliable source of information about Ayn al-Qudāt is the collection of his own writings. Zubdat al-haqaiq ("The Best of Truths") is the first text which contains considerable information about his life and writings. Not much information exists about Ayn al-Qudāt between 492/1098 and 516/1122. These twenty-four years were obviously the time of prodigious learning and reflection for the young Ayn al-Qudāt. There are scattered references to the titles of his writings before Zubdah, both in Ayn al-Qudāt's own texts and in other sources. Neither the authenticity of these texts nor their content can be ascertained by these scattered references. What is evident, however, is that most probably Ayn al-Qudāt was a prodigious and precocious child who came to scholastic fruition very early in life. He appears to have had a wide range of interests and was deeply involved in the dominant intellectual issues of his time. Again from his later writings, especially from the Shakwa al-gharib ("The Complaint of the Exile" or the Apologia which he wrote in his own defence while incarcerated in a prison in Baghdad), it is quite evident that he

had an early, and perhaps lasting, fascination with "writing" as such. "Writing" constituted a reality sui generis for him. In Shakwa he claims that at the writing of that Apologia he was beyond his youthful preoccupation with stylistic prose and masterful writing. But there are enough indications in his later writing, even, or perhaps particularly, in Shakwā, which indicate that he continued to be concerned with the sheer reality of writing, with the act of literary being.[19] That is why Shakwā a document which is supposed to defend him against the dangerous accusations he was charged with, begins,

continues and ends with unmistakable rhetorical tropes, almost every other paragraph of the text studded with poetry. The titles of three treatises among 'Ayn al-Qudāt's early writings point to a considerable attention to literary issues: Risālah amālt al-ishtiāq ft layālt al-firāq ("Dictations of Longing in the Nights of Separation"), Nuzhat al-'ushshdq wa nahzat al- mushtāq ("The Pleasure of Lovers and Opportunity of the Passionate") and al-Madkhal ila7-'arabiyyah wa riyādat 'ulümuhai-adabiyyah ("An Introduction to Arabic and the Practice of Its Literary Sciences"). Ayn al-Qudāt himself informs us, at the conclusion of Shakwā$_y$ that he had intended this last book to be expanded into a ten-volume introductory text on adab. We have no extant trace of this text, or indication of its actual accomplishment. But if it was what its title suggests, then it is a strong indication of Ayn al-Qudāt's interest in the humanist institution of adab, which included a paramount attention to poetry, rhetoric and other aesthetic and literary devices.

Erotic lyricism was particularly attractive to Ayn al-Qudāt. He informs his readers at the conclusion of Shakwā, where he gives a rhetorical list of his writings:

Amongst the offspring of my thoughts are a thousand erotic verses which I was inspired to compose in ten days; these are collected together in a sheet known as Nuzhat al-'ushshāq wa nahzat al-mushtdq ["The Pleasures of Lovers and Opportunity of the Passionate"]. The following lines occur there:

Ah, and the maiden of Maadd descent

On either side, the best of ancestry,

Guarded by warriors powerful as lions

Who raid the foe on noble, short-haired steeds,

Furnished with tempered swords of polished steel

And each with slender lances, true and long!

She came, whilst my companions slept a-bed,

Escorted by her modest maids of Sa d;

They trod the heights of hillocks and the vales

To visit a generous and mighty man;

Clad in the robes of glory and renown,

They passed the night in soft, delightful ease,

And I right cheerful, Hind being by my side,

Kissing her, mantled in sweet perfumery,

And culling with my lips the rose of her cheeks.[20]

The second extensive project that Ayn al-Qudāt had in mind but was not able to complete reveals his interest, very broadly speaking, in the religious dimensions of his primarily epistemic concerns with all narrative acts of "Truth-telling". "[The] Interpretation of the Real Truths of the Qur'an"[21] is the title that ʿAyn al-Qudāt gives to this book. There is no extant trace of this text. But by this reference one might estimate the range of ʿAyn al-Qudāt's concerns with all hermeneutic acts that try to break through the word to "realities" thus represented. As evidenced in his other, extant, writing, ʿAyn al-Qudāt was particularly fascinated by the nature of revelation as the master-narrative. His interest in revelation, as evidenced in his concern with Qur'ānic hermeneutics, is matched by an equal interest in the related issue of prophethood, or, put very simply, what does it mean that someone is "chosen" (bath) to be a messenger of God to humanity and thus speak via revelation? On this latter issue, he informs the readers of Shakwā that in his youth he wrote a treatise on Ghāyat al-bahth ʿan maʾni al-baʾth ("The Last Word on the Meaning of [Prophetic] Mission").[22] Judging from such rhetorical titles as "The Last Word" (Ghāyat al-bahth) and "The Real Truths of the Qur'ān" (HaqāʾTq al-qur'ān) one can deduce that Ayn al-Qudāt had certain unconventional opinions about the issues of revelation and prophethood. The two related issues of revelation (wahy) and prophethood (bath) narrowed in on ʿAyn al-Qudāt's concern with the nature and authority of God's spoken Word (Kalām) as the most important issue of Islamic theology. Kalām is essentially a problem of language as the Qur'ānic (revelatory) instrument of "Truth-telling". God, according to the Qur'ān, "spoke" and "wrote". He taught humanity all the

names of things. He taught with "the Pen". He in fact swore by "the Pen". Reading/writing/speaking/ listening constitute the very narrative principles of the Qur'ān (literally the Recitation) as revelation. Throughout his writings, 'Ayn al-Qudāt never lost sight of this irreducible narrativity of the revelatory nature of faith, of believing in One Unseen God, of recognizing Muhammad as his chosen messenger, of knowing for certain that there will be a final day of judgment when this story of truth, this act of "Truth-telling", will come to an end.

Although the first extant book of'Ayn al-Qudāt is Zubdah al-haqā'iq, which he wrote in 516/1122, from his introduction to this text and other references we may reconstruct the issues addressed in at least two of his prz-Zubdah treatises of which we have no manuscript.

We have 'Ayn al-Qudāt's own reference in his introduction to Zubdah al-haqā'iq that some time before or in 513/1119 he wrote a treatise he calls al-Risālat al-'alā'iyyah. The reason that we can narrow in on or about 512/1118 is that 'Ayn al-Qudāt wrote Zubdah in 516/1122, when he was twenty-four years old and he says he wrote Ghāyat al-bahth three years earlier, when he was twenty-one.[23] This puts the date of Ghāyah in 513/1119, and since he refers to al-Ãā'iyyah in an earlier part of the introduction (p. 1 of the critical edition) than the section he writes about Ghāyah (p. 3 of the critical edition), we may conclude that al- Ãā'iyyah was written slightly earlier than Ghāyah. Another, perhaps more
convincing, reason that al-Ãaiyyah was written shortly before Ghāyah is that on the very first page of Zubdah, immediately after the conventional salutations and prayers, he says:

And then, this [i.e., Zubdah] is a spark of fire called Zubdat alio aqaiq which consists of the unveiling of the hidden [Kashf al-ghita from the three principles which the entirety of people believe in and obey. I have divided it into one hundred chapters, each adorned with subtle points on every one of these principles. And these should be sufficient substance for those who seek the [meaning and significance of] the [three] principles of the faith, and ample material for the seekers to reach their objectives, from a [mere] knowledge of certainty to the very essence of certainty. I have already covered in "The al-Ãaiyyah Treatise" which I wrote in the manner of [blessed] ancestors – May God be Pleased with them and with those who follow their path – what is necessary for the general belief of the populace in these [three] principles. But that which is exclusive to the selected few I have covered in the following chapters.[24]

We may thus tentatively conclude that both Alaiyyah (512/1118) and Ghāyah (513/1119) preceded by about three years the writing of Zubdah (516/1122).

Although we do not have any extant copy of Ghāyah, in his introduction to Zubdat al-haqā'iq Ayn al-Qudāt gives a synopsis of the content of this treatise. Putting for the moment aside the conventional expression of "A group of my friends, may God grant me the ability to deserve their friendship and companionship and make me succeed in performing my duties towards them as friends, were diligent in their insistence to dictate a few chapters to …", there are very specific references in Ayn al-Qudāt's introduction to his Zubdat al-haqā'iq to the content of his previous book. Indeed, this part of the introduction reads like an intellectual autobiography in which Ayn al-Qudāt reports of his circle of

friends, questions and issues with which they were concerned, and the fundamental changes that occurred in his thinking on these issues. It is also evident from Ayn al-Qudāt's introduction that Ghāyah had introduced certain issues which are then picked up and discussed further in Zubdat al-haqaiq.

What are the issues that concerned Ayn al-Qudāt and his contemporaries? First and foremost, a rational understanding of the nature and essence of God (rnā yantahi ilayhi nazar al-'uqül fii-Hlm bi-dhāt Allāh azza wa jalla)[25] is at the centre of Ayn al-Qudāt's concern, and that of his contemporaries. The expression dhāt Allāh must be understood as "the Essence" or "the Nature" of God, or very simply "what" God is. The formulation of the question is rather pre-emptive, which is to say it does
not postulate the question of the "isness" of God for a problematic consideration, but puts forward the "howness" of that a priori supposition of "isness". Nevertheless the mere proposition of what "the Essence of God" is has always been a dangerous question that could be posed only with considerable risk to the questioner. Constitutional to this theoretical inquiry is 'Ayn al-Qudat's concern with God's "Attributes" (,Sifāt), i.e., a thematic expansion of the pre-emptive question of the "howness" of God's Being. A prophetology and soteriology extend from this theology, which is to say, after the question of the "howness" of God's Being, arise the questions of His ways of communicating His Will to His created beings in a way that corresponds to His primary Attribute of Mercy (al-Rahmān, al-Rahini) and yet does not violate His Attribute of Oneness (wahdah). This constitutes the necessary intermediary status of prophethood, al- nubuwwah, which 'Ayn al-Qudāt says he addressed in his Ghāyah. The issue of soteriology also emerges from His

Attributes of Justice, i.e., the punishment of those who have disobeyed His commands and reward for those who have been obedient.

'Ayn al-Qudāt is quite jubilant about the eloquence with which he addressed these theological and other related issues in Ghāyah. He also reports that there was a period of delay, perhaps even procrastination, on his part in producing Ghāyah, until, "I saw them [i.e., his friends] in dire need of it [i.e., of a book addressing these issues], especially in the belief in the truth of prophethood, and the truth of the Attributes with which the Creator of the heavens and earth is characterized, and I realized that attending to this matter was a rather urgent necessity."[26] Ayn al-Qudāt reports that he dealt exclusively with the issue of "prophethood" in Ghāyah.

This is as much general information as we can deduce from Ayn al-Qudāt's introduction to Zubdat al-haqā'iq as to the content of Ghāyah. From the subtext of 'Ayn al-Qudāt's narrative it is quite evident that the age-old theological question of the Essence and Attributes of God had continued well into the sixth/twelfth century and that the leading intellectuals of Hamadan, Baghdad and Isfahan (the three intellectual metropolises of the time which 'Ayn al-Qudāt frequented) were deeply engaged with these issues. And this is not surprising, because 'Ayn al- Qudāt wrote Ghāyah when he was twenty-one years old,[27] i.e., in 513/1119, which was not more than eight years after the death of the great Abü Hāmid al-Ghazzāli (d. 505/1111). Although al-Ghazzāli produced most of his works in the fifth/eleventh century, his monumental intellectual presence began to exert itself in the sixth/twelfth century, as indeed 'Ayn al-Qudāt himself, as a

representative intellectual of his age, testifies that he read al-Ghazzāli voraciously.[28]

Main Works

Ayn al-Qudāt gives the exact date of the writing of his full-length book that has reached us, Zubdah (516/1122), and says, and here is the irony, that it is the last book he wrote: "and the book I entitled Zubdat al- haqā'iq," he concludes his defence in Shakwa, "was the last book I composed, being then twenty-four years of age".[29] Of his writings between Zubdat al-haqā'iq and Shakwa al-ghanb I shall write momentarily. But this statement puts the date of the Zubdah at precisely 516/1122 when Ayn al-Qudāt was twenty-four.

In his introduction to Zubdah, after giving a synopsis of his dealing with the question of prophethood in the Ghāyah, Ayn al-Qudāt proceeds to give a preparatory description of why he is now writing what is in effect a sequel to that text and to the Ãā'iyyah treatise which he had (probably) written even earlier than the Ghāyah. There are many indications in this introduction that point to some major transformations in Ayn al-Qudāt's epistemic assumptions and operations between the writing of the Ãā'iyyah treatise in (or about) 512/1118, of the composition of the Ghāyah in 513/1119, and the writing of Zubdah in 516/1122. He says that he had written the Ãā'iyyah treatise in the traditional manner of "the blessed ancestors", which is a code-name for the law-based narrative of Muslim jurists, which is to say, in that treatise he had addressed the three principal (doctrinal) issues of theology, or kalām, which centres on the principle of tawhtd or the Oneness of God,

prophetology (or nubuwwah, which is the second dogma in Islamic faith), and soteriology (or qiyāmah, which is the third principle of the Muslim creed) in the dominant juridical discourse. His principal occupation with these credal foundations of Islam continue from the Ãā'iyyah treatise to Ghāyah, where he specifically concentrates on the issue of prophetology but, more important, he shifts his epistemic operation from a law-based, juridical narrative to a reason-based, philosophical narrative. The key reference here, again from the introduction to Zubdah, is that Ayn al-Qudāt's friends were asking him to address the theological question of "the knowledge of the Essence of God" in a "rational" manner (nazar al-cuqül).[30]

Zubdat al-haqā'iq thus comes in fact at the conclusion of a narrative tour de force that has led Ayn al-Qudāt from a dominant juridical discourse in the 'Alā'iyyah treatise to the often questioned philosophical discourse in Ghāyah and now finally to the "theo-erotic" discourse of Sufism in the Zubdah. There are quite a number of indications in the introduction to Zubdah that support this supposition of an epistemic move away from both the juridical and rationally based approaches. Firstly, having identified the three principal doctrinal beliefs of Islam (tawhid, nubuwwah, qiyāmah), Ayn al-Qudāt writes in the introduction to Zubdah that he has already dealt with these issues in the dominant juridical manner
of "our blessed ancestors" in his 'Alaiyyah treatise but that now he is going to write for a selected few (qalil al-khawassr), who need to be led from a mere "knowledge of certainty" ('ilm al-yaqin) to the superior position of "the [very] essence of certainty" ('ayn al-yaqin). Secondly, he writes that in his Ghayah he was asked to address precisely the same issues from a "rational perspective" (nazar al-'uqul),

but that that sort of explanation can satisfy only those who are concerned with "proofs" (al-barahin) and the "knowledge of certainty" ('ilm al-yaqin). Thirdly, he writes that gaining knowledge about such issues as the Essence of God, or the nature of prophethood, or the reality of bodily resurrection through mandatory norms, laws and proofs is just like gaining an appreciation for poetry without any genuine taste (dhawq) for poetry. He writes.

Indeed the confirmation [tasdiq] of belief in the truth of prophethood as it is deduced from rational understanding [al-mustafad min al-'ilm is similar to a kind of confirmation obtained by someone who has no taste [dhawq] in poetry. And of course the person who is not blessed with a taste for poetry can indeed gain [only] a belief ['i'tiqad in what the tasteful person actually possesses. But that belief is vastly different from the specific truth which is exclusively that of a person with taste.[31]

Fourthly, Ayn al-Qudat confesses to a major intellectual transformation in his mind and spirit between 512/1118 and 513/1119, i.e., when he composed the 'Alaiyyah treatise and Ghayah, respectively, and 516/1122, when he began to compose the Zubdah. He writes in 516/1122 that for quite some time, i.e., since the writing of his previous two texts, his friends (ikhwdn, which can also mean "followers" or "admirers") had been pressing him to write a treatise for them on the principles of doctrinal beliefs more convincing than his previous ones, delivered, as they were, in the juridical and philosophical narratives, respectively. He confesses that he was unable to do as his friends demanded because he himself was deeply involved in his own studies (idh kuntu mushtaghilan bi-tahsil al-'ilm wa istifadatuhu).[32] His nights

and days, he reports, were consumed in studies. His friends gradually lost hope that he would ever fulfil their wishes. But he says he was so preoccupied with his own thoughts and feelings on these matters that he could not think of composing a treatise, or writing a book. "My heart was in a tumultuous sea with no shores, drowned in it were all the beginnings and all the ends";[33] which could very well mean a major crisis of belief in these doctrinal principles on his own part. But finally he ran into a particularly dear friend of his, or at least so goes his recollection of these events or his preferred rhetorical narrative in staging Zubdah, who reminded him that they had no hope other than him and that he must write a treatise for them. He finally

conceded, and, having consulted the Qur'an for a good omen ('istikharah), he set out to write the Zubdah?[34]

He further reports that the three years between 513/1119 (the writing of the Ghayah) and 516/1122 (the writing of the Zubdah) have been particularly revealing for him:

When I was writing that treatise [Ghayah] I was twenty-one years old, and right now I am twenty-four years old. By the grace of the Everlasting I have been blessed during these three years by a variety of hidden learnings and many precious discoveries which I am incapable of describing or explaining. Much of these, however, are impossible to render into the world of speech with letters and sounds. I shall do my best to describe in subtle expressions and proper phrases some of those [discoveries] in the following chapters.[35]

At this point Ayn al-Qudat gives an account of the reasons why he has proceeded to try to communicate his ideas despite

the fact that he has to use expressions that may cause confusion among his readers:

But the truth of the matter is that many of the expressions used in this book are extremely vague [mutashabih]. Thus, if you see in this book an expression which does not exactly correspond to the meaning [ordinarily] intended for it, do not launch your criticism against me because I have two obvious reasons in doing so. First, I made these references to meanings in a condition devoid of any attention to [proper] expressions and thus I did not utter them in the best possible way. Moreover, conveying such meanings in expressions which are devoid of vagueness is almost, nay indeed definitely and positively, impossible. And second, I indeed wrote these chapters for those whose concern for the ambiguity of expressions does not prevent them from grasping the truth of meanings, and because of the frequency of their dealings with rational truths they have reached a point where the ways of affinity with the sublime are not closed to them by virtue of their presence in the material world.[36]

Ayn al-Qudat then proceeds to give an account of how he has now reached a point of comprehension beyond rational discourse. Given the autobiographical significance of this passage, I translate a rather larger passage from it. He begins with his preoccupation with rational discourse:

Thus I proceeded on this path and looked at both the strengths and weaknesses of rational thought [al- 'ilm, and wreaked both its benefits and harms until I attained what I had intended in my
endeavour … But knowledge is great and life is so short that wasting it on what is of no benefit is sheer stupidity. My

excuse in trying all the possibilities that rational thought could offer is perfectly clear: A person who is drowning reaches for anything that could possibly save his life. And only God could save me with His grace and magnanimity from falling into a hole of fire. The reason for that [state of confusion] was that I kept reading books of theology [kutiib al-kalam hoping to move out of the nadir of emulation and reach the zenith of understanding. But I did not succeed in reaching my objective with those books. I became [conversely] totally confused about the principles of the faith until I doubted [my way into] the depth of such pits I cannot recount them here in this short treatise. Also, there is no benefit for the general public to hear them, because they cause great damage to small minds and weak hearts. I was totally baffled in my affair, a bafflement which utterly darkened my days until the Guide of the confused led me to the [Right] Path and His Grace helped me with subsistence and success. In short, I was not saved from falling [from grace] except, after the grace of God Almighty, by reading the books of al-Shaykh al-Imam Hujjat al-Islam Abu Hamid Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Ghazzall, may God be pleased with him and please him. I read him closely for almost four years and during this time of preoccupation with learning I witnessed such strange things which saved me from the path of blasphemy and misguidedness, confusion and doubt. It is not necessary to go into the details of these, because they are much too extensive and ultimately there is no use in [recounting] them.[37]

This intellectual transformation leads Ayn al-Qudat from a rational and juridical succession of discourses towards the discovery of a "theo-eroti- cism" as the narrative urge of his new discourse. He credits Abu Hamid al-Ghazzali's brother,

Ahmad al-Ghazzall, as principally responsible for this transformation:

The very essence of perception began to open little by little. I was halted in the midst of this by some major barriers which prevented me from reaching what is beyond knowledge. I remained in that condition for about a year. Later, I could not completely grasp the gravity of what had befallen me in that year until fate brought my master and my lord, al-Shaykh al-Imam al-Ajal, Sultan al-Tarlqah, Tarjuman al-Haqlqah, Abu'l-Futuh, Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn al-Ghazzall – may God grace the Muslims with His continued presence and grant
him my utmost gratitude – to Hamadan which is my home town. While I was in his service, he unveiled for me in a matter of twenty days, much to my astonishment, the true meaning of that incident. And in that condition, I recognized the true meaning of what had occurred. Then something dawned on me whereby there remained nothing from me or my objective except what God willed. And now for two years I do nothing but wish for annihilation in that matter. And [only] God is He who helps in completing that of which I only saw a small portion. And if I live to be Noah's age and be annihilated in this quest, it would not be much to offer.[38]

The rhetorical phrasing of this crucial passage leaves no doubt that Ayn al-Qudat's reading of Abü Hāmid al-Ghazzāli was instrumental in saving him from complete and absolute blasphemy, and that his encounter with Ahmad Ghazzāll was instrumental in converting him from a rational narrative of the philosophers to a "theo-erotic" narrative of the Sufis. The process and progression of the dominant discourses is rather normal. It was normal for Ayn al-Qudāt's generation to begin

their religious preoccupations and concerns with a "traditional", law-and-order-based juridical perspective. Beyond the juridical approach stood the attractive possibilities of reason. "Reason" was the most widely celebrated alternative to the juridical approach of dogmatic learning. But beyond rational thought, when reason failed to assure and ascertain, haunting moments of doubt, unbelief and blasphemies would naturally ensue. The "theo- erotic" language of Sufism, with its comprehensivity of the oneness of Being, a unifying vision of existence that embraced and celebrated all the otherwise inexplicable tensions and anxieties of being, offered a way out of this impasse.

Two major conclusions can be made from this tentative reconstruction of the content of the ʿAlaiyyah and the Ghāyah, the two pre- Zubdah treatises of Ayn al-Qudāt which have not reached us: first, that the principal problems with which Ayn al-Qudāt was concerned were the three doctrinal foundations of Islam: belief in One Omnipotent God (tawhid), the necessary intervention of a prophetic mission to communicate God's will to humanity (nubuwwah), and the absolute conviction in a Day of Judgment when humanity will face the Creator and be accountable for worldly actions (ma'ād); and, second, that the Zubdah, chronologically the first extant text of Ayn al-Qudāt, is in fact the last "book" that he wrote in a cycle of narrative engagements with the principal doctrines of Islam which took him from a juridical account in the Ãā'iyyah treatise to a rational rendition in the Ghāyah, and finally to a "theo-erotic" version in the Zubdah.

It is also evident from this introduction that ʿAyn al-Qudāt went through a major intellectual crisis, or more accurately a crisis of faith, very similar to that of Abü Hāmid al-Ghazzāli

(as recorded in his al- Munqidh min al-dalāl), and that is probably the reason that he found the writing of al-Ghazzāli helpful in guiding him in that period of crisis. Since he uses a version of the word al-munqidh in his description of his being saved from that crisis of faith, one may conclude that whether consciously or subconsciously he had al-Ghazzāli's al-Munqidh min al- dalāl in mind when writing this sentence. Al-Munqidh min al-dalāl ("Deliverance from Misguidedness") is al-Ghazzāll's autobiographical account of his crisis of faith.[39] Because of this rather tumultuous period of crisis, 'Ayn al-Qudāt had a rather difficult time bringing himself to writing a sustained treatise. The Zubdah is in fact the last such sustained treatise that he wrote. 'Ayn al-Qudāt's writings after the Zubdah are characteristically of a non-book type, principally in the rhetorical tropes of "personal letters". Both Maktübāt, his collection of "letters", and the Tamhidāt, a collection of letter-like "prefaces" or "preparations", are quite deliberately non-books. Shakwā' al-ghanb, his last writing, is in fact the text of a defence he delivered to clear himself against charges that the clerics had brought against him, and thus it is not a "book" [al-kitāb] or a "treatise" al-risālah in the ordinary sense of the term.

The Zubdah is the culmination of 'Ayn al-Qudāt's metaphysical concern with the principal doctrines of the Islamic faith – tawhid, nubuwwah and ma'ād — delivered in a "theo-erotic" language of love that effectively substitutes the rhetorics of love, devotion and annihilation in the God-Beloved for both the rigid nomocentricism of law and the futile misplacedness of reason in a logocentricism which is faith-bound. In the one hundred short chapters (fitsI) of the Zubdah, 'Ayn al-Qudāt experiments with the limits of such metarational categories as ("revelation" or "discovery") and

dhawq ("taste" or "disposition") in order to reach for an "understanding" of the principal doctrines of the faith beyond what reason and the law can offer. In his judgment, the principal point of contention in every "revealed" religion is precisely the nature of that "revelation", or, very simply, how can one believe that a "prophet" or a "messenger" can come up with a "revelation"? What does it mean that some ordinary people have been given this "message" by "God" to convey to others? 'Ayn al-Qudāt divides people into four categories in relation to the central problem of "revelation". Firstly, there is a group of people who do not need to rely on the confirmation of the possibility of "revelation" by rational argumentation; secondly, those who do rely on such arguments but in doing so they simply follow the lead of the established authorities in different schools of thought; thirdly, those who do need such rational argumentations but need to draw them themselves; and finally, fourthly, those who equally pursue theoretical knowledge (al-Hlm

al-nazari) in believing in such doctrines as "revelation" and yet they look forward to realities beyond "knowledge" (,al-'ilm) and "reason" 0al-'aql), as in "discovery" (kashf) or "taste" (dhawq) for example, in reaching that certainty.[40] 'Ayn al-Qudat's preference is obviously for the last category, and indeed the Zubdah is a sustained assimilation of the two subjective categories of "taste" and "discovery" into a systematic theology that tries to account for "revelation". The word 'ārif signifies for 'Ayn al-Qudāt the personification of "taste" and "discovery" as two supra-rational instruments of understanding. He postulates the existence of God (wujüd Allāh) as the ontological origin of everything that there is. But the ontic reality of God is beyond the reach of human grasp. This postulation is then the epistemic assumption (or more accurately a sustained problematic) upon which 'Ayn

al-Qudāt begins to construct his own ontology. There is nothing particularly revolutionary about 'Ayn al- Qudāt's ontology. It remains essentially Ibn Slnan in such basic categories as al-qadim (the pre-eternal), al-hādith (the-created-in-time), al-kāmil (the perfect), al-nāqis (the imperfect), al-wāhid (the unified), al-kathir (the diversified), etc. God's Names (Asmā') and Attributes (Sifāt) are the primary categories of His definition. 'Ayn al-Qudāt is cautious not to make God's existence, however, contingent upon His Names and Attributes.

The ontic reality of God is not by virtue of a Name, Allāh, or an Attribute, al-Rahim, referring to and signifying His reality:

The nominal Name is constructed in order to lead to that Pearl [al-durrah [of the Unity of God], not because of its relationship to existent beings which have [themselves] emanated from it, but by virtue of its very essence [dhatuha], by virtue of seeing it as existent. And if somebody calls that Pearl "pre-eternal" [qadtmah], then he calls it so by virtue of seeing it as different from other beings which are in need of a cause to bring them into being. And the same is true if you consider the Names al-Hayy ["The Living"] and al-Haqq ["The Truth"], you realize that one has created these [expressions] with an eye towards the "death" of the other and its "un-truthfulness".[41]

The deduction of such binary oppositions, e.g. between "The Living" and "The Dead ", is a typical 'Ayn al-Qudāt trope whereby he de-signifies the words from their ordinary assumptions. The Name al-Haqq ("The Truth") thus has nothing quintessentially representative about it. It has

significance only to the degree that it stands in opposition to "un-truthfulness".

'Ayn al-Qudāt is quite anxious in his Zubdah to "prove" such credal doctrines of Islamic theology as God's knowledge of the specifics,[42] and the non-contingent nature of that knowledge, i.e. that, like the sun's rays,
it is irrelevant whether or not the earth is capable of receiving all of it. It is and it shines.[43] But this "proving" is always through a mode of narrative constitutionally different from the dominant metaphysics of Reason and/or law. Beyond "discovery" (kashf) and "taste" (dhawq), 'Ayn al- Qudāt postulates basirah ("perception") as yet another metarational agency of grasping the nature of God. Al-Basirah begins to operate when al-'aql ("reason") cannot any more. There are theoretical intricacies (ghawāmiz al-nazariyyah) that "reason" cannot grasp but "perception" can.[44] 'Ayn al- Qudāt argues that al-basirah is in fact something like the rational faculty itself, or the ability to see or the taste for poetry. Those who do not have them do not know how they work. The difference between a "philoso-pher" (al-'dlim) and a "knower" ('drif) is that a philosopher can partake of truth only as something which is "known" (malüm), whereas the 'drif partakes in "the beauty of truth" (jamdl al-haqq), and by virtue of this pleasure/understanding he has an overwhelming ecstasy (shawq azim) towards God.[45]

Uns is yet another virtue, or force in 'Ayn al-Qudāt's countermetaphysics, by which he identifies the nature of the 'drifts grasp of truth. Uns, rather difficult to translate, has a range of meanings pointing to a comfortable and intimate, habitual and frequent, relationship between two persons or a person and an object. To have uns with someone means to

have grown to like the cosy companionship of that person. 'Ayn al- Qudāt suggests that the 'drif as opposed to the philosopher, or the person who operates through reason, gets used to (uns) beholding the beauty of the Divine Presence. Then whatever increases human uns with heavenly concerns subverts one's uns with the material world.[46] Kashf (discovery), dhawq (taste), basir ah (perception), uns (companionship) are thus modes of subtle counter-thoughts, or counter-intelligibilities, which define an 'drif and distinguish him from a rationalistic philosopher.

This leads 'Ayn al-Qudāt to three hierarchically ordered epistemic positions vis-à-vis the knowledge of the existence of God or Imam firstly, al-ma'rifah, which means "knowing" in the most intimate sense of the term and ought to be distinguished from 'ilm or "knowledge", which is not even in the hierarchy; secondly, al-waldyah, which means "friendship" or "companionship", and which is a higher form of "knowing" God; and, thirdly, al-nubuwwah, which means "prophethood" and which constitutes the most intimate "knowing" of God with certainty.[47]

Kashf dhawq, basir ah, uns and a number of other, related, terms constitute the principal vocabularies of 'Ayn al-Qudāt's soft metaphysics, deliberately postulated against the hard metaphysics of law and reason which determined the narrative tropes of Islamic jurisprudence and Islamic philosophy, respectively.[48] The soft counter-metaphysics of 'Ayn al-Qudāt is formulated deliberately and consciously against the hard metaphysics of logocentrism that particularly with the advance of Greek philosophy
cross-countered Islamic nomocentrism and created a binary opposition between reason and law in the two opposing/

apposing faces of Islamic metaphysics. The tripartite theocentric epistemology that Ayn al-Qudat postulates – al-marifah, al-walayah and al-nubuwwah – is construed with reference to such counter-intelligibilities as bastrah, Hrfdn and uns, all replacing the hard metaphysics of reason and law with the soft metaphysics of a "theo-erotic" nature. Love (al-'ishq) is in fact the defining/dividing factor that separates baslrah from 'aql. Only baslrah can grasp the conditions (ahwdl) of love (Hshq), whereas reason (al-'aqt) cannot understand anything but forms of knowledge (al-'ulurri),[49] In Ayn al- Qudat's "theo-erotic" opposition to the metaphysics of reason and law, "love" is the supreme defining factor that constitutes the relationship between person-as-lover and God-as-Beloved.[50] Ayn al-Qudat is determined that there is a mode (tawr) of understanding (idrak) which is beyond reason:

Whoever has been blessed with the pleasure of this mode, his reason is rendered blind by virtue of its disability to grasp the truth of the First and comprehend the truth of His Attributes. The last universe from the rationally understood universes is the recognition of reason that there are many things that it does not understand. This inability is the vanguard of what lies beyond in that mode which is beyond reason. The final frontiers of the mode of reason are linked to the first frontiers of the mode which is beyond it. As for [example] the last frontiers of the recognition of good from evil [al-tamyiz] is connected to the first frontiers of reason. Among the characteristics of a person of rational knowledge [al-'dlim is that when he or she has reached perfection in knowledge ['ilm he or she knows for certain that it is impossible to grasp the Everlasting Truth [al-Haqiqat al- azaliyyah?[51]

In order to postulate a mode of understanding beyond reason, Ayn al- Qudat always "reasons" by referring to a state below reason, as for example in the passage I just quoted where he says that the last frontiers of al-tamyfz$_y$ a simple recognition of good from evil, refers to the first frontiers of reason. Elsewhere, he postulates al-wahm ("fantasy" or "the estimative faculty") as a state beneath reason. He suggests that as al-wahm cannot grasp its real inability to grasp rational intelligibilities, so does reason not truly understand that it cannot comprehend "the truth of the Truth" and "the truth of His Attributes".

From this anti-rationalistic, "counter-metaphysics" of "theo-eroti- cism", Ayn al-Qudat proceeds to address such seminal theological problems as the pre-eternity or createdness of the world,[52] or the contin-gent reality of all created beings.[53] In one of the most compelling narrative strategies of the Zubdah, 'Ayn al-Qudāt constructs the image of a mirror wherein external objects are reflected. As the image in the mirror, ipso facto, points to a pre-existing reality a priori to it, this (material) world should be considered as a mere mirror image of a supernal reality beyond itself.[54] Another typical example of how 'Ayn al-Qudāt subverts the reigning rationality-based discourse of his time is his suggestion that the priority of God over existent beings is not a "temporal priority" (qabliyyah zamāniyyah) but a priority in "essence" (al-dhāt) and "nobility" (al- sharaf). In a passage remarkably reminiscent of Plato's Phaedo, Ayn al-Qudāt argues for the immortality of the human soul, that it has existed before entering the body, that it has then entered the body and that it will survive after its separation from the body.

You ought to know that the human mind does not grasp the true nature of the soul, except such aspects of it which are evident in the body and its attributes, such as the fact that it understands and that it prompts action. In these two attributes, all animal species are identical. But it [i.e., the human intellect] does not understand its continuity [i.e., the continuity of the soul] after its departure from the body, while it may be grasped through theoretical observation in a rational way. Because the soul is the locus of all knowledge and knowledge is not divisible, and thus the division of its locus is unimaginable. And whatever is like that cannot disintegrate. And as for the supposition that it exists before [entering] the body, no one has been able to provide a convincing proof which is beyond suspicion and doubt. The problem with the rational people in that respect goes back to their lack of proper expressions to convey that meaning. And as for their supposition that it is found in the body, and that the body is a pre-condition, a causal factor, for its existence, that is [entirely] wrong. That it changes its condition when entering the body is perfectly evident. The fact of the matter is that the soul exists before entering the body. That is perfectly clear to me. But I cannot explain this in such a way that aborts all possibilities of doubt and reversal. And my guess is that whoever understands this is equally at pains to explain what he understands. This opinion of mine, I have not reached in its entirety by virtue of any observations of rational proof and logical argumentation. Except for the fact that rational observations, as elaborated in logical observations of theoretical sources, have considerably helped me [in this respect]. To the degree that it is possible to elaborate in this short treatise, [I might say] that the reason for the existence of the soul [before entering the body] is due to its supreme causality which is in existence before it enters the body,

and that the cause and the caused are [both] in it. Certainly, its operation in the body is contingent upon the existence of certain specific conditions, and it does not come-into-being (yiijad) except after the existence of such conditions.[55]

The Zubdah is thus a remarkably condensed text, culminating in 'Ayn al-Qudat's brilliant formulation of a "theo-erotic" epistemics deliberately and in detail postulated against the reigning rational tendency of philosophy. As the last book written on the principal doctrinal beliefs of Islam, the Zubdah is an historical testimony to the creative imagination and the theoretical prowess of its author. The Zubdah testifies not only to his brilliant command of the whole juridical and philosophical traditions developed by his time, but, more important, to his rare analytical capabilities to formulate theoretical positions. The Zubdah is indeed a revolutionary manifesto for a radically different epistemics that introduces a whole new spectrum of phenomenological sensibilities in "under-standing". That that epistemic revolution remains constitutionally theocentric, that it is put whole-heartedly at the service of "proving" the Islamic credal doctrines via a phenomenological hermeneutics radically different from, and subversive to, the reigning rational approaches of his time, does not, in any significant way, detract anything from the serious viability of its major propositions. One must, as Eco argued about Aquinas, be able to disentangle 'Ayn al-Qudat's theoretical formulations, particularly his epistemology, from his theocentric mode of narrative in the Zubdah. Soon after the Zubdah, as I shall demonstrate presently, he will surpass that theocentricity, and the twin problematics of knowing-and-telling become paramount in his writings. Operating within the general doctrinal mandates of his faith, in the Zubdah 'Ayn al-Qudat transcends both the legalistic approach

of the juridical tradition and the rational one of the philosophical, and yet ultimately remains in the Zubdah within the theocentric confinements of his ancestral faith. The introduction to the Zubdah leaves no doubt that both the nomocentrism of law and the logocentrism of philosophy had left Ayn al-Qudat totally dissatisfied and indeed abandoned him desperately in a critical state of doubt and confusion. In the Zubdah he found and formulated a mode (al-tawr) of thought-as-being beyond that of reason.[56] As perhaps the most theoretically consistent and sustained text produced on the defining terms of his revolutionary epistemic mode, the Zubdah was the zenith of what could still be called "Islamic" imagination. This he achieved when he was twenty- four. Still he had a long and productive life ahead of him. That long and productive life was cut brutally short by the political circumstances of his life. But before that tragic end he still managed to go beyond this zenith of Islamic sacred imagination, he still managed to explore "modes" of thought-as-being beyond what he had done in the Zubdah. The conclusion

of the Zubdah in 516/1122 coincided with the commencement of his extensive writings in the form, or "mode", of "letters", and it is to his "letters" that I now would like to turn our attention.

The Letters

Both in the Zubdah (516/1122) and in the Shakwa' (52513), Ayn al- Qudat himself asserts that the Zubdah is the last book he ever wrote. Three scholars, A. J. Arberry, A. 'Usayran and A. Zarrinkub, have actually accused Ayn al-Qudat of

"approximating the truth" (i.e., lying) in this respect in the Shakwa in particular for fear of his life.[57] They suggest that Ayn al-Qudat deliberately did not refer to his Maktubat and Tamhidat in his "apologia" in order not to add more ammunition at the disposal of his enemies. An alternative reading of these two passages in the Zubdah and the Shakwa is that Ayn al-Qudat in fact means what he says, that after the Zubdah he did not write any "book" in the ordinary sense of the term. While it may be supposed that in the Shakwa, written in 525/1131 in a prison in Baghdad, Ayn al-Qudat suppressed the existence of his Maktubat and Tamhidat for fear of adding to his problems, that supposition is seriously challenged by the fact that as he was defending himself in the Shakwa Ayn al-Qudat does not for once conceal his utter contempt for his accusers. It is possible to take Ayn al-Qudat's remarks at their face value and assume that he did not consider either his "letters" or his "preparations" as "books" in the ordinary sense of the term. The chief characteristics of Ayn al-Qudat's Maktubat and the Tamhidat is that (1) they are identical in their narrative, i.e., the "chapters" of the Tamhidat read almost exactly like "the letters" of the Maktubat; (2) they are not in "book" form, i.e., each individual "letter" or "chapter" can be read almost independently (and there are as many cross-references among the "chapters" of the Tamhidat as there are among "the letters" of the Maktubat); and (3) they both break radically loose from all the dominant metanarratives of Islamic metaphysical Truth-telling and relentlessly search for an autonomous, individual, irreducibly self-conscious narrativity. The assumption that the Tamhidat "is in a sense the same as the Zubdah in a different expression – more expanded and more poetic"[58] is utterly incorrect. In their basic narrative strategies, both the Tamhidat and the

Maktubat break radically from the Zubdah. One of the political strategies of subsequent "mystical" readings of Ayn al-Qudat has been to whitewash all the crucial internal developments in Ayn al-Qudat's thinking and writing tropes. It is imperative to date his writings and care-fully distinguish between one text and another. Otherwise, not only Ayn al-Qudat's diversified modes of writing but some fourteen hundred years

of vigorous intellectual debates and developments are packed together and appropriated as "Persian Sufism".

Between 517/1123 and 525/1130 'Ayn al-Qudât wrote a substantial but unknown number of "letters". These "letters" constitute a remarkable narrative strategy radically different from 'Ayn al-Qudàt's other writings, and in their rhetorical tropes entirely their own. While these "letters" contain some insightful references to 'Ayn al-Qudàt's personal and public life, they are essentially a series of short treatises on thematic issues. He selects a subject, e.g. "intentionality", and writes a series of "letters", not just one, on it. There are references to actual, historical persons in these "letters", such as Kâmil al-Dawlah or 'Aziz al-Mustawfî, two of his most devoted and influential friends. But that is not an indication that these historical persons were the sole addressees of these letters. In fact, 'Ayn al-Qudât himself is quite emphatic in one of his "letters" that he has a larger audience in mind, extended into the future, for these "letters", and indeed the extant manuscripts of 'Ayn al-Qudàt's "letters" indicate that subsequent generations reproduced them with a liberal attitude as to their number and/or content. There is no way to ascertain the number of 'Ayn al-Qudàt's "letters". At one point in the Tamhîdât he says that he wrote "volumes" of letters to his friends and acquaintances.[59] One anthology of

his letters in Istanbul contains 127 "letters", another 67.[60] Quite a number of these anthologies have no date of preparation, which is a typical way of dehistoricizing these texts and collectively assimilating them into a grand mystical metanarrative. The few extant dated anthologies of manuscripts of these "letters", however, do indicate that from the fourth decade of the seventh/thirteenth century onwards a growing number of texts were produced that contained samples of 'Ayn al-Qudàt's "letters". In the Sipahsalàr Library in Tehran there is an anthology, dated 638/1240, which is the oldest extant manuscript found so far. This anthology contains only six letters of 'Ayn al-Qudàt. The most recent dated manuscript is in the Bibliothç°µe Nationale in Paris; it was prepared in 1025/1616 and contains ninety-eight "letters". The editors of a critical edition of these letters believe that this manuscript was copied from an undated anthology now kept in the National Library in Tehran.[61] If we disregard all the extant but undated manuscripts and consider the two oldest and most recent dated collections, we see that, starting from the seventh/ thirteenth century, there is an increased interest in 'Ayn al-Qudàt's "letters", an "interest" which indicates a persistent appropriation of 'Ayn al-Qudàt by active Sufis. The seventh/ thirteenth century, with the presence of Jalai al-Dln Rüml (d. 672/1273) and Ibn 'Arabl (d. 638/1240) and his Persian followers, was in fact the height of mystical imagination. After Rùmï, there appears to be an increased interest in 'Ayn al-Qudàt's "letters" among the Turkish Sufis.

The presence of Rumi, and later his legacy, among the Turkishspeaking Sufi communities in Asia Minor probably acted as a catalyst in assimilation of Ayn al-Qudat, and particularly his "letters", into the mystical tradition. In 668/

1269 a collection of Ayn al-Qudat's "letters" was prepared in what is identified as "Turkish naskh"G and by someone "who did not know Persian quite well".[63] This scribe also ventured to summarize some of Ayn al-Qudat's "letters". This trend continued until the middle of the eighth/fourteenth century, when another scribe, who identifies himself as Yunus ibn Shadl ibn Wall al-Dln Mawlawi (obviously a Mevlevi Sufi), prepared an anthology of sixty-four "letters" of Ayn al-Qudat between Jumada II, 733/February—March 1333, and Shawwal 762/August-September 1361. This scribe also produced a verbatim, interlineal, Turkish translation of fourteen of the sixty-four "letters", presumably intended for some young Turkish novices who did not know Persian. The beautiful calligraphy and the red ink used for Qur'anic and Hadith passages may indicate the interest of a wealthy and/or powerful patron in the production of this anthology. The inclusion of Ahmad al-Ghazzall's letters to Ayn al-Qudat in some manuscripts, such as in the one produced in 853/1449 and now kept in the Mulla Murad Library in Istanbul, testifies to the textual institutionalization of a sustained dialogue between the two and symbolic configuration of a pantheon of "Persian Sufis".[64]

Despite this massive appropriation of these "letters" into a monolithic "Sufi tradition", a closer reading of them reveals a rather different picture. In their very narrative strategy, Ayn al-Qudat's "letters" are implicit (and thus effective), rhetorical subversions of "book" (al-kitab) and "treatise" (,al-risdlah) as the dominant metaphysical forms of Truth-telling. It is almost impossible to attend to "the content" of these "letters" without a simultaneous attention to their preferred narrative strategy: a simultaneous attention which must inevitably lead to the final destruction of the pre-sumed

binary opposition between "content" and "form". Developed over a relatively extended period of time, i.e., between 517/1123 and 525/1130, these "letters" are the last and final choice of Ayn al-Qudat for his preferred narrative. Zubdat al-haqaiq, with qualifications which I identified in the preceding passages, was the last "book" that Ayn al-Qudat wrote as the culmination of his relentless engagement with, for him, the "classical" mode of addressing the supreme metaphysics of Truth-telling.

Ayn al-Qudat achieves a narrative voice in his "letters" unlike anything else in the long, rich and diversified history of intellectual activities to which as a Muslim of extraordinary learning he had access. The first and foremost narrative feature of these "letters" is precisely their preferred rhetorical choice of "personal letters", that they are written in a specific context, that they defy and subvert the meta-physics of anonymity which informs and authorizes the entire spectrum of "knowledge" he had inherited. 'Ayn al-Qudàt is quite emphatic in pointing out that "it was Monday, the seventeenth of Muharram. I wrote a short passage to my student", or "this letter, I wrote on the eve of Saturday [i.e., on Friday evening], after the evening prayer [just to inform you] of [my] good health and fortune. Yesterday, which was the first of Muharram, I received a letter from that dear brother, may God increase his days."[65] This insistence on temporality gives 'Ayn al-Qudàt's "letters" a peculiar kind of temporal "authenticity" absent in the dominant modes of Truth-telling in most of the established (nomocentric, logocentric or even theo-erotic) discourses. As in most traditions of power-basing narratives, the effacement of temporality is one of the principal modes of universalizing an otherwise perfectly particular vision of reality.

Writing "letters" was of course nothing new in the Persian or Islamic intellectual traditions. The most distinguished intellectual of 'Ayn al- Qudàt's generation, Abü Hàmid al-Ghazzàlï's brother, Ahmad, whom 'Ayn al-Qudàt had met, admired and corresponded with, in fact wrote letters to 'Ayn al-Qudàt. There is indeed a whole genre of Makâtïb al- 'urafa with which 'Ayn al-Qudàt's letters are identified. Abü Hàmid al-Ghazzâll himself wrote quite a number of "letters" to Seljüq warlords, advising them on matters of politics and statecraft. But there is something peculiar to 'Ayn al-Qudàt's "letters" which is absent in others, and that is the gradual but persistent vibration of a personal voice fully conscious, self-conscious even, of the subjectivity, temporality and, most significant of all, narrativity of his voice. 'Ayn al-Qudàt is self-consciously present in his narratives as no one else is willing to face or admit that central presence.

Central to the temporality of 'Ayn al-Qudàt's self-conscious narrative in his "letters" is a full and rare unresoluteness about its movements that precisely in its unresoluteness discloses the constructability of all narrative acts. Through his narrative disclosure of the temporality of his own act of "telling", 'Ayn al-Qudàt discloses the temporal reality of all acts of "telling", and, a fortiori, all temporal acts of Truth-telling that hide behind a metaphysics of atemporality. But even more important, through this narrative disclosure of the physical temporality of "telling", 'Ayn al-Qudàt reveals the irreducible temporality of all cognitions of being, if they were only not subverted, distorted and concealed behind the reigning demands of the metaphysics of atemporality. Thus, through the transparent temporality of 'Ayn al-Qudàt's narrative, not only all metaphysical acts of Truth-telling, but with them that

metaphysics itself and ultimately the "Being" which is postulated by it are all transformed. Here is a good example:

You ought to know, my dear friend, may God increase your days and by His grace grant you what you wish, that that statement
which I wrote to you in addition to this one on the subject of the endowment that [our mutual friend] Kamil [al-Dawlah] has made, is an unbelievable piece of writing. Since yesterday that I wrote that piece, a number of times it has occurred to me to tear it into pieces, for reasons which I am not at liberty to mention. Today I consulted [the Holy Text], whether or not to send it, both on Fathah's grave and on Tahir's. I thought perhaps to write you something else, less subject to misinterpretation. It is thus that I write you this letter. I hope that from [my] pen shall come [only] what is best for you and me, and for all Muslims.[66]

Such rhetorical suppositions as "I would have", "if I could have", or "only if I could I would have" are conditional phrases with which Ayn al-Qudat both constitutes and at the same time subverts his own subjectivity. Central to the subjectivity of 'Ayn al-Qudat's narrative is his consistent self-consciousness of the existential individuality of his perceptions. 'Ayn al-Qudat in effect takes the overwhelming temporality of his narrative and works it through a conscious recognition of the existential nature of all acts of "telling", including the supreme act of Truth-telling before it has taken refuge, for fear of being recognized as yet another act of "telling", behind the metaphysics of primordiality, atemporality. That metaphysics that informs everything in the "Islamic" intellectual traditions, from the logocentricism of "Islamic philosophy" to the nomocentricism of "Islamic law",

the theo-eroticism of "Islamic mysticism", and I even dare say the humanism of Persian and Arabic traditions of adab, is what is radically suspended in this self-conscious subjectivity of 'Ayn al-Qudat's preferred rhetoric of "letter-writing".

Equally central to the very self-conscious narrativity of 'Ayn al- Qudat's preferred mode of writing, the fact that he is alert to the "telling" nature (whether written or vocal) of all claims to "Truth", is a prose that moves by a dialectic energy generated by the active divestment of its own highly alert rhetoric. Ayn al-Qudat is the master practitioner of making his own writing actively alert to its written-ness. The result of this prose, highly alert to its temporality, subjectivity and narrativity, is the generation and sustenance of an almost audible "voice" that in its potent poeticity "shatters", to use Heidegger's expression, the thick walls of the presiding metaphysics of Truth-telling.

The subjectivity of 'Ayn al-Qudat's narrative in his letter-writing is thoroughly contingent on his insistence to place his letters in time, space, occasions, frames of very specific reference:

In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate. Praise be to God, the Giver of Reason and Life, so excellent is His giving. Yesterday, Thursday, the eleventh of Rabl' al-Awal, I wrote a letter to that dear brother, may God lengthen his life and may
He show him the path of salvation, on the issue concerning certain questions that you had raised, about which I have remained silent. Concerning that issue, there is much to be said. But yesterday, when I received your letter, I felt really depressed, so I wrote very briefly. Today, somebody kindly

asked me for a letter. So I thought of writing something for him. Since I had already started the letter, I thought to finish it. Of course I do not know what I will end up writing![67]

This pre-emptive suspension of intentionality in writing gives writing a reality sui generis quite independent of the will of the author. There are innumerable occasions in his "letters" where 'Ayn al-Qudat writes that he is not completely in charge of his writings, that writing itself is a reality sui generis.

Equally constitutional to that radical subjectivity is Ayn al-Qudat's penchant for using the act of writing itself, from the letters of the alphabet to sentence structures, as the verisimilitudes of being:

If someone wants to learn the Qur'an, they must necessarily be taught the letters of the alphabet. Their learning [the Qur'an] is contingent upon learning these letters. The teacher will teach them A, B, C [etc.]. It is perfectly evident that if the letter "A" is not [taught] first, it does not make any difference. The objective shall nevertheless be reached. It is perfectly possible to start with the letters "T", "U" or "K", to the end, in whatever way that they are presented. It is possible to start [the teaching of the alphabet] with any letter. It does not make any difference what "letter" a child is taught first. What is important is to teach the alphabet. But it is not necessary to start with "A" or "T", "N"or "U". You can do it in a reverse order. There is a point here that if you search the whole world you will not hear it from anybody [else].[68]

He then takes this example and applies it to the very heart of Islamic juridical laws concerning prayers, fasting, etc., with a

full intention of exposing the decidability of such juridical mandates.

Ayn al-Qudat's ultimate objective in such deliberate breakdowns of habitual conformities is to alert his readers to the artificiality of all binary oppositions:

My dear! Suppose someone is in his entire being in love with knowledge; spending his days and nights doing nothing but seeking knowledge. If he loves pens, paper, ink and ink-case, you cannot say that he is not entirely in love with knowledge. Quite to the contrary! The Beloved cannot necessarily be but one.

There is nothing wrong with loving other things so far as they are loved by virtue of [their relatedness to] the beloved. If man loves God, he necessarily loves His messenger, and loves his own guide [pir], and loves his own life and health, and loves eating and drinking, because they sustain his life, and he loves [his] wealth, by means of which he attains his daily sustenance. He also necessarily loves the cold and the warm weather, the snow, the rain, the sky and the earth. Because were it not for the earth, the wheat will not grow. So he loves the farmer too. This is so far as the philosophers ['uqala] see it. Put in other terms, someone who is in love, loves the place where his beloved lives; and the whole world is His House; and he loves the handwriting, the artefact and the written compositions of the person he loves, and the whole world is His handwriting and his written composition. Indeed everything is just Him. Let me put it even more bluntly. Once there was an army going on an expedition against the infidels. Abu'l-Abbas al-Qassab turned to them and said, "O, if I could only sacrifice my life for that infidel

whom you are going to kill for Him!" If the wishes of the beloved are to burn a letter that she has written to her lover, then the lover must necessarily burn that letter. And here no one can say that a disrespect has been demonstrated against the letter of the beloved, because [the lover] has done as the beloved has wished. And this is a great calamity! If the Chosen One, peace be upon him, and Abu Bakr eliminated the infidels who were against Him, they simply obeyed His commands. They meant to make Him happy with themselves. Otherwise a lover has no business interfering in the rule of the beloved. And that indeed is a long story. Peace and salutations [upon you]. Praise be to God, the Lord of both worlds, and peace and benedictions be upon His best creation, Muhammad, and all his relatives![69]

The burning of the letter or message of the beloved here could not have been lost to critical readers of Ayn al-Qudat, as to what exact message, letter or book he specifically had in mind.

Even when Ayn al-Qudat engages in familiar theoretical debates he does so in his own radically transformative way, in a constantly moving epistemic roller-coaster that does not yield to any narrative authority. In one of his long letters, for example, he engages in the vexed problem of theodicy. He addresses his reader and refers to a previous letter in which he had said that the theological position of the Qadarites (those who believe in free will as opposed to predestination) has been distorted, that originally their position was perfectly correct and that gradually the successive generations of interpreters have distorted their original position. The current, i.e., Ayn al-Qudat's time, Qadarite position is that

God cannot be the cause of evil. 'Ayn al-Qudat says this is blasphemy because it necessitates another God, "which is the religion of the Zoro- astrians ['Ayn al-Qudat uses the derogatory term of gabr for Zoroastrians], who believe in Yazdan and Ahrlman". And the Qadarites are the Zoroastrians among my followers, "[a presumed prophetic statement] refers to this [fact]".[70]

Through a reconstruction of what he considers to be the "original" position of the Qadarites, 'Ayn al-Qudat postulates six principles by which the problem of theodicy may be resolved. The first principle by which 'Ayn al-Qudat commences his "letter" concerning the problem of theodicy is, typically, a linguistic proposition. When a word or an expression or a signifier refers to more than one signified, and one of those signified is a wrong proposition, then one can very easily be confused. The expression "to bring to life a dead person", Ayn al-Qudat suggests,[71] has a literal meaning, that is to say, what the expression "literally means, and [then] it has a symbolic meaning, which is to say when God turns an ignorant person into a person of knowledge". There are variations and modifications on how a signifier can be "multi-significatory" (mushtarik al-dilalah) which does not concern Ayn al-Qudat here. Usually, 'Ayn al-Qudat insists, it is from the context of the signifier that the exact signified is understood. Nevertheless when we receive an expression which is multi-significatory, and one of its signifieds is a fallacious proposition, we are bound to be confused.

The second principle is that whatever we receive from the intermediary sources (wdsildn) concerning doctrinal positions is by definition multi-significatory, and it cannot be otherwise.[72] The principal reason for this is that the signifiers

are finite and yet the signifieds are infinite, "and since the signifieds [maant] are hundreds of times more than the signifiers [alfaz], then necessarily multi-signification (ishtirak-i dar alfdz;) is inevitable".[73] But what is more important is 'Ayn al-Qudat's assertion that:

Every constructed signifier is made to refer to tangible signifieds (madni-i zahir). Such signifieds that the multitude do not see and know have no constructed signifiers. Since in the material world the signifiers are verified only through the external eye, then they have constructed expression, such as "the sky", "the earth", "the mountain", "the land", "the sea", "honey", "man", etc. While heavenly [= malakut, by which he means "nonmaterial"] intelligibles have no constructed signifiers, because not everyone can observe them. Thus when someone wants to talk about such [non-material] expressions, they have to borrow istidrah from those signifiers constructed [for the material signifieds].[74]

Ayn al-Qudat further elaborates on this principle, that as various branches of knowledge have developed in Arabic then specific expressions have been "borrowed" from tangible signifiers in order to construct technical vocabularies. Thus jurists, theologians, grammarians, prosodists, etc. have all constructed their respective technical vocabularies by borrowing words and expressions that do not refer to their original signifieds any more.[75] The same is true about all other-worldly references in the Qur'an, wherein worldly expressions have been used to refer to other-worldly realities still beyond human comprehension. Of course, there cannot be any absolute correspondence between other-worldly realities and worldly expressions, and thus as the Qur'an says one must "believe in the unseen". Expressions such as

"Heaven" and "Hell" are thus closer to realities that are unseen and other-worldly than such expressions as "bread, meat, and honey".[76] At this point Ayn al-Qudat introduces his reading of such non-mean- ingful Qur'anic expressions as Khy's, Hm'sq, Alms, Tsm, Th and Ys. These are signifiers, Ayn al-Qudat contends, to other-worldly realities for which there are no worldly comparisons. There is a pattern to these signifiers. Occasionally, they are only one letter, such as Q (as in 50: 1), S (as in 38: 1) or (as in 68: 1). Sometimes they are two, such as Th (as in 20: 1) or K (as in 36: 1) or Hm (as in 40: 1). They might be three, such as Air (as in 10: 1), Tsm (as in 26: 1), Aim (as in 2: 1). There are combinations of four, such as Alms (as in 7: 1), Almr (as in 13: 1). And finally, they might be a combination of five letters, such as Khy's (as in 19: 1) or Hm'sq (as in 42: 1). Ayn al-Qudat contends that all these differences have a significance. There is a reason that some are only one letter, others two, three, four or five. There is also a reason why there are not more than five. But all these combinations of letters are scattered signifiers that point to signifieds beyond the common comprehension of people in their material frame of reference. When grammarians say "subject", "object" or "predicate", they have borrowed these terms from their common uses and given them technical meaning. There are such uses of common expressions for non-common realities in the Quran too. But there are also Qur'anic constructions, such as Aim, which are not borrowed from the material world because they signify realities utterly alien to the material form of ordinary linguistic references. Not only the significance of these letters but the whole mystery of other letters concerns Ayn al-Qudat. He says that there must be a significance as to their numbers, shapes, correspondences to realities. Ayn al-Qudat is quite boastful of his observations in this respect.

Do not think for a moment that as long as Islam has existed anyone has had the [intellectual] power to say what I have said concerning these broken letters. Everyone has simply followed Ibn Abbas [an early Qur'anic commentator] in this respect,

maintaining that [for example] "A" refers to "Allah", "L" to "Jibra'il ", and "M" to "Muhammad". And even this much not everyone knows what it exactly means. It is a long way before one recognizes what the "A" of "Allah" signifies, or the "L" of "Jibra'il", or the "M" of "Muhammad". Simply to know what Ibn Abbas said is one thing, but to learn [why] something is something [else] is an entirely different thing. It is not such an accomplishment to know that Ibn Abbas maintained that "A" refers to "Allah". As if for example, someone learned that "the world is created". This is not knowledge, unless one knows why the world is created.[77]

The third principle that Ayn al-Qudat proposes, in this apparently theological but effectively hermeneutic theory, is that one can compose an expression that on the one hand reads like the Qadarite position that "God does not create evil", which is not acceptable, because it then necessitates a second god who can cause evil, just like the Zoroastrian belief, and on the other corresponds to a meaning which is acceptable. In the second, Ayn al-Qudat's preferred reading is that God cannot cause evil, but that proposition is to be understood only in the grand scheme of things. There are things that "appear" as evil to us but in an absolute sense they are not. When a child is given a medicine which is bitter, the child considers it an evil act, but in reality it is good. If the child had the wisdom of his parents it would know that taking the medicine was a good not an evil act. With the same logic, there are things which in God's grand wisdom are good, but

in our limited perceptions, always limited to our specific realities, they appear as evil. The reason, Ayn al- Qudat says, that the Prophet has prohibited discussions of theodicy is that whoever engages in it will inevitably go astray.[78] Whoever believes in the existence of such evil acts as "blasphemy, adultery, sodomy and theft"[79] either has to attribute them to God, which is blasphemy, or to some other source, which is equally blasphemous. An alternative view would be to hold that there is no evil, which is more acceptable but still it posits certain problems such as appearing not to consider "blasphemy, adultery, sodomy, theft, robbery and murder"[80] as evil acts. Three positions thus become evident in the matter of theodicy: two are blasphemous, one acceptable. It is blasphemous to believe that evil exists and that God has created it; it is equally blasphemous to believe that there is evil but God did not cause it. The acceptable position is that "there is evil but it is like a kind of therapy and medicine which is evil-in-appearance but good-in-truth".[81]

The fourth principle is that all, or most, (theological) positions were correct in their original formulations but that they were distorted by misguided transmitters. This should become evident, Ayn al-Qudat points out, only by observing one's own age. Every age, he maintains, is just
like others, consisting of four major groups: the dogmaticians ('ulama '), the philosophers ('uqala), the ignorant (juhhat) and the insane (majdnm). If someone today starts an utterly insane idea, such as that nothing exists at all, and there are enough people believing in it, before long there would be a school of thought to that effect; as indeed the Sophists had a similar position and for a long time they had their followers.[82] 'Ayn al-Qudat then turns the question around and suggests that such an utterly inane position could not have been that of the

Sophists, that undoubtedly their positions have been altered ever time. 'Ayn al-Qudat's example, again as usual, is a linguistic one: "We read in the Qur'an," he says, "that Pharaoh's followers said, 'And over them we shall be victorious' [Qur'an 7: 127]. And we know that by 'over them' a 'victory' is intended. Now, imagine someone were to translate this to Persian or Turkish, and the equivalent of 'victorious' is [inadvertently] dropped. Then the story of Moses and Pharaoh will be misunderstood, and some people may think that [the phrase] 'over them we …' means that we are sitting over their head, and this is wrong and fallacious."[83] 'Ayn al-Qudat does the same hermeneutic explications of the expression "come down" in the statement attributed to Prophet Muhammad that "Every night God comes down from the heavens to the earth", and to the word "wisdom" (hikmah) in the Qur'anic passage "And to whomever He gives wisdom, He has indeed given a great blessing."[84] Very naturally, substitutions of words and meanings can gradually distort the original intentions of a phrase. On this premise, 'Ayn al-Qudat makes the radical proposition that such religions as Christianity or Zoroastrianism that now Muslims consider misguided were originally of a different nature which has not come down to us, "as indeed Islam [itself] which little by little is being discarded, these religions too have been little by little discarded".[85] Did the Prophet himself not say, "There shall be a time when people will gather in mosques and pray and not a single Muslim shall be among them"?[86] When during the immediate generation after the Prophet, Hasan al-Basrl complained that no trace of Islam were to be found, what was to be understood of the state of "Islam" in 'Ayn al-Qudat's time, he retorted, some five centuries after the initial Muhammadan message? The same is true about Zoroastrianism which has been around "for four or five

thousand years".[87] How could we know what exactly was the nature of this faith when it started? "I have a friend from Badakhshan," 'Ayn al-Qudat further elaborates, "who once told me that in his native land is a place where people consider themselves to be Muslims. They considered their leader to be a person who could read the Qur'an; and yet they had no one who could understand the meaning of the Qur'an. They do not pray, and they have no idea that in Islam praying is mandatory. They know that they have to perform their hajj pilgrimage, and yet they do not know that they have to fast during the month of Ramadan."[88]

The fifth principle is that there are varieties of distortions (tahrif) which cannot be counted or enumerated. 'Ayn al-Qudat distinguishes, for example, between the spoken words and the written statements. He is deliberately conscious of the fact that the spoken words have certain intonations which are utterly missing in the written statements. A person might say to his slave, 'Ayn al-Qudat says, "go do whatever you want" in a state of anger and frustration; and the same person might say "go do whatever you want" to his son in a state of parental love and care. When they are spoken, they have different intonations and "meanings", but when they are written, they are identical, "because one cannot write the difference between the condition of anger and that of contentment, since it pertains to the shape of the person". There is the added element of the addressee, of which 'Ayn al-Qudat is equally aware: "When you are present, I engage in a dialogue with you in correspondence to your knowledge. While if a child or an adult of limited rational faculties were present, they would not be able to understand me, and should they report what I had said on a [different] occasion, they would misrepresent it [inevitably]."[89]

The sixth principle is that someone who seeks the truth must never dwell on any religion or school of thought, should only get to know them and then go beyond them. Using the image of a pilgrimage, 'Ayn al- Qudat says that to reach Kufah from Hamadan, one must first reach Baghdad. But Baghdad is not the ultimate destination. It is only a stage to get to Kufah, and then Kufah itself is not the end; one only goes there to go to reach the Ka'bah in Mecca.

Hermeneutics

It is impossible to exaggerate the radical implications of 'Ayn al-Qudat's historical hermeneutics as expounded in this letter, which he wrote to his close friend and confidante 'Aziz al-Dln al-Mustawfl.[90] In six successive moves he transforms the entire edifice of "Islamic" epistemic assumptions as institutionalized in not only the juridical and philosophical but any other hegemonic reading. While he engages in the rather common problem of theodicy through a reading of the Qadarite position, he pursues a much more serious line of hermeneutic argument. The fact of the multi-significality of all acts of signification is 'Ayn al-Qudat's path to a remarkably radical hermeneutics with monumental implications for the historical veracity of any ahistorical notion of "Truth".

The six principles through which 'Ayn al-Qudat develops his rereading of the Qadarite theological position correspond to the primary features of his historical hermeneutics, or his theory of reading such historical events as the rise of a religion. The first and foremost feature of this

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hermeneutics is the principality of language in any act of understanding. He maintains that "since the discourse (sukhari) of the intermediary sources (wasilan) is multi-significatory (mushtarik al-dildlah) to two or three signifieds, only one of which is right and the others wrong, then whoever does not know this will fall into a fallacy".[91] This revolutionary observation in the whole spectrum of "Islamic" intellectual history renders all acts of the production and reception of knowledge contingent upon language. This is not a casual observation, or in any way limited to the theological position of the Qadarites. 'Ayn al-Qudat insists in the second principle that "the discourse of the intermediary sources cannot but be multi-significatory, and it is impossible for it not to be so".[92] As a hermeneutic principle, all received statements are, ipso facto, multi- significatory. They signify more than one signified. This is so not as a matter of theological or philosophical position or preference, but as a matter of a hermeneutic principle, as a governing theory of reading. The term wasilan means the intermediary sources between the origin of a hermeneutic event (as the original "message" of a religion) and its subsequent interpreters. By recognizing the historical instrumentality of these intermediary interpreting sources, 'Ayn al-Qudat constitutes the subjective individuality of the human agency as the primary vehicle of linguistic transformation of any "original message". Language is spoken by people, and as a linguistic proposition, people can and do make "mistakes" in translating a message from one generation to the next. 'Ayn al-Qudat repeatedly uses examples of how such words as hikmah (wisdom) or nazala (to come down) can have a range of meanings associated with them in one age and then be totally transformed in another. Language thus constitutes the principal problematic in any hermeneutic act, a problematic

which is particularly aggravated by the human agency which is at the centre of any linguistic transference of any "original message".

Emerging immediately from the linguistic problematic at the core of any hermeneutic act is the phenomenon of multi-signification at the very core of that event. The essential problem with this multi-significatory aspect of language is that from a presumed "original message" point of view only one signification is "correct", Ayn al-Qudat says, and the rest are wrong. But no one knows exactly which reading is correct and which are wrong. ('Ayn al-Qudat of course in his typical self-confident way exempts himself from this hermeneutic principle and says that he can tell the difference. But that boastful rhetoric is a different matter in the general scheme of his hermeneutics to which I shall turn momentarily.) This complex of multiple readings makes of the hermeneutic event a pregnant occasion, precisely in the illusion or recognition that only one reading is correct. But which one is it? Thus Ayn al-Qudat makes "mis"- understanding a principal component of his hermeneutics. Since the intermediary sources (wasilan) cannot speak or write except through a multi-signifying language, and since all readers operate under the assumption that only one reading is correct and the rest are wrong, then "mis"-readings are constitutional to all acts of hermeneutics.

But who is to decide which is a correct reading of an original message? Here, 'Ayn al-Qudat is patently conscious of the agency of power, political or intellectual, in deciding the "correct" reading from a network of multi-significatory possibilities. Notice that in his third principle he observes that "there is an expression which in one reading verifies the

position of the Qadarites, and in another it is [perfectly] correct".[93] He further elaborates that one can say, for example in the theological position now under scrutiny, that "Yes, there is evil in the world", and from it one can conclude that the Qadarites are right. But, Ayn al-Qudat stipulates, this reading of the statement is not acceptable because it creates two principal conclusions, each of which is blasphemous. Namely, either evil exists and God did not create it, "thus the creator of evil is someone else and this is blasphemy because [the person] has constituted two gods", or else evil exists and God created it, which is equally blasphemous because "He [i.e., God] has willed evil, which is to say, absolute evil in which there is no good, and a person [sic like that is not proper to be considered magnanimous and benevolent, and it follows from this position that God Almighty is not benevolent, because if He can avoid doing evil, and yet He commits it, then it is impossible for Him to be benevolent, and this position is blasphemous because it requires denying God Almighty perfect Attributes."[94] But there is an alternative reading of the statement "Yes, there is evil in the world" which, Ayn al-Qudat proposes, is correct and that reading maintains that "there is evil but it is like medical therapy and taking of medicine which is evil-in-appearance but good-in-reality".[95] But that reading is "correct" either by virtue of the power of Ayn al- Qudat's argument or by virtue of the political necessity of maintaining the absolute theological monotheism of the Qur'anic revelation. In fact the two religious adversaries with which 'Ayn al-Qudat compares the Islamic monotheism are Zoroastrian dualism ("fire-worshipping") and Christian trinitarianism ("cross-worshipping"), one of which Islam defeated and eradicated in 'Ayn al-Qudat's homeland, and the other Muslim armies faced continually, but particularly during Ayn

al-Qudat's time which coincided with the advent of the Crusades. The triumphant reading of "there is evil but it is like medical therapy and taking of medicine which is evil-in-appearance but good-in-reality" is made possible only under the supreme metaphysical power of Islamic monotheism at the service of which is Ayn al-Qudat's intellectual power. Lest we might think that this is just an implicit aspect of 'Ayn al-Qudat's hermeneutics, we should note that he recognizes very explicitly the power of the crowd and history in producing legitimacy for a particular reading of a religion or a school of thought. During his observations about the Sophists he points

out that if today someone were to propose that nothing exists in or outside this world, nobody would believe him, and yet "if [only] one person were to believe in it and turn it into a religion [or school of thought = madhhab, and then a multitude of people were to join this religion, then it would remain in this world for thousands of years".[96] Or elsewhere he says,

We hear that in previous times there existed a group of people who maintained that nothing exists, so much so that they said "you do not exist, I do not exist, and the sky and the earth do not exist." Now, we know that in our time there is not anybody who would even entertain such a possibility, let alone daring to express it without a fear of being laughed at by the people. Now, suppose someone made such a proposition, you are sure that nobody would believe him. [You think that] people will surely laugh at him. It would be indeed strange if one or two people from all over the world were to believe him. And yet if a few thousand people were to follow the person [who made such a proposition], they would

then make a religion [or school of thought = madhhab] from this nonsense.[97]

This is as close and as accurate a description of the constitutional force of political power as one can get in the historical formation of any school of thought, religions included. Again, it is impossible to exaggerate the interpretative implications of such a direct and immediate recognition of the instrumentality of power in the working of a religion out of a primary proposition, and thus understandably this aspect of Ayn al- Qudat's hermeneutics must have remained rather tacit and implicit in his exposition.

What is not tacit and implicit, and in fact perfectly explicit in Ayn al-Qudat's hermeneutics, is his belief in the historicity of understanding which, as Ayn al-Qudat himself rightly boasts, is remarkably new and revolutionary, totally unprecedented in the history of Islamic dogmatics. Ayn al-Qudat's rhetorical proposition in this respect is that "all religions [or schools of thought = madhahib], or most of them, were true in their origin and [then] in the passage of time they have been "distorted".[98] Dwelling within this rhetoric is the crucial proposition that "the passage of time" can change and modify "the truth" or "original message" of a religion or school of thought. "To become distorted over a long period of time"[99] is Ayn al-Qudat's expression for recognizing the instrumentality of history in re-shaping and re-defining the nature of an "original message". While he continues to elaborate this hermeneutic principle of the instrumentality of history in understanding through an account of the Sophists' position, he does not hesitate for a moment to apply it to "Islam" in history. "You should know, my friend [he

addresses Aziz al- Din al-Mustawfl], that if you seriously consider the conditions of your

own age and the people of your own age, you would certainly see [the truth of] this [proposition], because in every age people are exactly as they are now."[100] The historical nature of understanding is as much applic-able to the history of Zoroastrianism and Christianity as it is to Islam. As for Zoroastrians, "for years they have been worshipping the fire. But we know that the origin of this has been something else which has not reached us. As indeed Islam [literally 'being-a-Muslim' = musalmdm] is piece by piece being eroded, these religions too have piece by piece been eroded. Now all that remains is idol-worshipping [Buddhism], crossworshipping [Christianity] and fire-worshipping [Zoroastrianism]."[101] Looking at himself at a "present" of an "Islamic history", he observed, "when Islam existed during the time of the immediate generation after the Prophet (tdbiiydn), Hasan al-Basrï used to say, "[Islam] is eroded. What do you think has remained from it now? How do we know what will it be like in a thousand years? What do we know about what the evil followers and misguided transmitters have done to fire-worshipping which has been around for four to five thousand years?"[102]

Extended from the principality of history in understanding is the next hermeneutic principle which gives full recognition to the communal (or sociological) definition of what constitutes "the Truth". Here, Ayn al- Qudat's report of a friend of his from Badakhshan that there a group of people who considered themselves Muslims and yet they knew no Arabic, read the Qur'an but did not understand what it meant, did not ever pray or fast during the month of Ramadan and yet performed their hajj pilgrimage is a case in point. Ayn al-Qudàt reports

this without any judgment, and adds to his report the phrase "And in this report there is a lesson [to be learnt] by someone who seeks the right path and a clue for those who seek it."[103] The Badakhshànl community of Muslims here was the primary agency in defining what constitutes being a Muslim and what are its principal requirements. Elsewhere, Ayn al-Qudàt elaborates that some time in the future there could be a community of Muslims who would radically modify their prayer rituals, commencing without the opening chapter of the Qur'àn for example, or without ablution.[104] For this possibility he also resorts to a prophetic tradition according to which "There will come a time that people will gather in mosques and pray, and there will not be a single Muslim among them."[105] From the perspective of this prophetic prediction, that community will not be "Muslim", but so far as that community itself is concerned, they are. These examples elaborate Ayn al-Qudàt's awareness of the principality of communal definitions of what constitutes "Truth", i.e., how they read "the original message" of, in this case, "Islam".

Embracing Ayn al-Qudàt's hermeneutics is a solid grasp of the irreducible subjectivity of all acts of understanding. In his fifth principle, Ayn al-Qudàt observes that "there is a variety of distortions and it is
impossible to enumerate them".[106] The reason for this, 'Ayn al-Qudat observes, is that the instrumentalities (asbdb) of distortion are many and no one can have a complete account of them. Here he makes a further distinction between the spoken and the written words. He does not give the primacy to the spoken words. He simply suggests that there are emotive conditionings of verbal expressions, such as when a man talks in anger to his slave (that is the example that he

gives) as opposed to when he talks to his son. There are differences in the mode of address that are evident in the shape and face of the speaker, qualities that cannot be represented in the written words. This phenomenon aggravates the possibilities of (mis)interpretations beyond measure. He also adds the element of dialogue to this list of forces conducive to (mis) understanding. This is how he is conscious of the force of dialogue as a determining factor:

In addition [to other factors that he has indicated as instrumental in conditions of (mis)understanding], the [nature] of address differs in relation to the addressee. For example, when you [he means Aziz al-Dln al-Mustawfi] are present, I engage in a dialogue with you in correspondence to your level of knowledge. While if a child or a man of limited rational faculties were present, they would not be able to understand me, and should they report what I had said in a [different] occasion, they would misrepresent it.[107]

As a matter of practical example, 'Ayn al-Qudat refers to a state of confusion in the prophetic traditions, where many discrepancies existed in the correct form, and even the actual number of Hadith. This is the case, Ayn al-Qudat emphasizes, "While Islam is still young, there will be a time when this would be much more so, and no one will be able to solve [this problem]. Thus how could you tell what does fire-worshipping really mean? Or what does the fire [in the story] of Moses, peace be upon him, mean?"[108] The multiple instrumentalities of human agencies, added to the transgenerational problem of those who transmit the accounts of various claims to truth, added to the constitutionally multi-significatory nature of language, added to the primacies of community, dialogue and power in establishing a reading

as true over others, all lead to the existential subjectivity of all acts of understanding, with no particular way to account for even the numbers of such possible (mis)readings.

Perhaps the most revolutionary proposition in Ayn al-Qudat's hermeneutics is that because of this phenomenal subjectivity of all acts of understanding and of historical transmissions of "Truth-telling", anyone who wants to know the truth should not dwell in, nor believe in the absolute veracity of, any single claim to truth. A person in search of truth, Ayn al-Qudat observes in his sixth and final hermeneutic principle, "must go over these religions [or schools of thought = madhahib ".[109] The expression he uses here is darurat ast kah bar in madhahib gudhar kunad, which means that it is obligatory for the person to get to know and then surpass all such claims to absolute truth. All religions or schools of thought are way-stations" (mandzil) towards the ultimate recognition of God, Ayn al-Qudat observes in his inevitably theo- centric language. But some have erroneously made of these way-stations an ultimate destination. This is an absolutely remarkable and daring observation. Because what in effect he is saying is that Islam, and Christianity, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, etc., are all historical versions of the ultimate and transcendent truth. One has to know and then surpass them in order to reach an understanding which is the sum total of all and totally present in none. Ayn al-Quiat himself is absolutely aware of the radically revolutionary and unprecedented nature of his observation here. At the conclusion of this "letter" he assures Mustawfl that:

Whatever I have written in this letter and in my other letters I have written them exclusively from my own dhawq [which is

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an extremely difficult word to translate into any language. It means, as Ayn al-Qudat uses it here, something like an irreducibly individual perception of things based on taste and penchant rather than rational calculations, logical conclusions, etc.]. Except for a few expressions which I have read or heard there is not anything [taken or quoted from others] in my letters. Had it not been that I had discovered these things through my own dhawq, how else could I have come up with something like [the recognition that] fire-worshipping, idol-worshipping, cross-worshipping and the Qadarite [theological] school are in their own respect true [or correct]?[110]

Finally, Ayn al-Qudat's hermeneutics is a solid, counter-systemic celebration of the individual as the ultimate locus of any hermeneutic encounter. What drives Ayn al-Qudat's narrative throughout his writings, but particularly in these "letters", is his relentless individuality, and even more significant, his awareness of this individuality. The consciousness of this individuality is in fact a tacit, and thus forceful, factor in Ayn al- Qudat's hermeneutics. At the end of the last passage I just quoted in which he self-confidently boasts of the instrumentality of his own dhawq in developing his theory of understanding, he makes a rather remarkable reference to his uncontrollable passion for writing. These references to his passion for writing are endemic to Ayn al-Qudat's works, particularly in his "letters", and they read as sudden existential outbursts of what ultimately drives any act of writing. Referring to his theory of the broken letters of the Qur'an, that they represent other-worldly realities for which there is no common linguistic expression he concludes:

[Had I not discovered these things through my own dhawq,] how would I dare to write so much on interpreting the broken letters [of the Qur'an] like Th, Ys, Hm and Alms so much so that whenever I write something, this [issue] comes forth and forces me to write. It is so that even if I want not to write, I cannot. And may God Almighty protect the readers of this from such a disease [wabalan]. You cannot imagine what dangers lie in writing about such issues. But

They threw him into the sea, with his hands tied up and [yet] they told him:

Be careful! be careful! Do not get wet![111]

On another occasion, having just presented his theory of the same "broken letters" of the Qur'an, he exclaims: "Don't you think for a moment that as long as Islam has been around anyone has had the power to say these things about the broken letters."[112] After presenting his theory of the necessarily historical distortions of all claims to truth, he assures Mustawfi: "This is as a matter of teaching [you these principles], otherwise, it is perfectly clear to me what exactly is the origin of fire-worshipping, and how it was distorted. And all these issues have become clear to me on my own. Because I have never heard anything remotely like them from anybody, nor have I read them in any book."[113]

The principal working of this rather boastful individuality becomes the subjective locus, the modus operandi, of Ayn al-Qudat's hermeneutics. That the hermeneutical experience is an intrinsically linguistic proposition, that all acts of signification are irreducibly multi-significatory, that relations of power have a decidedly political impact on the

hermeneutic outcome, that the hermeneutical encounter is an effectively historical proposition, that the hermeneutical event always occurs in a communal set-up and in the context of a dialogical exchange, that all acts of hermeneutics are quintessentially subjective in the wide and open- ended possibility of readings that they propose, and finally that all versions of the historically mediated claims to truth ought to be learnt and mastered and then abandoned for the next, are all specific features of a theory of understanding which in Ayn al-Qudat's own narrative ultimately rests on the irreducibly individual encounter with the supreme metaphysics of Truth-telling: a metaphysics which he effectively transforms via his own hermeneutics of counter-narrativity.

Metaphysical Principles

As "non-books", the Maktübât and the Tamhîdât are textual culminations of Ayn al-Qudat's active experimentations with a counter-narrativity that tests the limits of Islamic metaphysics. Through them is produced a highly personal and soft "voice" in which is collapsed the serious metaphysics of "Truth-telling" and all its surrogate agencies operative in the nomocentricity of the Islamic Law, the logocentricity of the Islamic philosophy, and here I insist against a whole history of mystifying Ayn al-Qudàt, the theo-eroticism of Islamic mysticism. Language as the inaugurating moment of all acts of narrativity assumes, or rather regains, a unique access to the shattering of the poetic word and, as it ceases to be representational, begins to generate and sustain worlds independent of all claims to reality, sacred or secular,

theocentric or anthropocentric. Ayn al-Qudàt achieved this revolutionary language by first mastering and then surpassing all the metaphysical surrogates of Islamic onto- theology in Islamic law, philosophy and Sufism. Neither as a legal theorist nor as a philosopher in the ordinary sense of the term nor certainly a Sufi, Ayn al-Qudàt can be understood only through the deliberate rhetoricity of his language, his conscious and deliberate attempt to shatter and break loose from the absolutist metaphysics of representation and Truth-telling.

Towards precisely that direction, the Tamhîdât (521/1127) continues with the same soft counter-metaphysics which is evident in the Maktübât (517/1123—525/1131). Ayn al-Qudàt begins his Tamhîdât, which he divides into ten tamhîds ("preface" or "preparation"), which read very much like his "letters", with a rhetorical and evocative voice, with a counter-epistemological distinction between a form of knowledge which is "acquired" (muktasib) and one which is ladunî (perhaps the best translation for this is "innate" or "God-given"). This distinction is crucial for Ayn al-Qudàt's subsequent formulation of his own counter-version of a theo-ontology which is actively aimed at the nomocentric proclivities of Islamic law and the logocentrism of the Islamic theological (or theo-centric) philosophy. In his second tamhîd, Ayn al-Qudàt turns to the individual person as the primary point of reflection for any existential understanding (of "faith" for example). This remarkable shift from the dominant nomocentric—logocentric epistemics to a subjective, "innate" or "God-given" intelligibility and then a major existential move to "the individual" as the main point of any legitimate theology are the principal characteristics of Ayn al-Qudàt's revolutionary "counter-metaphysics". The

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sdlik, or the individual seeker of Truth, becomes the primary point of reference in Ayn al-Qudàt's "counter-metaphysics". He elaborates on the nature of humanity in the third tamhîd, examines the borderlines of what constitutes humanity, or what it means to be a "human" (âdam),
and charts the venues of those who reach the upper limits of their humanity in their recognition of a "Truth" which is hermeneutically facilitated.[114]

For 'Ayn al-Qudat there is a direct line between his anthropology and his theology. "Know thyself in order to know God",[115] the content of the fourth tamhid, is more than a motto. It is the existential connection between the human reality and the possibility of one's grasp of a signifying truth beyond that of the human condition. From the irreducible individuality of this perspective, Ayn al-Qudat then proceeds to discuss the meaning and significance of the five pillars of Islam: shahadah means a confession of faith identical to that of the Prophet;[116] namaz means a prayer which is a distraction from the world and a concentration on God;[117] zakah means giving alms but not from one's wealth, from one's knowledge of certainty;[118] sawm does not mean fasting, it means feasting, but feasting with God, eating His food, drinking His drink;[119] and hajj does not mean travelling left or right, north or south, east or west, it means a journey to the heart.[120] As evident in this Ayn al-Qudatian redefinition of the five pillars of Islam, he is a master rhetorician, always putting the external meaning of every principle of faith on its head by reaching for its inner meaning: sawm is not fasting but feasting; hajj is not going out but going in, etc. This, if anything, is the trademark, the unmistakable trait, of Ayn al-Qudat's mode of rhetorical writing, the syntax and morphology of his technique of subversion.

"The Truth and Conditions of Love" is the subject of the sixth tamhld. Up to this point in the text, Ayn al-Qudat has constructed an effective (soft) narrative which postulates a counter-nomocentric/logo- centric metaphysics, constitutes "the individual" as the starting point of any understanding (of God for example), charts the human capabilities of that individual, makes theology contingent upon the anthropology of that individual, and then re-reads the principal doctrinal creeds of the individual's faith from the vantage point of this existential, individual- based, "counter-metaphysics". Now, in the second half of the Tamhidat, beginning with the sixth tamhid, the principality of "Love" comes to shift this entire "counter-metaphysics" to a new, theo-erotic, direction. The theo-eroticism of Ayn al-Qudat's "counter-metaphysics" casts a long and sustained shadow over his theo-ontology. The leading phrase of Ayn al- Qudat's theo-eroticism is actually a statement of the Prophet Muhammad: "Whoever falls in love and yet conceals it until his death, he has died a martyr."[121] Love, in Ayn al-Qudat's theo-eroticism, is the very constitutional foundations of creation, of being, of living and of dying. The "inferior" (saghlr) love is the love of man for God; the "superior" (kabir) love is the love of God for man; and there is a middle (miydnah) love, of which Ayn al-Qudat says he cannot talk except surreptitiously and with tact.[122] In the heat of his adulation for "love" as the principal motive
and motion of being, 'Ayn al-Qudàt refuses all measures of prudence. He takes the famous piety of "you should have the faith of old women" and does this with it: "'You should have the faith of old women!' Indeed, how splendidly he put it! Whoever wants to be in Paradise, they call him stupid. A whole world wants to go to Paradise. Not a single person seeks Love! Because Paradise is the bounty of the [carnal]

soul nafs and of the heart [diJ, while Love is the reward of the soul [jân] and of Truth [Haqîqat]."[123]

'Ayn al-Qudàt's postulation of "Love" as the principal modus operandi of being then functions as the premiss of a further elaboration of his "counter-metaphysics". Rüh (soul) and dil (heart) now emerge as the subjects of the seventh tamhîd, as the defining "faculties" of a counterintelligibility conducive to 'Ayn al-Qudàt's preferred conceptions of "understanding". In the context of this "understanding", which Ayn al-Qudàt's "counter-metaphysics" makes possible, he then links, in an extremely unusual but highly imaginative move, the purpose of the creation of humanity to his Qur'ànic hermeneutics. In his Qur'ànic hermeneutics, 'Ayn al-Qudàt separates words or signifiers (lafz) from their intended referentialities or signifieds (dilâlah). The Qur'àn, he says, will not be understood unless and until people have reached their divinely bestowed attributes. The enemies of the Prophet, for example, could hear the Arabic of the Qur'àn but could not understand its significance.[124] The revelation of the Qur'àn is the supreme sign of God's Mercy, so that people can recognize themselves. People are made constitutionally free to choose between good and evil, which in a radical departure from much of Islamic theology, 'Ayn al-Qudàt attributes both to God.[125] All binary oppositions are made in order for people to choose.

By the ninth tamhîd, 'Ayn al-Qudàt is ready to redefine entirely the meaning of belief (ïmân) and disbelief (kufio). There is a kind of (supreme) faith which 'Ayn al-Qudàt identifies with madness, and through madness with disbelief. In the same category are the drunk: "Another group is the drunkard, those who have hung the cross upon themselves,

they speak intoxicated words. Some of them were killed, and some were afflicted by His calamity, as it will happen to me! I do not know when! It is too soon now!"[126] These words 'Ayn al-Qudàt wrote in 521/1127, some four years before his execution. He here postulates a complete suspension of worldly, i.e., hegemonic, definitions of things as doctrinally established by the juridical custodians of the Faith: "Unless you disregard the khalq [the created beings], you will never reach the Khàliq [the creator of beings]."[127] That suspension of the familiar is always dangerous, and Ayn al-Qudàt is aware of this danger, vividly!

As I said, disbelief is of different kinds. Now, listen: There is the apparent disbelief, there is the-disbelief-of-the-soul, and there is
the-disbelief-of-the-heart. The disbelief-of-the-soul is related to Satan; while the-disbelief-of-the-heart is related to Muhammad. As for the-disbelief-of-the-Truth, that is related to God. After all this, then there is faith. O that I may be saved from my own deeds [lit., my own hands], daring as I do to utter these words, for which there is no room in this or in the world to come. But I utter them anyway! Come what may![128]

Thus the entire ninth tamhid is launched against a radical re-definition of what ordinarily is defined and constituted as "belief" and "disbelief" by the long historical authority of the clerical establishment. Through a radically transformative reading of such letters as i in Ruhl (which means "my" in God's phrase "my soul" in the Qur'an) or k in 'alayk (which means "you" in the phrase "Peace be upon you, O Prophet, and so be God's bounty and benedictions"), Ayn al-Qudat postulates for himself a position from which to author a whole

new reading of the faith. That postulation of course entails a supposition of extraordinary sensibilities.

Alas! I was kept in this sacred paradise, to which I referred, for a month. So much so that people thought me dead. Then much to my regret they sent me to a place wherein I was for some time. In this second place, I committed a sin, for which transgression you shall soon see me killed. What do you say?! Do you see what befalls a person who prevents a lover from reaching his beloved? In this matter, I have been so afflicted by Him that I think I shall never recover. Have you ever seen a man who loves two different persons, and yet he has to behave himself, because if he spent time with one of them, the other wants to shed his blood, and if with the other, so would the other? Alas! Have you never been in love with God and Muhammad, and then, in the midst of all this, has Satan not tempted you?[129]

These are moments of self-authorization, when Ayn al-Qudat presides over a radical redefinition of his faith. In such moments, time contracts, space dissolves, sheer narrativity subsumes both the sacred and the non- sacred, and thus Ayn al-Qudat writes and speaks with a language irreducibly his, and yet with a universal certitude echoing throughout all its resonances:

Shaykh Siyawash told me: I saw the Chosen One [Prophet Muhammad] in a dream tonight. He came in and said, "Tell our Ayn al-Qudat that we are not yet the residents of the Divine abode. You wait for a while! Be patient! Until we are all close together, and separation is all over. Then we shall all have unity, with no separation." When he told me of this dream, my

patience ran over. I became completely drowned in these verses. As I looked up, I saw the Chosen One who came in and said, "What I had told Shaykh Siyàwash, he could not have taken it when awake." From the light of the Chosen One a flame came out, and from that a spark hit him and he was instantly burnt out. And then the people think this is all magic and illusion.[130]

The tenth and final chapter of the Tamhîdât is the culmination of Ayn al-Qudàt's "counter-metaphysics", where he combines "the light of Muhammad, peace be upon him, and that of Satan".[131] This is the ultimate, the most radically transformative, deconstruction of the two binary oppositions between good and evil, a binary opposition at the very root of Islamic theology as it has been historically institutionalized. This tamhîd begins with a long and sustained commentary on the Qur'ànic passage "God is the Light of the heavens and the earth" (24: 35). "God ", Ayn al-Qudàt maintains, is the substance (jawhar) and "the light" is the accident ('arad) of that essence. From the accidental light then the lights of heaven and earth emerge, the heaven standing for the Muhammadan light, the earth for the light of Satan.[132] By thus tracing the whole phenomenological reality of the heavens and earth to the supreme and inaugurating Divine Light, but through the intermediary, symbolic lights of Muhammad and Iblls, Ayn al-Qudàt reaches for a final re-unification of all existence. He does a similar reading of the prophetic tradition, "The first thing God created was my light",[133] and ultimately concludes with a poem which he puts down in the last chapter after considerable hesitation:

The heart is a step for The True in this dungeon,

Only for a while it is a guest in the material world.

The heart is a bird of Truth in the abode of The True,

Indeed, it is a falcon, adoring The King.

The heart is alive in soul, and the soul is alive in The True,

Sometimes the soul is in the heart, and sometimes the heart in the soul.

From the light of God, the soul came about,

Have you not read "light upon light" in the Qur'àn?

That dark light is from the source of anger and wrath,

The fountainhead of disbelief, the abode of Satan.

This is the secret of The True which I just explained,

None of this is known among the religious doctors.

His intention in creating this and the other world

Was only one thing, which is all the necessary proof:

It was to see Himself in the mirror of the soul,

So He can fall in love with Himself, so perfect that He is.

We too see ourselves in Him,

Thus the Beholder and the Beheld are one and the same.

Thus the Lover and the Beloved sit next to each other,

Because one is the soul, and the other the soul of the soul.

Thus Love is the meeting of one another and talking.

And thus His eating and drinking is also by us.

Thus the soul shall be everlasting in the Living World,

What's the point of saying this, of course it shall always be.[134]

Such overwhelming reversals of Islamic metaphysics were too much for its doctrinal custodians to grasp or tolerate, or for the political establishment that was legitimated by it to tolerate or permit. Ayn al-Qudat paid dearly for his daring experimentations with the transformative reversals of the very metaphysics of "Truth-telling". His writings angered two powerful institutions in the Western Seljuq Empire: the religious and the political, and the two conspired to eliminate him. Abu'l-Qasim al- Daragazinl, the powerful vizier to the Seljuq warlord Mughlth al-Dln Mahmud, had a fatwa (a religious edict) issued against Ayn al-Qudat by the leading clerical establishment in Hamadan. Daragazlm's immediate cause of hostility against Ayn al-Qudat was his friendship with Aziz al- Dln al-Mustawfi, the treasurer to Mahmud, whom the vizier disliked in the context of a court rivalry and intrigue which also involved a lucrative dowry that the great Seljuq king Sultan Sanjar had given to his daughter Mahmalak when he married her to Mahmud as part of a political settlement.[133]

Ayn al-Qudat was captured in Hamadan in 525/1130, charged with blasphemy and sent to a prison in Baghdad. In prison he wrote his famous "defence" or "apologia", which he called Shakwa al-gharib. The Shakwa is a remarkable document[136] in which Ayn al-Qudat engages his enemies in a sustained debate, the outcome of which is (or must have been) rather evident to him.

The Shakwa reads like a long, arduous and heart-wrenching confession of a young man matured painfully beyond the limits of his elders. In it he tries to defend himself against the charges of blasphemy that the senior doctors of law had levelled against him, and yet he can hardly conceal his utter contempt for their mediocrity of intelligence and spirit.

The first charge against which he feels compelled to defend himself is that he has postulated a "mode" (tawr) of understanding beyond reason
in order to grasp the nature of messengership.[137] The reference here is most probably to the Zubdah which he had written ten years earlier in 516/1122, not twenty as recorded in various manuscripts. 'Ayn al-Qudat reiterates his position here, that in his epistemological hierarchy there is a "mode" of knowing beyond reason which he identifies with the state of wilayah, or being among the saintly few, and then there is another "mode" of knowing even beyond wilayah, which he identifies with the state of prophethood or nubuwwah. He contends that:

Contemporary theologians have disapproved of me on this account amongst others, thinking that to claim there is a stage beyond the stage of reason is to bar the way to the common people to faith in prophethood, inasmuch as it is reason that

proves the veracity of the prophets. Whereas I do not claim that faith in prophethood is contingent upon the attainment of a mode [of knowing] beyond the mode of reason. What I claim is rather that the truth of prophethood constitutes a mode [of knowing] beyond the mode of sainthood [wilayah], and that sainthood constitutes another mode [of knowing] beyond that of reason.[138]

'Ayn al-Qudat refers to many instances in early Islamic history when the Companions of the Prophet, i.e., those in the wilayah category, knew of things that reason could not have had access to, such as 'Uthman telling one of his companions that on his way to visit the third Rightly- Guided Caliph he had looked at a woman, attributing his clairvoyance not to "revelation", which of course had ended with the Prophet, but to his "intuition".

But more than just 'Ayn al-Qudat's prophetology was objectionable to his contemporary doctors of law. They asked him why he referred to God as "The Source and Origin of Being", or as "The Real Being". To which he answers: "All these expressions occur in many places in the Ihya 'ulum al-dln, the Mishkat al-anwdr wa misfdt al-asrdr and the al-Munqidh min al-dalal wa al-mufsih 'an al-ahwdl, all of which are works of al- Ghazzall, God have mercy on him."[139]

Beyond his theology and prophetology, his Imamology is equally unpalatable to the Sunni doctors of law. They accuse him of Shi'l, particularly Ismalll, tendencies when he has argued for the necessity of an Imam, or leader or guide, in matters of religious certainty and practice. 'Ayn al-Qudat denies any Ismalll tendencies, and points out:

My adversary, however, had chosen to interpret my words as being in line with the doctrine of the Ismallls, understanding me to subscribe to the belief in the infallible Imam. Yet how could he arrive at such a vexatious misconstruction, seeing that the
second chapter of my treatise is devoted to demonstrating the existence of Almighty God by way of rational demonstration and incontrovertible proof? It is well known that the Isma ills reject rational speculation, asserting that the way to knowledge of Almighty God is the prophet, or the infallible Imam.[140]

Thus Ayn al-Qudat goes through all the principal charges that were brought against him and point by point answers them via references to the Qur'anic and Hadith passages, the statements of famous philosophers, poets, historians and Sufis. But in a peculiar way Ayn al-Qudat's "defence" is full of extremely powerful rhetorical passages in which with a remarkably proud self-confidence he dismisses his opponents as jealous mediocrities:

Why should I consider it so curious that the theologians of the present age should disapprove of me, seeing that the greatest scholars of every age have always been the object of envy, and have been the targets of every kind of persecution? … It is no wonder that I am envied, seeing that I composed as a mere youth, sucking the udders of little more than twenty years, books which baffle men of fifty and sixty to understand, much less to compile and compose.

I do not blame them if they envy me,

Before my time,

And for no crime,

Savants have felt the lash of jealousy.

The content of Shakwa could not but have further frustrated and angered Ayn al-Qudat's enemies. He was brought back from Baghdad to Hamadan and on Tuesday evening 6 Jumada II 525/5 May 1131 executed in front of the school in which he taught, according to generations of hagiographers who kept a vigilant gaze on Ayn al-Qudat's legacy.

NOTES

1 See Eco (1988): 1-2.

2 Secondary literature on Ayn al-Qudat is sparse. The first serious study of Ayn al-Qudat was by Mohammed ben Abd al-Jalil who in 1930 prepared a critical edition of Shakwa and translated it into French with a long introduction and elaborate notes. The next person to work extensively on Ayn al-Qudat was Aflf 'Usayran who in 1961—2 published the complete critical edition of all of Ayn al-Qudat's works except his letters. We owe the critical editions of Zubdah, Tamhidat, and a new edition of Shakwa to 'Usayran. To 'Usayran we also owe a sustained philosophical reading of Ayn al-Qudat against a massive history of mystification of his ideas. 'All NaqI Munzawi, collaborated with
'Aflf 'Usayràin preparing a two-volume critical edition of 'Ayn al-Qudat's letters, Maktübdt, in 1969. Another Iranian scholar with a long-term interest in Ayn al-Qudà²is Rahim Farmanish, who in 1959 wrote a comprehensive book on his

life and ideas. Farmanish also edited Risdlah-yi lawdyih under the impression that this treatise belonged to Ayn al-Qudà²® Since then, 'Usayràhas established that Lawdyih is not actually 'Ayn al-Qudat's. Another treatise falsely attributed to 'Ayn al-Qudà² Risdlah-yi yazddnshinakht, was edited by Bahman Karlml in 1948. A third treatise falsely attributed to 'Ayn al-Qudat, Sharh-i kalamat-i Baba Tahir, was edited by Jawà¢Maqsüdlü in 1975 with a long introduction on the life and ideas of 'Ayn al-Qudà²® The Iranian historian of ideas 'Abd al-Husayn Zarrlnküb wrote a brilliant essay on 'Ayn al-Qudà²in his Justujü dar tasawwuf-i Iran. Nasrullà¦Pourjavadl prepared a critical edition of the "correspondence" between 'Ayn al-Qudà²and Shaykh Ahmad Ghazzà. Not too much serious attention has been paid to 'Ayn al-Qudà²by Orientalists. Arberry translated Shakwd' into English, wrote a brief introduction, and added some useful notes in 1969. Christiane Tortel translated Tamhidat into French in 1992. Bertels (1971) has a generally useful chapter on 'Ayn al-Qudà²® The Maktübdt and the Zubdah are not translated into any European language. There is no comprehensive study of 'Ayn al-Qudat's corpus in any language. Lewisohn (1993) is a typically mystical, but brilliantly executed, reading of Tamhidat. Landolt (1978) is in the same vein, but with a more comparative glance at 'Ayn al-Qudà²and Suhrawardl. Awn (1983) and Ernst (1985) have useful references to 'Ayn al-Qudat's "ecstatic words" and his references to Satan, respectively.

3 For a useful compilation of data on 'Ayn al-Qudà² see Farmanish (1959).

4 As an example, see Jam! (1957): 414-16.

5 On the rule of Seljüqs in Persia, see Bosworth (1968).

6 For a good primary account, see Mustawfl (1985): 448—54.

7 For further details, see Bosworth (1968): 76-7; Mustawfl (1985): 437—8.

8 The series of events which I have just narrated in the above coherent account is actually scattered throughout our sources. Perhaps the most crucial piece of evidence is to be found in al-Qummi (1984): 20—2. Al-Qumml's account of the rivalries between Daragazlnl and al-Mustawfl, which he recorded in 584/1188, is corroborated by KirmanI (1959): 74—7, who wrote his account in 725/1324. Both these accounts are also compatible with al-Isfahà⁻– (1900): 109—15, who was actually a cousin of al-Mustawfl and practically an eyewitness to these rivalries.

9 See al-Isfahanl (1900): 139 for further details.

10 On the Isma'llls, see Daftary (1990); on al-Ghazzà—, see Humai (1938).

11 Ibn Rushd is known for having given an effective answer to al-Ghazzall's criticism of philosophy. For the most recent discussion of this debate, see Urvoy (1991): 80-1.

12 See Safa (1977), 2: 253f. for further details.

13 For further details, see Safa (1977), 2: 295.

14 The most comprehensive account of Suhrawardfs "Illuminationist" philosophy is to be found in his Hikmah al-ishraq. See Suhrawardl (1982).

15 The active cultivation of this "theo-erotic" vocabulary continued and comes to full fruition in the seven th/thirteenth century. Shaykh Mahmüd Shabistari's
(687/1288-720/1320) Gulshan-i raz comes at the crucial culminating point of this theo-erotic language. In it Shabistari provides, in a hauntingly simple and beautiful poetry, a glossary of amorous words – "eyes", "lips", "face", "hair", "mole", "candle", "beloved", "idol", "the Christian boy", etc. – and their symbolic significance. See Shabistari (1982): 71-94.

16 Safa (1977), 2: 346.

17 For the critical edition and a comprehensive introduction by the editor, see GurganI (1959).

18 A good example of such hagiographies is to be found in Jam! (1957): 414—16.

19 After a rather long, elaborate, poetry-studded prologomena (five pages in the critical edition) in his "defence", Ayn al-Qudat refers to literature and writes "Yes indeed; but this branch of learning, though it is more appealing to human nature and is lighter on the ears, yet I have bidden it farewell and departed from it ever since I approached puberty and manhood. I have gone forth in quest of the religious sciences, and have busied myself with treading the path of the Sufis; and how foul it is for a Sufi to turn away from a thing and

then to return to it, and apply himself to it with all his heart."
Shakwa: 6, Apologia-. 29.

20 Shakwa : 40-1; Apologia-. 71.

21 Shakwa-. 41; Apologia-. 72.

22 Shakwa : 40; Apologia: 70; Zubdab 3.

23 Zubdab. 4.

24 Ibid. : 1.

25 Ibid.-. 3.

26 Ibid.-. 3.

27 Ibid.: 4.

28 Ibid.: 6.

29 Shakwa : 40; Apologia-. 71.

30 Zubdab. 3.

31 Ibid.: 4.

32 Ibid.: 2.

33 Ibid.: 2.

34 Ibid.: 2.

35 Ibid.: 4.

36 Ibid.: 4.

37 Ibid.: 6.

38 Ibid.: 7.

39 "From my early youth," writes al-Ghazzali in al-Munqidh, "before I was twenty years old and as I neared the age of puberty, up until now, when I am fifty years old, I have plunged deep into this shoreless ocean, like courageous ones, not like the coward. I swim through its hidden depth, and step into the darkness of every mystery. I attack every problem, and fearlessly step into every danger. I question the beliefs of every sect. I discover the secrets of the religion of every community, so that I can distinguish between their right and wrong, their traditions and their conventions" (al-Ghazzali (1983): 24). There are passages like this that must have fascinated Ayn al-Qudat.

40 Zubdab. 9-10.

41 Ibid.: 17.

42
Ibid.: 22.

43 Ibid.: 23.

44 Ibid.: 27.

45 Ibid.:: 29.

46 Ibid.: 30.

47 Ibid.: 31.

48 By soft as opposed to hard metaphysics, I wish to designate a mode of epistemic operation for 'Ayn al-Qudat's thinking in Zubdah which is true to his detection of a series of non-rational intelligibilities, such as "taste" and "perception" which are not reason-based and logocentric. I believe that it is exactly the same mode of epistemic operation that the contemporary Italian philosopher Gianni Vattimo calls il pensiero debole, which has been translated as "weak or post-foundational thought". "All the categories of metaphysics," Vattimo asserts, "are violent categories: Being and its attributes, the 'first' cause, man as 'responsible', and even the will to power, if that is read metaphysically as affirmation or as the assumption of power over the world. They must be 'weakened' or relieved of their excess power" (Vattimo (1993): 5—6). I believe that 'Ayn al- Qudat's active postulation of such terms as dhawq, basjrah, etc., and indeed his entire anti-nomocentric, anti-logocentric counter-metaphysics is geared towards a mode of il pensiero debole.

49 Zubdah: 33.

50 Ibid.: 34.

51 Ibid.: 35.

52 Ibid.: 43.

53 Ibid.: 47.

54 Ibid.: 48-51.

55 Ibid.: 80.

56 It is crucial to keep in mind that precisely this point is one of the charges which were brought against 'Ayn al-Qudat when the clerical establishment in Hamadan issued an edict (fatwd) against him. See Shakwa': 7, Apologia: 30. 'Ayn al-Qudat's reference here to "a treatise which I composed twenty years ago" is almost certainly a mistake which is left uncorrected in both the critical editions of 'Usayran and Abd el-Jalil and in Arberry's translation. 'Abd al-Jalil notes the discrepancy in his introduction, La Sakwd 7 n. 2, but leaves the "twenty years" in the text. Shakwa was composed in 525/1131. Twenty years before would be 505/1111 (the year of al-Ghazzali's death) when 'Ayn al-Qudat was thirteen and to the best of our knowledge author of no significant text. But ten years before 525/1131 is 516/1122 and coincides with the date of the Zubdah; and thus most probably 'Ayn al-Qudat is referring to this text, and in fact to this very passage. Arberry's appendix A to Apologia: 94-6 is an excellent, point-by-point, verification of the fact that in the Shakwa almost all of 'Ayn al-Qudat's references to his youthful Risdlah are in fact to the Zubdah.

57 Arberry on p. 15 of his Introduction and appendix C to Apologia: 99-101 and Zarrlnkub in his chapter on Baba Tahir and 'Ayn al-Qudat in Zarrlnkub (1978): 197.

58 Zarrlnkub (1978): 197.

59 Tamhidab. 15.

60
For details, see 'Usayran's introduction to TamhiddP. 9.

61 See 'All NaqI Munzawl and 'Afif 'Usayran's Introduction to their critical edition of 'Ayn al-Qudat's "letters" in MaktubdP 5.

62 Introduction to the TamhiddP. 6.

63 Ibid.

64 For further details on these manuscripts see the editors' Introduction to MaktubdP. 3—15.

65 From a letter quoted in 'Usayran's Introduction to TamhiddP 12.

66 Maktubat, 1: 433.

67 Ibid., 2: 1.

68 Ibid, 2: 17-18.

69 Ibid., 3: 34.

70 Ibid, 2: 281.

71 Ibid, 2: 283.

72 Ibid, 2: 286.

73 Ibid, 2: 286.

74 Ibid, 2: 286-7.

75 Ibid, 2: 287.

76 Ibid, 2: 288.

77 Ibid, 2: 291

78 Ibid, 2: 293.

79 Ibid., 2: 293.

80 Ibid, 2: 294.

81 Ibid, 2: 294-5.

82 Ibid., 2: 297-8.

83 Ibid., 2: 299.

84 Qur'an 2: 269.

85 Maktubat, 2: 301—2.

86 ibid., 2: 302.

87 Ibid, 2: 302-3.

88 ibid., 2: 303.

89 As this careful account of Ayn al-Qudat's historical hermeneutics unfolds, occasionally he interjects a few words that reveal his remarkable, rather arrogant, self-confidence. Right at this point, for example, he writes, "[I elaborate this] for the sake of explication, otherwise I know perfectly well, what the origin of the fire-worship was, and how it was distorted. I have known these all by myself. I have never

heard anything remotely resembling this from anybody, nor have I read it in any book" (Maktubat, 2: 304-5).

90 As evident in his remark on the penultimate page of the letter, where he says, "When somebody, for example, reaches your status of the treasurer, then he must have gone through the stages that you have" (Maktubat, 2: 307).

91 Maktubat, 2: 282.

92 Ibid.

93 Ibid.

94 Ibid, 2: 293.

95 Ibid, 2: 295.

96 Ibid, 2: 297.

97 Ibid, 2: 298.

98
Ibid., 2: 282.

99 Ibid., 2: 298.

100 Ibid., 2: 297.

101 Ibid., 2: 301-2.

102 Ibid., 2: 302-3.

103 Ibid., 2: 303.

104 Ibid., 2: 302.

105 Ibid., 2: 302.

106 Ibid., 2: 282.

107 Ibid., 2: 304.

108 Ibid., 2: 304.

109 Ibid, 2: 282.

110 Ibid, 2: 308.

111 Ibid, 2: 308.

112 Ibid., 2: 391.

113 Ibid., 2: 305.

114 TamhidaP 39—43.

115 Ibid.: 56.

116 Ibid.: 66-78.

117 ibid., 78-88.

118 Ibid.: 88-91.

119 Ibid.: 91-2.

120 Ibid.: 92-6.

121 ibid.: 96.

122 Ibid.: 100.

123 Ibid: 111.

124 Ibid: 170.

125 Ibid: 186-9.

126 Tamhldat. 209.

127 Ibid.: 207.

128 ibid.: 209.

129 ibid.: 232.

130 Ibid.: 234.

131 ibid.: 254.

132 Ibid.: 258.

133 Ibid.: 765.

134 ibid.: 270.

135 The details of this are reported in various historical sources of the period. See, for example, al-Isfahanl (1900): 109—24; al-Qumml (1984): 1—26; Kirmani (1959): 74-7; Mustawfl (1985): 453-5; and al-Rawandl (1985): 203-8.

136 I have read Shakwa closely in an earlier article on him to outline the principal charges which were brought against 'Ayn al-Qudat. See Dabashi (1993).

137 Shakwa : 7—8; Apologia: 30.

138 Shakwa : 9; Apologia: 32, with some modification of Arberry's translation.

139 Shakwa : 10; Apologia: 33.

140 Shakwa: 11; Apologia: 34—5, with slight modification of Arberry's translation.

141 Shakwa : 39; Apologia: 69-70.

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CHAPTER 28

Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī: founder of the Illuminationist school

Hossein Ziai

The Master of Illumination

Shihab al-Din Yahya ibn Habash ibn Amlrak Abu'l-Futuh Suhrawardl is well-known in the history of Islamic philosophy as the Master of Illumination (Shaykh al-Ishraq), a reference to his accepted position as the founder of a new school of philosophy distinct from the Peripatetic school (madhhab, or maktab al-mashshaun). Suhrawardl was born in the small town of Suhraward in north-western Persia in the year 549/1154. He met a violent death by execution in Aleppo in the year 587/1191[1] and therefore is also sometimes called the Executed Master (al-Shaykh al- Maqtul).

Although the circumstances surrounding Suhrawardl's death are a matter of speculation, as I will touch upon further, information on his life is fairly extensive. The influential

philosopher lived only thirty-eight lunar (thirty-six solar) years.[2] In the year 579/1183, he travelled to Aleppo,[3] where he completed his major work Hikmat al-ishrdq ("Philosophy of Illumination") in 582/1186.[4] His main biographer, Shams al-Dln Muhammad Shahrazuri, states in his Nuzhat al-arwah ("Pleasure of Spirits") that Suhrawardl was thirty years old when he completed another of his major philosophical works, al-MasharV wa'l-mutdrahdt) ("Paths and Havens") (completed c. 579/1183).[5]

Suhrawardl first studied philosophy and theology with Majd al-Dln al-Jlll in Maraghah, then travelled to Isfahan (or Mardin) to study with Fakhr al-Dln al-Mardlnl (d. 594/1198),[6] who is said to have predicted his student's death.[7] It is also known that Zahlr al-Farsi, a logician, introduced Suhrawardl to the al-Basair ("Observations") of the famous logician 'Umar ibn Sahlan al-SawI (fl. 540/1145).[8] This fact is significant, in that the latter work is among the first to depart from the standard nine-part division of logic – the nine books of the Organon – in favour of a two-part division: formal and material logic. Suhrawardl later employed this simpler system within his three-part logic, consisting of semantics, formal logic and material logic.

Suhrawardl composed most of his major treatises over a span of ten years, which is not long enough for him to have developed two distinct styles of philosophy – a Peripatetic style followed by an Illuminationist one – as some scholars have suggested.[9] In fact, in each of his major works Suhrawardl makes ample references to his other treatises. This indicates that the writings were either composed more or less concurrently, or that they were revised when taught with a consideration of the others.[10]

Soon after his arrival in Aleppo, Suhrawardl entered the service of Prince al-Malik al-Zahir GhazI, governor of Aleppo – also known as Malik Zahir Shah, son of Sultan Ayyubid Salah al-Dln. The sultan is well known in the West as Saladin, the great champion of the wars against the Crusaders. Suhrawardl won the prince's favours, became his tutor and began a life at court. There, in extended private sessions, the young philosopher reportedly informed the prince of his new philosophy. No doubt Suhrawardfs rapid rise to privileged position met with the usual medieval courtly jealousy and intrigue. That the judges, viziers and jurists of Aleppo were displeased with the distinguished tutor's increasing status could not have helped his case.[11] Letters written to Saladin by the famous judge Qadi al-Fadil arguing for Suhrawardl's execution sealed the young thinker's fate.[12] The sultan ordered the prince to have his tutor killed.[13]

Medieval historians cite "heresy", "corrupting religion" and "corrupting the young prince, al-Malik al-Zahir" as charges against Suhrawardl. The validity of these accusations is controversial, however.[14] As I have substantiated in publication elsewhere, the more plausible reason for Suhrawardl's execution is based on the philosopher's political doctrine revealed in his works on the Philosophy of Illumination, a political philosophy which I have termed the "Illuminationist political doctrine".[15] The year of Suhrawardl's execution was turbulent with political and military conflict. England's King Richard the Lionheart had landed in Acre,[16] and major battles were taking place between Muslims and Christians over the Holy Land. The great sultan Saladin clearly had more pressing matters at hand than to bother with the execution of a wayfaring mystic, had he not been deemed to be a clear threat to political security.[17]

Controversial though Suhrawardl's life may have been, one fact is certain: he had a major impact on subsequent philosophical thought, a fact on which all biographers concur.

Suhrawardī's Works

Suhrawardl was a prolific author who wrote many works on almost every philosophical subject, including, for the first time in the history of Islamic philosophy, a substantial number of Persian philosophical symbolic narratives. Not all of his works have survived nor have all of the existing ones been published. His major published works are indicated here.

The most important texts in the Philosophy of Illumination are Suhrawardl s four major Arabic philosophical works: the al-Talwihdt ("Intimations"), the al-Muqawamat ("Apposites"), the al-Mashan wa'l- mutarahat, ("Paths and Havens")[18] and the Hikmat al-ishrdq ("Philosophy of Illumination").[19] Based on textual evidence, I have found these works to constitute an integral corpus presenting the details of the Philosophy of Illumination.[20] Though of lesser philosophical significance, the Arabic treatises, al-Alwah a I-'imadiyyah ("'Imadian Tablets") and Hayakil al-nur ("Temples of Light"), and the Persian Partaw-namah ("Epistle on Emanation") may also be added.[21]

Based on Suhrawardl's own explicit statements, the four major works mentioned above were to be studied in a designated order: (1) the Intimations, (2) the Apposites, (3) the Paths and Havens, and (4) the Philosophy of Illumination.[22] Among all of Suhrawardf s works, the

"Introductions" of only two of them, the Paths and Havens and the Philosophy of Illumination, include specific statements concerning the methodology of the Philosophy of Illumination. In the "Introduction" to the Paths and Havens, Suhrawardl indicates that the book contains an exposition of the results of his personal experiences and intuitions, and further stipulates his view of how knowledge is to be obtained. Suhrawardl's account of the same methodological question in his "Introduction" to the Philosophy of Illumination is more elaborate and detailed but is essentially the same as the account given in the Paths and Havens.

Next in order of significance after Suhrawardl's major works and the treatises named above are his Arabic and Persian symbolic narratives. These include Qissat al-ghurbat al-gharbiyyah ("A Tale of the Occidental Exile"); Risdlat al-tayr ("The Treatise of the Birds"); Awaz-ipar-i Jibra'll ("The Sound of Gabriel's Wing"); Aql-i surkh ("The Red Intellect"); Ruzi bajamacat-i sufiyan ("A Day with a Group of Sufis"); FT halat al-tufuliyyah ("On the State of Childhood"); Ft haqiqat al-'ishq ("On the Reality of Love"); Lughat-i muran ("The Language of Ants"); and Saflr-i simurgh ("The Simurgh's Shrill Cry").[23] In these writings Suhrawardl, as in Ibn Sina's Arabic tales before him, uses the symbolic narrative to portray philosophical issues, though usually simple ones intended for the novice. The tales are more significant in their use of language than in their philosophical content. But all are indicative of long-established views that the symbolic and poetic mode of discourse both elicit interest from readers
and may also convey a certain experiential, subjective sense lost in purely discursive texts.

The next group of works by Suhrawardl consists of devotional prayers and invocations. Other minor treatises, aphorisms and short statements may also be grouped here.[24] Of specific interest in terms of both language and content are two prayers and invocations composed in an especially rich symbolic and literary style, where Suhrawardl addresses "the great Heavenly Sun, Hurakhsh",[25] and invokes the authority of "the Great Luminous Being" (al-nayyir al-azam), praying to it for knowledge and salvation. The symbolism of such short prayers has led some scholars to believe them to contain an ancient Persian element of reverence for luminous astronomical bodies such as the sun.[26]

An Overview Of Suhrawardī's Philosophy of Illumination

Suhrawardl chose the title Philosophy of Illumination (Hikmat al-ishraq) to name his major Arabic work, and also to distinguish his philosophical approach from that of the established Peripatetic works of his time, predominantly the doctrines of Ibn Slna, the great Islamic scientist and master of mashshai or Peripatetic philosophy. While Suhrawardl states that the Intimations, for example, is written according to the "Peripatetic method",[27] this should not be considered an independent work written about Peripatetic philosophy. Rather, it indicates that the Philosophy of Illumination includes but is not defined by accepted Peripatetic teachings,

parts of which Suhrawardl accepted and parts of which he rejected or refined.

Throughout his works Suhrawardl uses terms such as "Illumi-nationist theorem" (qaidah ishrdqiyyah)', "Illuminationist rules" (dawabit ishrdqiyyah)-, "Illuminationist lemma" (daqtqah ishrdqiyyah) and similar phrases, to identify specific problems of logic, epistemology, physics and metaphysics – areas of thought which he reconstructs or otherwise reformulates in an innovative manner. These new terms indicate the essential components of the Philosophy of Illumination and distinguish Illuminationist methodology from the Peripatetic.

Suhrawardl adds the word "Illuminationist" (ishraqi) as a descriptive adjective to selected technical terms as a means of signifying their specific use in his system. For example, "Illuminationist vision" (musha- hadah ishrdqiyyah) specifies the epistemological priority of a primary mode of immediate cognition distinguished from the more general use of the word vision as applied to mystical experience. "Illuminationist relation" (idafah ishrdqiyyah) specifies the non-predicative relation between subject and object, and is a new technical term signifying the Illuminationist
position in the logical foundations of epistemology. "Illuminationist knowledge by presence" (al-'ilm al-huduri al-ishraqi) signifies the priority of an immediate, durationless, intuitive mode of cognition over the temporally extended essentialist definitions used as predicative propositions; and it also distinguishes the Illuminationist position from the Peripatetic view of "acquired knowledge" (al-Hlm al-husult). Many other similar technical terms are also defined and used by Suhrawardl for the first time in an Illuminationist

philosophical sense to distinguish them from specific Peripatetic terms or from the general non-philosophical vocabulary of mystical and theological texts. Suhrawardi's attempt to attribute specifically chosen meanings to known expressions by adding qualifiers, and to coin new terms as well, is a basic characteristic of his philosophical reconstruction of previous modes of thought.

Finally, Suhrawardl introduces the term "the Illuminationists" (al-ishrdqiyyun), subsequently adopted by commentators and historians, to describe thinkers whose philosophical position and method are distinguished from "the Peripatetics" (al-mashshaun). It is clear, therefore, that the young philosopher intended his works to be recognized as incorporating a different system from the Peripatetic works of his time as manifest by language, method and meaning. All of the major Illuminationist commentators – Shams al-Dln Shahrazurl, Ibn Kammunah and Qutb al- Dln ShlrazI – agree that Suhrawardfs philosophical position is markedly different from that of the Peripatetic school.[28]

An older Orientalist tradition, however, asserts that the Philosophy of Illumination is not essentially new, and considers Ibn Slna s short remarks concerning Oriental Philosophy (al-hikmat al-mashriqiyyah) to precede it. In this view, Ibn Slna s polemic or even politically motivated statements were not intended to reconstruct Aristotelian philosophy systematically but to garner wider acceptance for Greek philosophy by giving it more commonly accepted epithets. The same Orientalist tradition, moreover, does not consider Illuminationist philosophy to be essentially distinct from the Peripatetic and has, usually without careful examination of Illuminationist texts, generalized it as Ibn

Sinan. This position is not altogether valid, however, as it does not take post-Ibn Sinan Arabic and Persian texts into account, considering them to be devoid of new and fresh philosophical arguments.

My position concerning the Philosophy of Illumination, which I have delineated here and elsewhere,[29] is that it is a distinct, systematic philosophical construction designed to avoid the logical, epistemological and metaphysical inconsistencies which Suhrawardl perceived in the Peripatetic philosophy of his day. While Suhrawardl quite obviously was deeply aware of the Ibn Sinan philosophical corpus, his Philosophy of Illumination cannot be totally attributed to Ibn Slna, nor can it be deemed to be merely its allegorical restatement. Suhrawardl does use Ibn Sinan
texts, terms and methods, but he employs many other sources, as well. Although he was deeply influenced by the great Peripatetic master al-Shaykh al-Ra'ls, in my view the philosophical intention underlying the composition of works designated as "Illuminationist" is clearly Suhrawardl's own. It will be a challenging task for future researchers to determine if the Illuminationist plan is well defined and philosophically sound or given more to polemics. One thing is clear, however: a failure to examine actual Illuminationist texts, the majority of which remain unpublished and accessible only to a few specialists, has blurred the origins of Illuminationist philosophy. By briefly examining a few relevant passages here, I hope to put an end to these historical generalizations.

Suhrawardī's Critique of Ibn Sīnā's Position

In numerous places in his writings Suhrawardl argues against Ibn Slna's philosophical position while carefully delineating his own. In a few instances he even attacks the Peripatetic master directly. In perhaps his most bitter attack on Ibn Slna, Suhrawardl emphatically rejects the alleged position of Ibn Slna as a so-called Oriental (mashriql) philosopher. The implications of this passage are also significant for an understanding of the trends and schools of thought in the history of Islamic philosophy in general. The controversy concerns Ibn Slna's claims that he had plans for composing an Oriental philosophy more elevated in rank than his other, strictly Peripatetic works. Suhrawardl begins the passage by quoting texts by Ibn Slna concerning problems relating to the definition of simple things, with which he at first agrees – namely that simple, non-composite essences can only be "described" and not defined.[30] Suhrawardl here refers to a book titled Karans fi'l-hikmah ("Quires on Philosophy"), attributed by Ibn Slna to the method of "Orientals" in philosophy.[31] It is not clear what the Quires are, but the statement in question can be traced to Ibn Slna's Logic of the Orientals.[32]

Suhrawardi's initial remarks concerning Ibn Slnan thought are matter-of-fact. His attack against it begins rather abruptly and is directed towards the essential distinction between Peripatetic philosophy and Oriental philosophy. First, Suhrawardl casts doubt on Ibn Slna's claim that the Quires is

based on Oriental principles. Then, he goes on to refute intensely Ibn Slna's assertion that the Quires constitutes a new Oriental philosophy in a twofold argument, as follows. Firstly, no supposedly Oriental philosophy existed prior to Suhrawardl's own reconstruction of the Philosophy of Illumination, which should not be considered Oriental in a cultural or geographic sense, but rather as incorporating an "Illuminationist" (ishraql, not to be confused with mashriql)[33] emphasis on intuitive, inspirational and

immediate modes of cognition. (These philosophical issues should not be confused with the contemporary reading of an allegedly medieval nationalist ideology that is, at best, difficult to substantiate textually.)

Secondly, Suhrawardl takes pains to demonstrate that the Quires were, in fact, composed solely in agreement with established Peripatetic laws (qawaid al-mashshain), comprising problems included only in what he specifies as philosophia generalis (al-hikmat al-'dmmah). At best, as Suhrawardl is careful to indicate, Ibn Slna may have changed an expression or slightly modified a minor point, but the Quires is not significantly different from the standard Peripatetic texts. Suhrawardl concludes that simple modifications made by Ibn Slna do not make him an Oriental philosopher. Here is another instance at which Suhrawardl turns to polemics, perhaps for political reasons, as he invokes the authority of the "ancients" by claiming that his own principles of Oriental philosophy (al-asl al-mashriqi) reflect the earlier "wisdom" of Persian KhusrawanI sages and many other figures.[34]

It is necessary to bear in mind Suhrawardi's own philosophical intention in composing systematic works

structurally distinct from the Peripatetic and that were specifically titled to emphasize the difference. Suhrawardl claims that his new system triumphs where the Peripatetic fails, that it is a sounder method for probing the nature of things, and is, above all, capable of "scientifically"[35] describing non-standard experiences (widely believed to be real in his time), such as "true dreams", "personal revelations", "intuitive knowledge" of the whole, "ability to foretell the future", "out-of-body experiences", "reviving the dead" and other "miraculous" extraordinary phenomena.[36] The underlying intention for Suhrawardl's Philosophy of Illumination is to prescribe a clear path towards a philosophical life that is at once a more "scientifically" valid means of probing the nature of things and attaining happiness, and ulti-mately a way of reaching more practical wisdom that can and should be employed in the service of just rule.

The Significance of Suhrawardī's Work in Islamic Philosophy

A significant methodological principle is established by Suhrawardl when, for the first time in the history of philosophy, he clearly distinguishes a bipartite division in metaphysics: metaphysica generalis and metaphysica specialis.[37] The former, as the new philosophical position holds, includes standard discussions of such subjects as existence, unity, substances, accidents, time, motion, etc.; while the latter is said to include a novel scientific approach

to analysing supra-rational problems such as God's existence and knowledge; "true dreams"; "visionary experience"; creative

acts of the enlightened, the knowing subject's "imagination"; the "proof" of the real; the objective existence of a "separate realm" designated mundus imaginalis (alam al-khayal); as well as many other similar problems. In fact, Suhrawardfs division of the subject matter of metaphysics, as well as his attempt to demonstrate the epistemological primacy of an objectified experiential mode of cognition, are among the distinguishing methodological and structural characteristics of Illuminationist philosophy. Since Suhrawardfs time, these principles have been employed by many commentators and historians to accentuate the differences between the Peripatetics and the Illuminationists.[38]

Another area in which Illuminationist principles have had an impact is in the realm of semantics ('ilm dalalat al-alfaz:). Suhrawardl, perhaps inspired by a Stoic-Megaric minor trend in Islamic philosophy up to his time, restates a number of problems in a different manner than the way in which they are named and discussed in the Ibn Sinan logical corpus.[39] Problems in this area of logic include: types of signification; relation of class names to constituents (members) of the class; types of inclusion of members in classes (indiraj, istighrdq, indikhal, shumul, etc.); and, perhaps most significantly from the standpoint of the history of logic, a fairly well-defined theory of supposition (the restricted and unrestricted use of quantification).[40]

In the domain of formal logic Suhrawardl proves himself to be a remarkable logician. To a lesser or greater extent, Suhrawardl influenced a number of works on specific

problems of logic in Persia. These include: iterated modalities; the construction of a super affirmative necessary proposition (al-qadiyyat al-daruriyyat al-battdtah); the question of negation (al-salb), especially in the conversion of syllogism (al-'aks); reduction of terms; construction of a single "mother" figure for syllogism (shakl al- qiyas) from which all other figures are to be derived; temporal modalities (al-qadaya al-muwajjahah); especially non-admittance of an unrestricted validity of the universal affirmative proposition (al-qadiyyat al-miijibat al-kulliyyah) in obtaining certain knowledge (al- Him al-yaqlnt) because of future contingency (al-imkan al-mustaqbal) as well as many others.

Another major area of Suhrawardfs influence is his theory of categories, to which most later philosophical works in Persia refer, especially within the later major non-Ibn Sinan philosophical synthesis known as Transcendent Philosophy (al-hikmat al-muta 'dliyah). Suhrawardl discusses the categories at great length in his major Arabic and Persian systematically philosophical works. He attributes his influential categorical theory to a Pythagorean scholar (shakhs fithaghurithi) by the name of Arkhutus.[41] What is later designated by Sadr al-Din al-Shirazi as "motion in the category of substance" (al-harakah al-jatuhariyyah), translated as "substantial motion" and "transubstantial motion", is a direct corollary to Suhrawardfs theory.[42] Briefly the theory states that

"intensity" (shaddah wa daf) is a property of all categories which are reduced to five: substance (jawhar), quality (kayf), quantity (kamm), relation (nisbah) and motion (harakah).[43]

This concept is in direct agreement with Suhrawardl's special theory of being as continuum, as well as with his theory

known as "theory of future possibility" (qaidat imkân al-ashraf literally, theory of the possibility of the most noble).

Taken as a whole, Suhrawardl's aim is directed towards theoretical as well as practical and achievable goals, first to demonstrate fundamental gaps in the logical foundations of Aristotelian epistemology and meta-physics, and then to reconstruct a system founded upon different, more logically consistent, epistemological and metaphysical principles. Although further analytic studies are required to evaluate the philosophical side of Suhrawardl's thought, one fact is widely accepted by the traditional Islamic philosophers: the Philosophy of Illumination – its ideas, language and method – had a major impact on all subsequent thought in Islam, covering philosophical, mystical and even political domains. The influence of this philosophical system has been most widespread in Persia followed by Muslim India, where it has also helped define the notion of poetic and philosophical wisdom as the principal means by which generations of Muslims have sought solutions to essential intellectual and existential questions.

A Review of Western Scholarship on Suhrawardī

Despite Suhrawardl's monumental impact on the development of post- Ibn Slnan philosophy in Islam, evidenced by the widespread use of the epithet "Illuminationist" (ishrâqï) to distinguish it from the Peripatetic approach, only a few analytical works (none

comprehensive) are available on Suhrawardl's systematic philosophical works. Lack of serious interest in studying the philosophical dimension of Suhrawardl's thought has been due partially to, firstly, a misconception among some historians that Islamic philosophy did not develop beyond Ibn Slna in the East, and terminated in the West with Ibn Rushd; and, secondly, misrepresentation of Suhrawardl's ideas by a number of scholars who have described the Philosophy of Illumination (and other non-Aristotelian philosophical endeavour) as "theosophy", "sagesse orientale", "transcendent theosophy" and the like.[44] While the Islamic Peripatetic tradition has been studied from a philosophical perspective, the dominant focus of scholarly attention on post-Ibn Slnan thought has been on a presumed "spiritual" dimension of selected Arabic and Persian texts of Islamic philosophy covering the five centuries after Ibn Slnà, including Suhrawardl's Philosophy of Illumination ("Hikmat al-ishrâq"), Mullâ Sadrà's al-Asfdr
al-arbaat al-'aqliyyah ("The Four Intellectual Journeys") and other similar texts. This type of emphasis has led some historians to categorize thinkers such as Suhrawardl as "esoteric" Sufis, which is a misleading designation to say the least. The more serious limitation of emphasis on the esoteric dimension of post-Ibn Sinan philosophical texts, appropriately stated by Fazlur Rahman, has been "at the cost … of its purely intellectual and philosophical hard core, which is of immense value and interest to the modern student of philosophy".[45]

Western interest in Suhrawardl has a long history. Since the early decades of the twentieth century Orientalists and historians of philosophy have noticed Suhrawardl to be an important figure in the formation of post-Ibn Sinan

philosophical thought. Carra de Vaux[46] and Max Horten[47] wrote short essays on him. In the late 1920s, Louis Massignon gave a classification of Suhrawardfs works.[48] Otto Spies edited and translated a few of his philosophical allegories a decade later;[49] and Helmut Ritter clarified a prevalent Orientalist confusion by distinguishing Suhrawardl from three mystics who bore the same attribution "Suhrawardl".[50] It was, however, Henry Corbin's text editions of many of Suhrawardfs philosophical writings, as well as his interpretations, that started a new wave of infatuation with Illuminationist philosophy.[51] Seyyed Hossein Nasr has also devoted a number of studies to the spiritual and religious dimension in Suhrawardfs teachings.[52] Still, however, too few studies of the logical and epistemological foundations of the Philosophy of Illumination from a philosophical point of view are available. The few pages in Muhammad Iqbal's The Development of Metaphysics in Persia constitute one of the few general accounts of Suhrawardfs philosophical thought.[53]

Some recent scholars, notably Henry Corbin and Mohammad Moin, have further imagined Suhrawardl to be the reviver of some form of ancient Persian philosophy, which, however, cannot be substantiated. There is simply no textual evidence for an independent Persian philosophical tradition. The fact that Suhrawardl (as well as other thinkers in Islam) mentions names of Persian kings and heroes, and makes reference to Persian mythological events, is indicative more of an intention to invoke the authority of ancient, well-known Persian symbols, than to recover some lost systematic philosophy. Suhrawardfs critique of certain problems of logic, epistemology, physics, mathematics and metaphysics in his Philosophy of Illumination draws upon established Peripatetic texts. No other textual source can be presumed to have been

available to him. The fact that he reformulates philosophical problems, rejects some or redefines others is indicative of his own philosophical intention to reconstruct a metaphysical system that aims, among other things, to establish the primacy of an intuitive mode of cognition. It is not indicative of a philosophical tradition known to him but lost to us.

Problems, Structure and Method of the Philosophy of Illumination

The most obvious but too readily dismissed principal component of Suhrawardl's Illuminationist philosophy is his use of a special technical language. This distinct vocabulary uses the symbolism of light to describe ontological problems, and especially to depict cosmological structures. For example, the Peripatetic Necessary Being is called "Light of Lights"; the separate "intellects" are called "abstract lights"; and so on. It is important to note that these linguistic innovations are not just new terms but are also indicative of philosophical intention. Thus the light symbolism is deemed more suitable to convey the ontological principle of equivocal being, since it is more readily understood that lights may differ in intensity while remaining of the same essence. Also, it is deemed more acceptable to discuss "proximity" (qurb) and "distance" (bud) from the source as indications of degrees of perfection when light symbolism is used. For example, the closer an entity is to the source, the Light of Lights, the more luminous the light entity (al-shay ' al-mustanlr) will be.

The use of symbolic language is a significant and distinguishing characteristic of the Philosophy of Illumination as a whole. Symbolism is also applied to the epistemological primacy of the creative act of intuition, which proposes as a primary axiom that the soul's knowledge of itself – here a light entity – is the foundation and starting point of knowledge. This knowledge is described as an abstract light generated (basil) from the source of light. The argument is that any light is observed to propagate itself once lit and is not emanated (fayd) either by will or at discrete intervals in time. This means that all light entities are obtained or generated from the source not in time but in a durationless instant once the source is lit, whenever that may be.

From the textual perspective, the Philosophy of Illumination begins in the Intimations, especially where Suhrawardl recollects a dream-vision in which Aristotle appears. This allegorical device allows Suhrawardl to present several important philosophical issues. Aristotle informs Suhrawardl through this dream-vision that the Muslim Peripatetics have failed to achieve the kind of wisdom achieved by mystics such as Abu Yazld al-Bastaml and al-Hallaj. This is due, the narration continues, to the mystics having achieved union with the Active Intellect by going beyond discursive philosophy and relying on their personal experience.[54] The truths (haqaiq) obtained in this way are the results of a special intuitive, experiential mode of knowledge, this text states.[55] Thus the first critique of Peripatetic philosophy is uttered through no less an authority than Aristotle, who informs Suhrawardl that true knowledge can only be
based on self-knowledge and obtained through a special mode designated as "knowledge by illumination and presence".

What this epistemological mode means and how it is obtained must rest first on demonstrating the logical gaps in the Peripatetic system. This is achieved as Suhrawardl undertakes an elaborate critique of the Aristotelian concept and formula of definition. This critique, which will be examined here in some detail, is the first significant attempt to show a fundamental gap in the Aristotelian scientific method, and indicates the first step in the reconstruction of the Philosophy of Illumination. The next major methodological step is to present an alternative epistemological foundation for constructing a holistic metaphysics. These are the primacy of intuition and the theory of vision-illumination – considered in Illuminationist philosophy to be the means for obtaining principles to be used in compound deductive reasoning.

Suhrawardfs Critique of the Essentialist Theory of Definition[56]

The problem of definition is fundamentally related to how the Philosophy of Illumination is constructed. Perhaps the most significant logical problem, which also has epistemological implications, is Suhrawardfs negation and thus rejection of the Aristotelian view of an essentialist definition, horos$_y$ and of an Ibn Sinan complete essentialist definition, al-hadd al-tamm, which considers definition to be the most prior and thus the significant first step in the process of philosophical construction. The impact of Suhrawardfs critique of Peripatetic methodology on this issue is so direct and has had

such a widespread impact on the subsequent development of philosophy in Persia that I am tempted to call it the triumph of Platonic method over the Aristotelian in Persia. The Platonic approach to definition seeks the unity of the thing defined in its Form, which is fully defined only as a person realizes what-is-to-be-defined (the definienduni) in his or her own self-consciousness.

Suhrawardfs critique of Aristotle's theory is marked by a combination of logical and semantic arguments. It begins by asserting that it is impossible to construct an essentialist definition, and that even Aristotle himself admits this.[57] Thus, Suhrawardl points out a critical gap in the Peripatetic system, thereby undermining Aristotle's basis of philosophical construction. Suhrawardfs analysis of the essentialist definition is in itself of major philosophical value. In a celebrated passage in book 2 of the Posterior Analytics, Aristotle stipulates the position of definition to be that of the first step in science,[58] and the premiss for demonstration.[59] Therefore, only if a definition is obtained, or constructed, may one proceed to scientific knowledge. Thus if essentialist definition does not
lead to unrestricted, primary knowledge of essence – as it must in the Illuminationist position – then the entire philosophical system has to be reconstructed based on other means of achieving knowledge of essence.

How should a definition be constructed? Suhrawardl asks his Peripatetic adversaries for their answer. Let us assume we want to define a thing, X. This thing must be constituted in relation to its attributes, both essential and non-essential, such as concomitants, accidents and so on. We may designate these attributes as constituents of X, say x_y Not considering simple,

non-composite (basit), entities, we must, Suhrawardl argues, see whether x_l is real or only ideally known, and how it is known in relation to X. The next question pertinent in the Illuminationist position is that of priority (taqaddum). That is, in order to define Xwe must be able to know Y, itself consisting of y_x constituents, in relation to which X may be defined. And Y must be necessarily prior to X in respect to knowledge. Also, as with X, the question whether Ycan be known through y_x will also have to be examined. Therefore, the definition of X will depend on what is known prior in knowledge. Thus, how the definition is obtained is, according to Suhrawardl, the primary philosophical step and first constructivist step in science.

Suhrawardl insists that the Peripatetic position on definition is reduced to: "A formula [qawl] which indicates the essence of the thing and combines [yajma] all of its constituent elements [muqawwimat]. In the case of the principal realities, it [the formula] is a synthesis tarkib of their genera and differentiae."[60]

So far, this formula of definition is in conformity with Ibn Slna s writings.[61] Suhrawardl's novel position is his insistence that all constituents of a thing must be combined in the formula, a requirement not specified by the Peripatetic formula.[62] Also, the formula must be a synthesis (tarkib) of the multiple genera and differentiae.[63] This means that, from the Illuminationist position, things cannot be defined as such because of the impossibility of discretely enumerating all the essentials of a thing. Thus there must be some other prior Illuminationist foundation for knowledge.

Suhrawardl's use of terms such as all (kull), combination (jamo) and synthesis (tarkib), as applied to the manner in which the attributes or constituents of the thing to be defined must come together in the essentialist definition, indicate a new approach to the problem. In this respect he is also presenting a position which is in opposition to Ibn Slna's views that conform to the standard Peripatetic ones. Suhrawardl's critique of definition also draws on the semantic options he had worked out regarding signification (dalalah), of meaning (al-ma'na) or idea, by the utterances (al-lafz) said of the things (al-ashya) to be defined.[64] For the complete essentialist definition of "What is X?", according to the Peripatetics, is "the summum genus of X plus its differentiae". For
Suhrawardl, this formula is inadequate. As he states, the Peripatetic formula for the complete essentialist definition of man is "rational animal", which only implicitly states the essence of animal, and adds nothing to our knowledge of the idea "man" (al-insaniyyati). The formula qua formula does not indicate the idea, "animal" (al-hayawaniyyah) and the utterance "rational" only indicates "a thing that has a soul". By Aristotelian definition, then, only rationality is established, and not the essence of "man".[65]

The Peripatetics' position allows the essential to be more known than the thing defined, whereas Suhrawardl holds that the essentials are as unknown as the thing itself. Suhrawardfs own theory of unity is implied when he states: "[One can obtain a definition only] by recourse to sensible or apparent things in another way [i.e., other than the Peripatetic formula of definition], and [only] if [and when] the thing pertains specifically to the sum total of the [sensible and apparent things] as an organic whole."[66]

In the last paragraph of his argument, Suhrawardl attacks the Peripatetic formula of definition from yet another point of view which is related to his critique of induction.[67] Suhrawardf s view in this regard holds that: to know something by means of its essentials, one must be able to enumerate each and every one of them, which is possible only if the sum total of the essentials is known. Suhrawardl explicitly states here for the first time that such knowledge of the total essentials by the method of enumeration is not possible. This is because the thing to be defined may have a multiplicity of non-apparent (ghayr zdhir) attributes, the set of essentials may be limitless and the elements of the set may not be discretely distinguishable from the set itself. Also, although knowledge of the set implies knowledge of the elements, it is not possible to know what the set itself is by knowing the elements separately.

Suhrawardl concludes from his arguments that the constituents of a thing (muqawwimdt al-shay ') are not separate from the thing, neither "really" ('dynan) nor "mentally" (dhihnan). Therefore, an essentialist definition cannot be constructed, since that would require separating the constituents of a thing into genera and differentiae; but a thing can only be described as it is seen, which then and only then determines its reality. To define something according to the Illuminationist position, it has to be "seen" as it is. As Suhrawardl explicitly states, these are his own additions to the Peripatetic method.[68]

Does the definition of X simply rest on an intuition of it or of something else prior to placing its formula in some constructed structure? This problem will be discussed below. The emphasis here is on Suhrawardfs insistence that only "the

collectivity of the essentials of a thing is a valid definition of it".

The Illuminationist Theory of Definition[69]

From a formal standpoint, Suhrawardi's theory elaborates upon the earlier one and also includes a Platonic component; as it requires that by definition we ultimately strive to know the Forms, or to obtain knowledge of them through vision-illumination. Suhrawardfs theory is, therefore, fundamentally experiential. It is based on the immediate cognition of something real and prior in being, which he identifies as "light" – the fundamental real principle of Illuminationist metaphysics. For Suhrawardl, light is its own definition; to see it – i.e., to experience it – is to know it: "If, in reality, there exists a thing which need not be defined nor explained, then that thing is apparent, and since there is nothing more apparent than light, then more than anything, it is in no need of definition."[70]

Suhrawardl contends that the essentials may be ascertained only when the thing itself is ascertained, and this is the basis for his critique of the Peripatetic theory. It also serves as the impetus for his formulation of an alternate theory, as follows: "We obtain a definition only by means of things that pertain specifically to the totality (i.e., organic whole Ial-ijtima']) of the thing."[71]

In contrast to the Peripatetic view, the Illuminationist system begins by accepting the absolute validity of an atemporal, primary intuition of the knowing subject (al-mawdu al-mudrik), who is necessarily and always cognizant of its "I-ness" (al-anaiyyah) prior to spatial extension. In Illuminationist philosophy, self-consciousness and the self-conscious entities are depicted as lights and cover all of reality. Thus, for example, an abstract, non-corporeal light represents pure self-consciousness. Other corporeal entities are less "lit" but are also self-conscious, albeit to a lesser degree. Every thing is also potentially self-conscious, except for the purely "dark", which represents total privation of light.

Admittedly, one aspect of Suhrawardl's theory, namely the insistence on complete enumeration of the essentials of the thing synthesized in unitary formula, is, to say the least, enigmatic. However, considering the works of modern philosophers such as Bertrand Russell and Alfred J. Ayer clarifies the problem. Russell's theory is reduced to a distinction between definition by extension (a definition that seeks to enumerate the members of a "class")[72] and definition by intention (a definition that mentions a defining property or properties).[73] The Illuminationist theory can be seen as combining elements both of a definition by extension and of a definition by intension. Ayer distinguishes Aristotelian explicit definition from definition in use. This reduces to a set of symbols which, in turn, are translatable into symbolic equivalents.[74] This trans- latability must necessarily include, as an integral component, the experience of the truth underlying the symbol. Thus, the Aristotelian
essentialist definition of "man" as symbol for a "rational animal" is only an explicit definition, and so becomes a tautology in the strict non- mathematical sense.

According to Illuminationist theory, the essence of man, which is the truth underlying the symbol "man", is recoverable only in the subject. This act of "recovery" is the translation of the symbol to its equivalent in the consciousness or the self of the subject. Since the soul is the origin of the thing by which the idea of humanity is ascertained, and since the soul is the "closest" (aqrab) thing to humans, it is therefore through the soul that one may first realize the essence of the human being and ultimately of all things.[75] Subsequently, based on the subject's self-knowledge, the real sciences are constructed by employing the method of demonstration.[76]

Illuminationist Epistemology

Perhaps the most widespread impact of Suhrawardl's philosophy has been in the domain of epistemology. A basic Illuminationist principle is that to know something is to obtain an experience of it, tantamount to a primary intuition of the determinants of the thing. Experiential knowledge of a thing is analysed only subsequent to the intuitive total and immediate grasp of it. Is there something in a subject's experience, one may ask, which necessitates that what is obtained by the subject be expressed through a specifically constructed symbolic language? The answer to this question will be examined from multiple points of view, but it is clear, even at this juncture, that Suhrawardl's "language of Illumination" is intended as a specific vocabulary through which the experience of Illumination may be described. It is equally clear that the interpretation of the symbolism of Illumination and its implications, as detailed by Suhrawardl in

the Paths and Havens, are the central aspects of the controversy over the basis of Illuminationist philosophy.

The Philosophy of Illumination, as described in Suhrawardl's works, consists of three stages dealing with the question of knowledge, followed by a fourth stage of describing the experience. The first stage is marked by preparatory activity on the part of the philosopher: he or she has to "abandon the world" in readiness to accept "experience". The second is the stage of illumination, in which the philosopher attains visions of a "Divine Light" (al-nur al-ilaht). The third stage, or stage of construction, is marked by the acquisition of unlimited knowledge, which is Illuminationist knowledge (al-ilm al-ishrdqi) itself. The fourth and final stage is the documentation, or written form of that visionary experience. Thus, the third and fourth stages as documented in Suhrawardl's writings are the only components of the Philosophy of
Illumination, as it was practised by Suhrawardl and his disciples, to which we have access.

The beginning of the first stage is marked by such activities as going on a forty-day retreat, abstaining from eating meat and preparing for inspiration and "revelation".[77] Such activities fall under the general category of ascetic and mystical practices, though not in strict conformity with the prescribed states and stations of the mystic path or suft tariqah, as known in the mystical works available to Suhrawardl. According to Suhrawardl, a portion of the "light of God" (al-bariq al-ilaht) resides within the philosopher, who possesses intuitive powers. Thus, by practising the activities in stage one, he or she is able, through "personal revelation" and "vision" (mushahadah wa mukdshafah), to accept the

reality of his or her own existence and admit the truth of his or her own intuition. The first stage therefore consists of (1) an activity, (2) a condition (met by everyone, since we are told that every person has intuition and in everyone there is a certain portion of the light of God) and (3) personal "revelation".

The first stage leads to the second, and the Divine Light enters the being of the human. This light then takes the form of a series of "apocalyptic lights" (al-anwar al-sanihah), and through them the knowledge that serves as the foundation of real sciences (al- 'ulum al-haqfqiyyah) is obtained.

The third stage is the stage of constructing a true science (Him sahih). It is during this stage that the philosopher makes use of discursive analysis. The experience is put to the test, and the system of proof used is the Aristotelian demonstration (burhan) of the Posterior Analytics.[78] The same certitude obtained by moving from sense data (observation and concept formation) to demonstration based on reason, which is the basis of discursive scientific knowledge, is said to prevail when visionary data upon which the Philosophy of Illumination rests, are "demonstrated". This is accomplished through a process of analysis aimed at demonstrating the experience and constructing a system in which to place the experience and validate it, even after the experience has ended.

The impact of the specifically Illuminationist theory of knowledge, generally known as "knowledge by presence" (al-Him al-huduri), has not been confined to philosophical and other specialist circles, as Illuminationist logic has been, for example. The epistemological status given to intuitive

knowledge has fundamentally influenced what is called "speculative mysticism" ('irfan-i nazan) in Persia as well as in Persian poetry. By looking briefly at a paradigm concerning the poet—philoso- pher-mystic's way of capturing and portraying wisdom, this point will be made evident.

The paradigm involves a subject (mawdu), consciousness (idrak) in the subject as well as relating to it, and creativity (khalldqiyyah). The
transition from the subject (al-mawdu) to the knowing subject (al-mawdu al-mudrik) to the knowing-creating subject (al-mawdu al-mudrik al- khallaq) marks the transformation of the human being as subject in a natural state to the human as knowing subject in the first state where knowledge transcends simple knowing and the spiritual journey begins. This leads finally to the state of union, when the knowing subject enters the realms of power (jabariit) and the Divine (Lahut), and the human being obtains the reality (haqfqah) of things and becomes the knowing- creating subject. What are finally created are "poems".

In my view, the most significant distinguishing characteristic of Persian poetry taken as a whole is its almost existential perspective regarding the outcome of philosophy (especially non-Aristotelian philosophy, equated with Ibn Slna s Oriental philosophy, as well as with Suhrawardfs Philosophy of Illumination). From this viewpoint, the end result of philosophy, which is wisdom, can be communicated only through the poetic medium. Innate poetic wisdom thus informs the human being – the philosopher—sage; the sage—poet; and, ultimately, simply the poet – of every facet of response to the total environment: the corporeal and the spiritual, the ethical and the political, the religious and the

mundane. The ensuing perception of reality and historical process is constructed (as in the Persian shVr sakhtan) in a metaphysical form – an art form, perhaps – that consciously at all stages employs metaphor, symbol, myth, lore and legend. The consequence is that Persian wisdom is more poetic than philosophical, and always more intuitive than discursive. This, in my view, is clearly the more popular legacy of Illuminationist philosophy and of its impact.

The way Persian poetic wisdom (or Persian poetic ishrdql wisdom) seeks to unravel even the mysteries of nature, for example, is not by examining the principles of physics, as the Aristotelians would, but by looking into the metaphysical world and the realms of myth, archetypes, dream, fantasy and sentiment. This type of knowledge forms the basis of Suhrawardfs views of Illuminationist knowledge by presence.

A Synopsis of Illuminationist Knowledge by Presence[79]

In his introduction to the Philosophy of Illumination, Suhrawardl discusses the way in which the foundation of Illuminationist knowledge was obtained by him as follows: "I did not first obtain [the Philosophy of Illumination] through cogitation, but through something else, I only subsequently sought proofs for it."[80]

That is, the principles of the Philosophy of Illumination (tantamount to the very first vision, and to the knowledge of the whole), was

obtained by Suhrawardl not through thinking and speculation but through "something else". This, as we are told by Suhrawardl and by the commentators Shahrazuri (seventh/thirteenth century), Qutb al-Dln al-ShirazI (eighth/fourteenth century) and Harawl (eleventh/seventeenth century), is a special experiential mode of knowledge named "Illuminationist vision" (al-mushahadat al-ishraqiyyah).[81] The epistemology of this type of vision is worked out in great detail by Suhrawardl. It is the subject of much discussion by all later commentators and is also reformulated and reexamined by one of the leading twentieth-century Muslim Illuminationist philosophers, Sayyid Muhammad Kazim Assar, in his study of ontological principles and arguments Wahdat-i wujud va badd[82]

Suhrawardl's reconstructed theory of knowledge consists of intuitive judgments (al-ahkam al-hads – resembling the Aristotelian notion of agkhi- noia) and what he holds to be the dual process of vision—illumination (al-mushahadah wa'l-ishraq), which together serve as the foundation for the construction of a sound, true science (al-'ilm al-sahih). These aspects also form the basis for a "scientific" methodology (al-tanq al-'ulum) which is at the core of Suhrawardl's concept of knowledge by presence. The visionary experience, which leads to knowledge not obtained by cogitation ifikr), takes place in a special realm called mundus imaginalis (alam al-mithal). The philosopher's experience in the realm of the imaginary determines what things are, which may ultimately be communicated only through non-ordinary language, such as poetic language or other symbolic modes of metalanguage. Thus poetry, which encompasses a metaphysics of metaphor and symbol, is theoretically given the status of the "most real".

Suhrawardl uses a favourite analogy to describe his view of knowledge. He compares physical astronomical observation (irsad jismant) with spiritual astronomical observation (irsad ruhdni), and states that the same kind of certitude observed from the world of sense data (al-mahsusai) is obtained from observing or "seeing" the non-corporeal.[83] He uses this analogy in its various forms in many places in his writings, and his commentators also use it to illustrate the fundamentals of the Illuminationist theory of knowledge.[84]

Mundus imaginalis is in a sense an ontological realm. Beings of this realm, though possessing the categorical attributes – in other words, "having" time, place, relation, quality, quantity, etc. – are independent of matter. In Suhrawardl's theory of categories, he considers substance, quality, quantity, relation and motion in terms of degrees of intensity as processes rather than as distinct ontic entities. Thus an ideal being, or a being in the imaginalis sense, has a substance which is usually depicted symbolically as light. This substance differs from that of another being only in respect to the degree of its intensity, which is in a continuous state (muttasil) of, firstly, being connected to its substances, or light-monads,
and, secondly, being part of the continuum, which is the Illuminationist cosmos. The being also has shape, which is imaginal, or ideal. Motion is a category and is an attribute of substances as well. Light entities in this realm move, and their movements are in relation to their degrees of intensity, or luminosity.

What enables the novice to gain such knowledge is the guide figure of this realm who serves a similar function as that of the Peripatetic nous poietikos. But while the Active Intellect of the Ibn Sinan cosmology, for example, is stationary and

discretely distinct from the other nine intellects above it in rank, the guide in this clime (al-nur al-isfahbad in Hikmat al-ishrdq) — which is equated in activity with a dator spiritis (rawan bakhsh) or dator scientis (wahib al-'ilm) and a dator formarum (wahib al-suwar) — is a light entity which is continuously moving and propagating its essence. This essence, which is a degree of light intensity, impregnates the imagination of the philosopher—sage with the imaginal forms.

The visionary experience, which provides knowledge in this realm, is due and related to the substantiate (al-suwar al-jawhariyyah) that have taken ideal, or imaginal, forms. They may appear as different forms, as they are in a state of continuous transubstantial motion, although they do not actually change their singularity. Thus, a vision of al-Isfahbad al-nasiit may appear as Gabriel to one, as Surush to another, and so on. This phenomenon serves as a metaphor for what the Peripatetics call "connection with the Active Intellect" (al-ittihad, aw al-ittisal bi'l-'aql al- fa''al). The result is the same: knowledge of the unseen, leading to Illumination, culminating in becoming a knowing-creating subject (al-mawdu al-mudrik al-khallaq).

The story of Aristotle appearing to Suhrawardl in a dream-vision is an allegory through which the philosopher exemplifies his own view of knowledge.[85] This story has a number of characteristic components which may be analysed briefly as follows. Firstly, in the vision, which is a state accompanied by overwhelming pleasure (ladhdhah), flashes (barq) and a glittering light, stated to be one of the intermediary stages of Illuminationist visionary experience,[86] Aristotle, the "master of philosophy" and "one who comes to

the aid of souls", appears to Suhrawardl, who asks a question concerning knowledge (mas'alat al-'ilrn), how it is obtained, what it is made of and how it is recognized. Aristotle's response is: "return to your soul (or self)".[87] Self-knowledge is a fundamental component of the Illuminationist theory of knowledge. Knowledge as perception (idrak) of the soul is essential and self-constituted, because an individual is cognizant of his essence by means of that essence itself.[88] Self-consciousness and the concept of "I" – the self-as-self, or its ipseity, its selfhood – are the grounds of knowledge. What is ultimately gained through the initial consciousness of one's essence is a way to knowledge,[89] called the "science based on presence and vision" (al-'ilm al-hudiin

al-shuhudi). For Suhrawardl, this is a higher type of knowledge than that obtained by the Peripatetic philosophers, who rely on union with the Active Intellect.[90]

Concerning his views of the foundations of knowledge, Suhrawardl writes: "Should a thing be seen, then one can dispense with its definition [man shahadahu [al-shay'] istaghna 'an al-ta'rifY*, and in that case "the form of the thing in the mind is the same as its form in sense- perception" (suratuhu fi'l-'aql ka-suratihi fi'l-hiss).[91] This view of knowledge is a fundamental principle in the Philosophy of Illumination.[92]

The Illuminationist's method of obtaining knowledge by means of a special mode of perception based on intuitive knowledge is said to be higher and more fundamental than predicative knowledge because the subject has an immediate grasp of the object without the need for mediation.[93] His or her position is based on the unity of the subject and object by means of the "idea" of the object being obtained in the

consciousness of the subject. Thus, the subject's immediate experience of the "presence" of the object determines the validity of knowledge itself, and the experience of such things as God, the self, separate entities, etc., is the same as knowledge of them.

One of the most significant statements made by Suhrawardl on this matter is his insistence on a complete correspondence between the idea obtained in the subject, and the object. In his view, only such a correspondence shows that knowledge of the thing as-it-is has been obtained.[94] This means that, to obtain knowledge, a kind of "unity" has to be established between the subject and the object, and the psychological state of the subject is a determining factor in establishing this unity. For the Peripatetics, knowledge is ultimately established by a kind of "union" (ittihad) or "connection" (ittisal) with the Active Intellect after an initial separation or disjunction (infisdl). Suhrawardl vehemently opposes the idea of disjunction, arguing that the unity of the subject and object is obtained in the knowing person by an act of self-realization, and that this can take place because there is no disjunction in reality, but only gradations of the manifestation of essence.

Suhrawardl refers in a number of his works to "judgments of intuition" (ahkam al-hads, hukm al-hads) which are used as valid forms of inference.[95] In each instance, the validity of the judgment of intuition is unquestioned and is given the rank of demonstration, so with intuitive judgment, constructing demonstrations is no longer necessary.[96] Intuition, in the sense used here by Suhrawardl, is most probably an elaboration of the Aristotelian "quick wit" (agkhinoia'),[97] but Suhrawardl incorporates this particular

type of inference into his epistemology. Using a modified Peripatetic technical terminology, he identifies intuition first as an activity of the "habitual intellect" (aql bVl-malakah)[98] and, secondly, as the activity of the "holy intellect" (al-aql al-qudsi);[99] but he considers
the most important act of intuition to be the subject's ability to perceive most of the intelligibles quickly without a teacher.[100] In such a case, intuition grasps the middle term (al-hadd al-awsat) of a syllogism, which is tantamount to an immediate grasp of an essentialist definition – in short, of the thing's essence.

The twofold process of vision-illumination (mushahadah-ishraq) acts on all levels of reality, according to Suhrawardl. It begins on the human level, in outward sense-perception, as sight (ibsdr). The eye (al-basar, or the seeing subject, al-bdsir), when capable of seeing, perceives an object (al-mubsar) when that object is illuminated (mustanlr) by the sun in the sky.[101] On the cosmic level, every abstract light sees the lights that are above it in rank, while instantaneously at the moment of vision the higher lights illuminate those lower in rank. The Light of Lights (Nur al-anwar) illuminates everything, and the Heavenly Sun, the "Great Hiirakhsh", enables vision to take place. In effect, knowledge is obtained through this dual activity of vision-illumination, and the impetus underlying the operation of this principle is self-consciousness. Thus every being comes to know its own degree of perfection, an act of self-knowledge which induces a desire (shawq) to see the being just above it in perfection, and this act of seeing triggers the process of Illumination.[102] By means of the process of illumination, light is generated from its highest origin to the lowest elements.[103]

Illumination is also the principle by means of which celestial motion is regulated.[104] Illumination is propagated from the Light of Lights to the human level by means of certain intermediary principles. These are the "controlling lights" (al-anwar al-ghdhirah) and "managing lights" (al- anwdr al-mudabbirah).[105] Among the latter, the principal lights which directly affect the human soul are the isfahbad lights.[106]

The Light of Lights controls everything.[107] It is the most apparent to itself, and thus it is the most self-conscious being in the Universe.[108] All abstract lights are illuminated directly by the Light of Lights, whose luminosity (nuriyyah), Essence (dhai) and power are all one and the same.[109] The Light of Lights is self-emanating (fayyad bi'l-dhat), and its attributes and Essence are one.[110] When the "heavenly illuminations" (al-ishraqat al- 'ulwiyyah) reach the human soul through the intervention of the isfahbad lights, all knowledge is given to the person. Such moments are the visions of the apocalyptic lights (al-anwar al- sanihah), which are the foundation of visionary experience, and means of obtaining unrestricted knowledge.[111] Human souls who have experienced the apocalyptic lights are called "souls separated from matter" (al-nufus al-mujarradah), because they have torn away from the physical bondage of body. They obtain an "idea of the light of God" (mithal min nur Allah), which the faculty of imagination imprints upon the "tablet of the sensus communis" (lawh al-hiss al-mushtarak). By means of this idea, they
obtain control over a "creative light" (al-nur al-khdliq) which ultimately gives them power to know. The moment of illumination, which is experienced by the Brethren of Separation from Matter (ikhwan al-tajrld)[112] and the Masters

of Vision (ashdb al-mushahadah),[113] is described by Suhrawardl as a gradual experience of "light" in fifteen steps, starting with the experience of the "flashing pleasurable light" (al-nur al-bariq al- ladhidh) and ending with the experience of a light so violent that it may tear the body apart at the joints.[114]

Suhrawardl's theory of vision applies to physics as well as to metaphysics. The analysis of the theory begins with a discussion of external vision (ibsar), what is called "vision, or seeing, by means of external senses" (mushahadah bii-hiss al-zdhir). In physics, Suhrawardl rejects the corporeality of rays (jismiyyat al-shu 'a)[115] and the view that holds rays to be colours (lawniyyat al-shu a.[116] Next, he rejects the theory of external vision which holds that "vision [ibsar] takes place solely because rays leave the eye and meet [yuldqi] objects of sight".[117] Suhrawardl also rejects the view that the act of sight (ruyd) takes place when the form of the thing (surat al-shay') is imprinted in the "vitreous humour" (al-rutiibat al-jalidiyyah).[118]

For Suhrawardl, the fact that vision has no temporal extension, and that there is no need for a material relation (rdbitah) between the seer and the thing seen, means that sight or vision exists prior to thinking and is superior to it. This is because any enumeration of essential attributes, of the genera and the differentiae requires time. The construction of dialectical syllogism and induction also takes time. Vision, however, takes place in a durationless instant (an), and this is the "moment" of Illumination.

The theory of vision, as developed by Suhrawardl and portrayed in the metaphysics of the Philosophy of

Illumination, is an application of his general theory of knowledge. Suhrawardl restates the conclusions reached in his theory of physics: "Theorem: [On Vision] You have now learnt that sight does not consist of the imprint of the form of the object in the eye, nor of something that goes out from the eye. Therefore it can only take place when the luminous object [al-mustamr encounters [muqabalah] a sound [healthy] eye."[119]

Thus, external vision takes place in accordance with Suhrawardl's general theory of knowledge, namely that the subject (the sound eye) and the object (the luminous thing) are both present and together necessitate the act of vision.[120] For the act of vision to be consummated, the following conditions must be satisfied: (1) the presence of light due to the propagation of light from the Light of Lights, (2) the absence of any obstacle or "veil" (hijab) between the subject and the object,[121] and (3) the Illumination of the subject as well as the object. The mechanism which allows for the subject to be illuminated is a complicated one, and involves a certain activity on the part of the faculty of imagination. When an object is seen, the subject has acted in two ways: by an act of vision and an act of Illumination. Thus, vision-illumination is actualized when no obstacle intervenes between the subject and the object.

In summary, one of the foundations of the Philosophy of Illumination is that the laws governing sight and vision are based on the same rule, consisting of the existence of light, the act of vision, and the act of Illumination. Thus, in Suhrawardfs Illuminationist philosophy, light, illumination, sight, vision, creative acts – and by extension all things may

be explained through the existence of light emanated by the Light of Lights.

NOTES

1 The major biographical sources on Suhrawardl are: Ibn Abï Usaybi'ah, 'Uyün al-anba fi tabaqāt al-atibbā ed. A Müller (Kï¿½sberg, 1884), vol. I, 1: 168, and the edition (used here) edited by N. Ridà (Beirut, 1968), pp. 641-6 (hereafter cited as Tabaqāt)', Yāqüt, Irshād al-arib, ed. D. S. Margoliouth, 6: 269; al-Qiftï, Tārikh al-hukamā', ed. Bahman Dārāi (Tehran, 1929): 345; Ibn Khallikān, Wafayāt al-ayān, ed. I. Abbās (Beirut, 1965), 6: 268-74 (hereafter cited as Wafayāt); Shams al-Dïn Muhammad al-Shahrazürï (d. c. 687/1288), Nuzhat al-arwāh wa rawdat al-afrāh fi tārikh al-hukamā' wai-falāsifah, ed. S. Khurshïd Ahmad (Hyderabad, 1976), 2: 119—43 (hereafter cited as Nuzhat al-arwāh); the eleventh/seventeenth-century Persian translation of Nuzhat al- arwāh by Maqsüd All Tabrlzl has recently been published by M. T. Daneshpajouh and M. S. Mawlaêẑ¨Tehran, 1986); this differs (considerably at times) from the Arabic text. Part of the commentary on Suhrawardl in this text has been translated into English by W. M. Thackston, Jr in The Mystical and Visionary Treatises of Shihabuddin Yahya Suhrawardl (London, 1982): 1—4. Thackston's translation is based on the partial edition of S. H. Nasr in Shihaboddin Yahya Sohrawardi, Oeuvres Philosophiques et Mystiques: Opera Metaphysica et Mystica III (reprinted: Tehran, 1970): 13-30. This edition includes the Arabic text as well as the Persian translation of Tabrlzl. The following works may be consulted for information on Suhrawardfs life and thought: Carra de

Vaux, "La philosophie illuminative d'aprç±Suhrawerdi Meqtoul", Journal asiatique, 19 (1902): 63—4; Max Horten, Die Philosophie der Erleuchtung nach Suhrawardl (Halle an der Saale, 1912); Louis Massignon, Recueil de textes inè£©ts (Paris, 1929): 111-13; Otto Spies, Three Treatises on Mysticism by Shihabuddin Suhrawardl Maqtul (Stuttgart, 1935); Helmut Ritter, "Philologika IX: Die vier Suhrawardl", Der Islam, 24 (1937): 270—86; and 25 (1938): 35-86; H. Corbin, Suhrawardl dAlep, fondateur de la doctrine illuminative (Paris, 1939); Les Motifs zoroastriens dans la philosophie de Sohravardl (Tehran, 1946); UHomme de lumiç±¥ dans le soufisme iranien (Paris, 1971); En Islam iranien (Paris, 1971), 4 vols (the second volume, Sohrawardî et les Platoniciens de Perse, is devoted to a detailed study of Suhrawardl's life and works); as well as other works by Corbin especially his Prolè¦¯mç–¥s to each

of his following critical editions of Suhrawardl's works: Opera metaphysica et mystica I (Istanbul, 1945, hereafter cited as Opera I); Opera metaphysica et mystica II (Tehran, 1954, hereafter cited as Opera II); Opera metaphysica et mystica III (Tehran, 1970, hereafter cited as Opera III). Special mention must also be made of Corbin's translations of Suhrawardl's works: Archange empourprçQuinze traitè±et rè¢©ts mystiques traduits du persan et de l'arabe, prè²¥ntè±et annotè±par Henry Corbin (Paris, 1976); and Le Livre de la sagesse orientale, Kitâb hikmat al-ishrâq, traduction et notes par Henry Corbin, è³¡blies et introduit par Christian Jambet (Paris, 1986); and other works such as: S. H. Nasr, Three Muslim Sages (Cambridge, Mass., 1964), chapter 2; and especially the excellent summary of illuminationist doctrine, "Suhrawardï", in A History of Muslim Philosophy, ed. M. M. Sharif (Wiesbaden, 1963) I: 372—98; and An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines (London, 1978), chapter 12;

also of interest for the study of the impact of Suhrawardl's thought in India I refer the reader to Muhammad Sharif al-Harawï, Anwàriyya: an 11th Century A. H. Persian Translation and Commentary on Suhrawardl's Hikmat al-Ishràq, edited with introduction and notes by Hossein Ziai (Tehran, 1980). Finally I should inform the reader of my study of the logical foundations of illuminationist epistemology, where most of the brief discussions of Suhrawardl's analytical thought here are presented in greater detail. See Hossein Ziai, Knowledge and Illumination: a Study of Suhrawardl's Hikmat al-Ishrâq (Atlanta, Brown Judaic Studies, 97, 1990).

2 Shahrazùri, Nuzhat al-arwâh (MS Istanbul, Yeni Cami, 908), fol. 233v. Shahrazüri's work is the only extensive source of Suhrawardl's biography. See also Shahrazùri, Nuzhat al-arwâh wa rawdat al-afrâh fï târïkh al-hukamâ' wa'l- falâsifah, ed. Seyed Khurshïd Ahmed (Hyderabad, 1976), 2: 124ff.

3 See Abl Usaybi'ah, Tabaqât, 1: 168; and Yâqüt, Irshâd, 6: 269. This work has been translated by Henry Corbin as The Theosophy of the Orient of Light.

4 Suhrawardï, Opera II: 258.

5 Shahrazùri, Nuzhat al-arwâh, 2: 125-7.

6 Yàqùt, Irshâd, 6: 269.

7 Ibn Abï Usaybi'ah, Tabaqât, 1: 299-301.

8 Suhrawardï, Opera /: 146, 278, 352. Sâwl wrote a Persian commentary on Ibn Slnâ's Risàlat al-tayr, a symbolic treatise which was re-composed in Persian by Suhrawardï, translated in The Mystical and Visionary Treatises of Suhrawardï, trans. Thackston: 21-5).

9 Recent scholars have too readily accepted Suhrawardl's works such as the Intimations, the Apposites and the Paths and Havens as purely Peripatetic. See Louis Massignon, Recueil de textes inè£©ts (Paris, 1929): 111-13; Carl Brockel- mann, GAI, 1: 437-8, GAL, 1: 481-3; Henry Corbin, "Prolè¦‾mç–¥s", Opera LL; Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Shihàb al-Dïn Suhrawardï Maqtùl", in A History of Muslim Philosophy, ed. M. M. Sharif (Weisbaden, 1963): 374; as well as others who have followed the same classification of Suhrawardï's works as these authors.

10 E.g., Suhrawardï, Opera /: 59, 121, 128, 131, 146, 183, 185, 192, 194, 195, 278, 340, 361, 371, 401, 484, 506. Suhrawardï himself stipulates that all of the major texts are related.

11 See my "The Source and Nature of Authority: a Study of al-Suhrawardl's
Illuminationist Political Doctrine", in Islamic Political Aspects of Philosophy, ed. Charles Butterworth (Cambridge, Mass., 1992): 294—334.

12 Tabaqdt. 642: "ba'atha Saldh al-Din ila waladihi al-Malik al-Zahir bi-Halab kitaban fi haqqihi bi-khatti al-Qadi al-FadiF. The qddi had been a trusted counsellor of Saladin (H. A. R. Gibb, Life of Saladin, p. 49).

13 Shahrazurl states that Saladin, who had been urged by the "jealous" jurists of Aleppo, wrote a letter to his son asking for Suhrawardl's execution lest he corrupt religion (afsada al-dlri), but al-Malik al-Zahir refused, so the sultan wrote to his son a second time warning the young prince that he would take away the rule of Aleppo from him unless he complied (Nuzhat al-arwdh, 2: 125-6).

14 The biographers differ in their opinions regarding Suhrawardi's execution. For example, Ibn Khallikan states: "I saw people differ concerning his affair … some attributed him with heresy [al-zandaqa wa'l-ilhdd, while others were of the opinion that there was good in him and that he was from among the people blessed with miraculous powers" (Wafayat, 6: 273). Shahrazurl states: "I saw people differ concerning his execution" (Nuzhat al-arwdh, 2: 125). Muhammad 'All Abu Rayyan has discussed the circumstances of Suhrawardl's execution in Aleppo at some length. He refers to the debates between Suhrawardi and the jurists of Aleppo, and cites al-'Imad al-Isfahanl, who in his al-Bustdn al-jami li-tawdnkh al-zaman reports that the jurists of Aleppo, especially two brothers, Ibnay Jahbal, had engaged Suhrawardi in a debate on the question of prophethood and God's powers. During the debate Suhrawardl's position, that God can create anything He wants at any time, was considered blasphemous which is why they sought his execution. See Muhammad Abu Rayyan, Usui al-falsafat al-ishraqiyyah (Beirut, 1969): 25-6; "Kayfa ublh damm al-Suhrawardl al-ishraql", Majallat Thaqdfah, 702 (1952). S. H. Nasr briefly discusses the circumstances for Suhrawardl's execution in "Shaykh al-Ishraq", in al-Kitdb al-tadhkan Shaykh al-Ishrdq, ed. Ibrahim Madkour (Cairo, 1974): 17-36. Nasr states that while during the Fatimid period Syria had been "among the great Shl'a centers", when the

Ayyubids triumphed over them, and also because of the Crusades, the Sunni madhhab became dominant, and he then attributes anti-Batinite sentiments to have been a factor in Suhrawardl's demise. This may not, however, be substantiated solely by recounting the debate between the jurists of Aleppo and Suhrawardi concerning the question of prophethood and its seal. Nasr's view that Suhrawardi had believed in "guardianship" (al-wildyah) (pp. 20—1) is not supported by the evidence in Suhrawardi, who never refers to wildyah in any of his works.

15 See my "Source and Nature".

16 See, for example, G. Slaughter, Saladin (New York, 1955): 221ff.

17 See my "Source and Nature".

18 Published in Opera I.

19 Published in Opera II.

20 See my Knowledge and Illumination: 9-15, where I argue that, based on Suhrawardi's own explicit statements, these works together make up a corpus in which he carefully and systematically presents the genesis and development of the Philosophy of Illumination. And since Corbin's editions of al-Talwihat and of al-Mashari do not include the sections on logic and on physics, I refer
to the following manuscripts: al-Talwihdt, Berlin MS no. 5062, and al- Mashan, Leiden MS no. Or. 365.

21 The Arabic text of al-Alwdh a I- 'imadiyyah has been edited by Najaf All Hablbl in Si risalah az Shaykh-i ishraq (Tehran, 1977): 1-78; the Persian version of the same has been edited by S. H. Nasr in Opera III: 109-95; the Arabic text of Haydkil al-niir has been edited and published by Muhammad All Abu Rayyan (Cairo, 1957), and the Persian version by S. H. Nasr in Opera III. 83-108; the Persian text of Partaw-namah has been edited by Nasr in Opera III: 1-81.

22 Suhrawardl, Opera I: 124.

23 Qissat al-ghurbat al-gharbiyyah, published in Opera II: 274—97, trans. Thackston, op. cit.: 100—8. The other treatises are published in Opera III, and are translated by Thackston, op. cit.

24 Most of the aphorisms had been collected by Shahrazurl in his Nuzhat al- arwah, 2: 136-43.

25 The invocations have been published by M. Moin in Majala-yi dmuzish wa parwarish (Tehran, 1924). One of the two has been reprinted in Si risalah az Shaykh-i ishraq (pp. 18—19).

26 The invocation starts thus: "Greetings upon the most luminous, alive [al-hayy speaking al-natiq and most manifest being [al-shakhs al-azhar and goes on to attribute the qualities royal authority [al-salatah wa'l-haybah and perfect power [quwwah] to this being. As Hurakhsh shines in the heavens so does the kiyan kharrah of kings on earth (cf. Suhrawardl, Opera I: 494; Opera II: 149-50.

27 Suhrawardl, Opera II: 10.

28 See Chapter 29, below, "The Illuminationist tradition".

29 See my Knowledge and Illumination: 20—39.

30 al-Mashari op. cit., i.e., Paths and Havens: Logic, fol. 15v.

31 Ibid.: "sarrahai-shaykh Abu Alt, fi kardris, yansubuha ilai-mashriqiyyin

32 See Avicenna, Mantiq al-mashriqiyyin (Cairo, 1910): 1-4.

33 While the two terms are morphologically related – ishraq is the verbal noun of Form IV of the triliteral root sh-r-q, and mashriq the locative noun – the former is used as a technical epistemological term, and the latter in a general sense of "East".

34 Paths and Havens: Logic, fol. 15r: "wa hddhihi 'l-kardris, wa in yansubah a ila'l- mashriq fa-hiya bi-'aynihd qawa'id al-mashshd'in wai-hikmat al-'dmmah, ilia annahu ghayyarai-'ibdrah, aw tasarrafah fi ba'd al-furu, tasarrufan ghariban la tubayin kutubuhu'l-ukhra … wa la yataqarraru bihi'l-asl al-mashriqi al- muqarrar fi 'ahd al- 'ulamtf al-khusrawaniyyah". Corbin has discussed Suhrawardl's view of KhusrawanI philosophers and of ancient Iranian wisdom. See, for example, Opera II: vi; and ibid., Prolegomene: 24-6.

35 Suhrawardl's clearly stipulated intention is to provide scientific proof for all "observed" phenomena. He does this by employing his new method of "the science of lights" ('ilm al-anwdr and fiqh al-anwdr). See Suhrawardl, Opera II: 10.

36 Suhrawardl's elaborate discussions on such themes are to be found in the last sections of his major philosophical works. Examples can be found in the following chapters: Philosophy of Illumination, 2.5: "On resurrection, prophecy

and dreams", especially 2.5.5: "On explaining the causes of divine admonitions and knowledge of the unseen"; Intimations, 3.4: "On prophecy, signs, dreams and other such matters", especially 3.4.2: "On the causes of extraordinary acts"; Paths and Havens, 3.7.3: "On how unseen things may appear"; and 3-7.6: "On the spiritual journey [sulūk of the divine philosophers"; and in addition the last section of Partaw-nāmah ("Epistle on Emanation"), entitled: "On prophecy, miracles [mujizāt], miraculous powers [karāmāt], dreams and other similar things".

37 For a discussion of the divisions as they are employed in Latin philosophy as distinguished from Aristotle's see Philip Merlan, From Platonism to Neoplatonism (The Hague, 1975): 70-84.

38 See Chapter 29, below, "The Illuminationist tradition".

39 I have shown elsewhere that Suhrawardl's theory may have been influenced by the Stoic theory of lekton. See my Knowledge and Illumination: 42 n. 2; 59 n. 3.

40 Alexander Broadie in his Introduction to Medieval Logic (Oxford, 1987) traces the history of these problems only to fourteenth-century Latin logic.

41 Suhrawardi, Opera I: 12.

42 Mulla Sadrā in his al-Shawāhidal-rubübiyyah, ed. J. Ashtiyānl (Mashhad, 1965) in the section entitled "Fourth Witnessing: First Illumination", argues for his theory of substantial motion [ithbāt al-harakat al-jawhariyyah, mostly based on the re-examination and refinement of Suhrawardl's earlier doctrine.

43 See, for example, Opera I: 1-12; Opera III: 113; Opera I: 146-8. The great logician 'Umar ibn Sahlān al-Sāwi, whose al-Basair Suhrawardi had studied, also reduces the categories, but to four: substance, quality, quantity and relation, not including motion. See Ja'far Sajjādl, Suhrawardi (Tehran, 1984): 98-9.

44 For example, Corbin translates Hikmat al-ishrāq (the title of the book, and the system) as sagesse orientale, which overlooks the analytical value of the Philosophy of Illumination. See, for example, Shihāboddln Yahya Sohravardl, Le Livre de la sagesse orientale, traduction et notes par Henry Corbin, ed. Christian Jambet (Paris, 1986).

45 Fazlur Rahman, The Philosophy of Mullā Sadrā (Albany, 1975): vii.

46 See Carra de Vaux, op. cit.

47 See Max Horten, op. cit.

48 See Louis Massignon, op. cit.: 111—13.

49 See Otto Spies, op. cit.

50 See Helmut Ritter, op. cit.

51 See H. Corbin, Suhrawardi d'Alep; Les Motifs zoroastriens; L'Homme de Lumiere.

52 See S. H. Nasr, Three Muslim Sages: "Suhrawardi". Nasr has pointed out in his pioneering work the religious significance of Suhrawardl's life and teachings, as well as the religious dimension in his cosmology. See, in this regard, his An Introduction, op cit.: chapter 12.

53 See Muhammad Iqbāl, The Development of Metaphysics in Persia (London, 1908): 121-50. In his analysis of Hikmat al-ishrāq, Iqbāl draws on Muhammad Sharif al-Harawl's Persian commentary available in Berlin at the Kï¿½lichen Bibliothek (part of the Bibliotheca Orientalis Sprengeriana, Spr. 766).

54 Suhrawardi, Opera I: 70—4.

55
Ibid.: 58.

56 For a detailed discussion of Suhrawardl's critique see my Knowledge and Illumination: 77—114.

57 Suhrawardï, Opera II: 21.

58 Aristotle, Posterior Analytics, 2.3.90b 1—24.

59 Ibid., 90b24. On Aristotle's view regarding the relation between definition and demonstration, see Posterior Analytics, 1.2.72al9-24; 1.8; 1.10; 1.22; 1.33. This problem is treated at length by Anfinn Stigen in his philosophical study,

The Structure of Aristotle's Thought (Oslo, 1966), chapter 4, and p. 78 n. 2.

60 Suhrawardï, Opera II: 2Iff.

61 See Avicenna, Livre des dè¥©nitions, sec. 18. Cf. Avicenna, the Healing: Logic: Demonstration: 233—7.

62 Suhrawardï's theory of definition is related to his critique of induction. He makes a distinction between complete and incomplete induction al-istiqra al- tâmm wa'l-naqis. E.g., Opera III: 5. See also William Kneale, Probability and Induction (Oxford, 1966): 24—110.

63 This point, though mentioned by Ibn Slna, is not explicitly required by him in the formula. See Ibn Sïnà, al-Shifa: al-Mantiq: al-Burhdn 4.4.217—24.

64 See Suhrawardï, Opera II: 14; Shïrâzï, Sharh II: 35: 13—38.

65 Paths and Havens: Logic, fol. 17v.

66 Suhrawardï, Opera II: 21.

67 See Suhrawardï, Paths and Havens: Logic, fol. 98v.; Opera III: 5.

68 Paths and Havens: Logic, fol. 15r.

69 For a detailed discussion of the Illuminationist theory of definition see my Knowledge and Illumination: 114—27.

70 Suhrawardï, Opera II: 106.

71 Suhrawardï, Opera II: 21.

72 Other terms, such as "collection", "set", "aggregate" and "manifold", are also used, and may mean what Suhrawardï intends by al-ijtimd'.

73 Bertrand Russell, Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy (New York, n.d.): 12. Cf. Irving Copi, Symbolic Logic (New York, 1965), chapter 6; Moritz Schlick, General Theory of Knowledge (New York and Vienna, 1975): 31-9.

74 Alfred J. Ayer, Language, Truth and Logic (London, 1950): 59-71. Cf. Paul T. Sagal, "Implicit Definition", The Monist, 57(3) Quly 1973): 443—50.

75 Suhrawardï's Gedankenexperiment indicates a more detailed analysis than Ibn Sïnà's, and is incorporated fully into a comprehensive view of psychology. See Opera III: 10—14. Cf. Fazlur Rahman, Avicenna's Psychology (London, 1952): 31.

76 Suhrawardï, Opera II: 40—6.

77 Ibid.: 248.

78 Ibid.: 40-6.

79 For a detailed discussion of the Illuminationist theory of knowledge by presence see my Knowledge and Illumination: 129—45.

80 Suhrawardï, Opera I: 11.

81 See, for example, Anwariyyah: 6—7.

82 Muhammad Kâzim Assâr, Wahdat-i wujüd wa badà', ed. Jalâl Ashtiyànï (Mashhad, 1970).

83 Specific reference is made to the science of astronomy, implying that just as
one may predict astronomical occurrences in the future one may make valid predictions concerning the "unseen" metaphysical realm as well. See, for example, Suhrawardl, Opera II: 13.

84 See ShlrazI, Sharh II; Ibn al-Khatlb, Rawdat al-ta *nf 2: 564ff.

85 Suhrawardl, Opera I: 70—4.

86 Multiple stages of the Illuminationist visionary experience are discussed, and each of them accompanied by an experience of a special kind of light. See Suhrawardl, Opera II: 252; Opera I: 108, 114.

87 Suhrawardl, Opera 1:70.

88 Ibid. The self-conscious subject is to be compared with Ibn Slna s Thomme volant" (Peters, Aristotle and the Arabs: 173). See also Rahman, Avicenna's Psychology: 8-20.

89 Suhrawardl, Opera I: 75. Cf. 121.

90 Ibid: 74, 88, 90.

91 Suhrawardl, Opera II: 73—4.

92 Mushahadah indicates a special mode of cognition that enables the subject to have an immediate, durationless grasp of the essence of the object. Suhrawardl, Kalimat al-Tasawwuf (MS Tehran: Majlis, Majmuah 3071): 398. Cf. Mulla Sadra, TaItqat, Sharh II: 204 (margin).

93 See Philip Merlan, From Platonism to Neoplatonism: 185. This knowledge has to do with things "above being" and is called agkhinoia by Aristotle (Merlan: 186). It is usually translated as "intuition", or "quick wit". Cf. Aristotle, Posterior Analytics, 2.34.89bl0ff. Cf. Nicomachean Ethics 6.9.1142b6ff. Plotinus is considered the most significant Greek proponent of intuition (e.g. Cairo, The Evolution of Theology in the Greek Philosophers (Glasgow, 1923), 1: 220-1). Cf. the distinction between peitho and ananke (literally: persuasion versus logical necessity, thus the distinction between discursive and immediate knowledge), in Plotinus Enneads, 5-3.6.

94 Suhrawardl, Opera II: 15. Cf. ShlrazI, Sharh II: 40.8—41.5.

95 Suhrawardl, Intimations: Physics, fol. 64v; Opera I: 57, 440; Opera II: 109.

96 E.g., Suhrawardl, Opera I: 57: "al-hads al-sahth yahkum bi-hadha duna hdjjah ila burhdri

97 See Aristotle, Posterior Analytics, 1.33.89b 10-20. Cf. Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, 6.9.1142b5—6. Cf.

Suhrawardl, Intimations: Physics, fol. 69r; Paths and Havens: Physics, fol. 20 lv.

98 E.g., Suhrawardl, Intimations: Physics, fol. 69r.

99 E.g., ibid., fol. 65v, 69r.

100 Ibid.

101 Suhrawardl, Opera II: 134.

102 Ibid.: 139—41: "wa kullu wahidyushahid Niir al-anwdr

103 Ibid.: 142-3.

104 Ibid.: 142, 147-8, 175, 184-5.

105 Ibid.: 139—40, 166—75, 185—6. The managing lights function on the human level, as al-anwar al-insiyyah (Opera II: 201), as well as on the cosmic level as al-anwdr al-falakiyyah (Opera II: 236).

106 Ibid.: 201, 213-15.

107 Ibid: 122, 135-6, 197.

108 Ibid.: 124.

109
Ibid.: 121—4.

110 Ibid.: 150.

111 Ibid.: 141, 204-5. Cf. ibid.: 13: "al-ishràqiyyün là yantazim amruhum düna sawânih nüriyyah".

112 Ibid.: 252.

113 Ibid.: 156, 162.

114 Ibid.: 252-4.

115 ibid.: 97.

116 ibid.: 98.

117 ibid.: 99.

118 ibid.: 100.

119 ibid.: 134.

120 Ibid.: 150.

121 Ibid.: 134-5. Both excessive proximity [ghurb] and excessive distance [bu'd] are considered to be obstacles that block the actualization of "sight".

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CHAPTER 29

The Illuminationist tradition

Hossein Ziai

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Orientalists and historians of Arabic and Persian philosophy have, for the most part, ignored much of the scholarship on the systematic side of post-Avicennan Islamic philosophy. The Illuminationist tradition, founded by Suhrawardl in the sixth/twelfth century, represents the principal advancement in Islamic philosophy immediately following Avicenna (Ibn Slna). However, the period from Avicenna's death in 429/1037 to the death of Averroes (Ibn Rushd) in 595/1198 encompasses three distinct types of philosophical attitude and style manifest in Arabic and, to a lesser extent, Persian texts. Each of these "schools", or traditions of philosophical thought, tends to be associated with the person considered to be its founder or another scholar who epitomizes that philosophical attitude. The three traditions are as follows.

Firstly, the Peripatetic school. Though known throughout the early period of Islamic philosophy to follow the texts and teachings of Aristotle, after the fifth/eleventh century the Peripatetic school is usually associated with Avicenna and his followers. This tradition is characterized by the structure, technical terminology and philosophical approach of the

Aristotelian texts as put forth in Avicenna's major compositions such as Healing ("Shifa'"). The study of logic, for example, is divided according to the books of Aristotle's Organon; physics in accordance with the books, chapters, and subject matter of his Physics; and similarly in metaphysics. The Peripatetic school of Islamic philosophy continues in the philosophical writings of Avicenna's pupils, such as Bahmanyar and Abu'l-Abbas al-Lawkari; in numerous Arabic and Persian commentaries and glosses on Avicenna's two major works, the Shifa' and the Ishdrat, and in monographs on specific issues relating to Peripatetic views and problems. Philosophical problems of this school that stand as cornerstones of Islamic Peripatetic philosophy are, in brief: the ontological position of primacy of being, the epistemological priority given to acquired

knowledge, the Necessary Being's knowledge of the universals rather than particulars, and the eschatological position of the soul's immortality.

Secondly, the Averroist tradition. Although Averroes was the foremost commentator of Aristotelian texts, he has in fact had little or no impact on post-Avicennan philosophical thinking in Islam. The impact of his Arabic Aristotelianism is primarily confined to the Latin West. Almost every aspect of Averroes's philosophical thought from logic to political philosophy has been examined in detail. Most of his works, some of which have survived only in Hebrew or Latin versions as abridgements or translations, have also been edited.

Thirdly, the Illuminationist tradition. To understand how philosophy has developed in the Islamic world, especially in Iran, it is of singular importance to examine Suhrawardi's

Illuminationist tradition of the sixth/twelfth century and its aftermath. This area of Islamic philosophy, which has long been overlooked the West, has had the most significant, widespread impact not only on Islamic philosophical thought per se but also in other areas of thought and creative activity, including speculative mysticism ('irfan) and poetry.

It should be noted that these three schools and traditions continue well after the sixth/twelfth century, and that the Peripatetic and the Illuminationist traditions were revived in the tenth/sixteenth century when the philosophical writings and teachings of many thinkers gave rise to yet another so-called new synthesis in Islamic philosophy known as the School of Isfahan.

This chapter will examine the tradition of Illuminationist philosophy after Suhrawardl, and will discuss selected details of its two dominant trends, focusing primarily on the seventh/thirteenth century. Thinkers of other periods considered to have been Illuminationists or to have favoured Illuminationist philosophical positions in their writings will also be mentioned.

The Philosophy of Illumination grew out of reactions to certain aspects of Islamic philosophical texts, most of them associated with the Avicennan corpus. While Avicenna may have seriously intended to compose a separate and distinct "Eastern" philosophy – which he mentions briefly in his work Logic of the Easterners ("Mantiq al-mashriqiyyin") -nowhere does he systematically develop and construct a philosophical system distinct from his monumental and predominantly Aristotelian composition, Healing. All of his works reflect a

standard Peripatetic structure, terminology and philosophical intention.

A number of thinkers prior to Suhrawardl did compose works that incorporated different, sometimes anti-Aristotelian principles, however. Foremost among them is the philosopher Hibat Allah Abu'l-Barakat al-Baghdadi. In his major anti-Aristotelian philosophic encyclopedia of the sixth/twelfth century, Evidential("'al-Mu'tabar"), al-Baghdadi develops an alternate structure for a foundation of philosophy, especially of epis-temology. As shown by Solomon Pines in his many detailed studies, al-Baghdadl also treats certain problems of physics from a distinctly non-Aristotelian perspective.[1] Al-Baghdadi's intent was not to reject Avicennan philosophy, nor to prove its incoherence, as Ghazzall's polemics would suggest, but to improve the existing structure and rectify the perceived logical and metaphysical inconsistencies of the previous texts. The Evidential is the first evidence of a non-Aristotelian trend in Islamic philosophy which was later systematized by Suhrawardi in his Illuminationist reconstruction of philosophy. Al-Baghdadi's three-part text – consisting of logic, physics, metaphysics – differs from Avicenna's Healing in both structure and method. Both al-Baghdadl and Suhrawardi base their constructivist philosophical ideas on the same foundation -that of a primary intuition of a knowing subject whose immediate grasp of the totality of existence, time and space, and of the whole as a self-constituted, inherently manifest and knowable object, determines both being and knowledge.

The fact that Abu'l-Barakat al-Baghdadl is among the few philosophers Suhrawardi actually mentions in his works in

reference to specific philosophical problems is indicative of the impact of the Evidential on Illuminationist philosophy. Also, Suhrawardi upholds al-Baghdadl's Platonist position. Concerning the significant question of the foundation of philosophy, both Suhrawardi and al-Baghdadl take an intuitionist stance, requiring that primary intuition must constitute the "first step" in philosophical construction. The structure of the Evidential is also reflected in Suhrawardfs philosophical works. It is evident, therefore, that al-Baghdadl should be regarded as an important preliminary source for many of Suhrawardfs non-Peripatetic arguments.

Finally, the anti-philosophical works of the famous theologian Abu Hamid al-Ghazzall – especially his Incoherence of the Philosophers (" Tahafut al-falasifah") – were known to Suhrawardi. Some of the terms used by al-Ghazzall, specifically in his Mishkat al-anwar, are terms that were later modified and employed by Suhrawardi in his Philosophy of Illumination. However, al-Ghazzall's polemic intention must be distinguished from Suhrawardfs philosophical one. In spite of some similarities in terminology, Illuminationist philosophy should not be understood as resulting from theological polemics, which is basically anti-philosophical in intent. The purpose of Illuminationist thought, on the contrary, is a fundamentally philosophical one: to demonstrate logical gaps in the Peripatetic system and then to reconstruct a more consistent and holistic philosophical structure by solidifying its foundations, methods and arguments. The theologian's aim, however, is not to construct a better philosophical system but to refute the very basis of philosophy. In support of this distinction, none of the major commentators of Illuminationist philosophy ever

mentions al-Ghazzall's works as immediate sources for lUuminationist methodology or formal techniques, though they were obviously aware of the widespread appeal of such texts by al-Ghazzall, such as Mishkdt al-anwdr, Tahdfut al-faldsifah and Maqdsid al-faldsifah.

Along with the Peripatetic school, the lUuminationist tradition is the only other systematic school of Islamic philosophy that has continued to be studied as a complete system of thought up to the present day. The epithet "lUuminationist" (ishrdqi) is still used, especially in Iran, to characterize the method and philosophical views of individual thinkers. As described in the previous chapter, Suhrawardi's lUuminationist philosophy fundamentally departs from Islamic Peripatetic philosophy in respect to the logical foundations of its epistemology and its reconstructed metaphysical system. lUuminationist philosophy continues immediately after Suhrawardl, primarily in the form of several major commentaries on lUuminationist texts composed in the seventh/thirteenth century, though it is not confined to these.

Commentators on Suhrawardī' Philosophy of Illumination

Of the main figures in the tradition of lUuminationist philosophy, some were designated lUuminationist; others were not yet clearly influenced by Suhrawardi's thought. The

earliest thinkers known for their lUuminationist position are the following seventh/thirteenth-century scholars, all of whom wrote commentaries on Suhrawardi's texts and also composed independent philosophical treatises that include specific lUuminationist positions: Shams al-Dln Muhammad al-Shahrazuri[2] and Sa'd ibn Mansur ibn Kammunah[3] (both of whom are called "lUuminationist") and Qutb al-Dln al-ShlrazI.[4] Other commentaries on Suhrawardi's texts were composed later, the most important of these being the tenth/ sixteenth-century works of Jalal al-Dln al-Dawanl[5] and the eleventh/seventeenth-century writings of Muhammad Sharif Nizam al-Dln al-Haraw!.[6] The principal commentators and their works are as follows.

Shams al-Dln Muhammad Shahrazurl, al-Ishraqi, i.e. "the lUuminationist" (d. after 688/1288) is the author of the well-known history of philosophy Nuzhat al-arwah wa rawddt al-afrdh, as well as the author of the first major commentary on Suhrawardi's Philosophy of Illumination and his Intimations. Among all the commentators Shahrazurl is the most faithful to the original conception and philosophical constructivist methodology of Suhrawardi's lUuminationist philosophy. His independent philosophical composition, al-Shajarah al-ildhiyyah^ will be examined below to show the lUuminationist concepts, method and structure of this work.

Sa'd ibn Mansur ibn Kammunah (d. 683/1284) created a major commentary, al-Talwihdt, that has earned the status of a textbook among Illuminationist philosophers in Iran. Perhaps the most significant impact of Illuminationist philosophy may be seen in Ibn Kammunah's philosophical work al-Jadid fi'l-hikmah (literally, "The New Philosophy", or Novum Organum). I have detected a serious attempt in this

book to elucidate further certain anti-Aristotelian philosophical principles that originate with Illuminationist philosophy. The salient features of his Commentary on al-Talwihdt will be briefly outlined here.

Qutb al-Dln Shlrazi (d. 710/1311) is the author of the best-known commentary on Illuminationist philosophy, as well as the voluminous, encyclopedic Durrat al-tdj. However, on careful scrutiny, Shlrazi's work indicates major borrowings from Shahrazuri's text that have previously gone unnoticed. Shlrazi is a better-known figure in Islamic philosophy than Shahrazuri, simply because he is one of the first post-Suhrawardian philosophers in Iran successfully to synthesize Avicennan philosophy and Suhrawardi's Illuminationist philosophy with Ibn Arabi's "gnosis" of wahdat al-wujud in a coherent and accessible independent Persian composition. Durrat al-tdj marks the beginning of philosophical compositions in which Avicennan methodology and metaphysics are harmonized with Illuminationist theories of vision and illumination (epistemology and psychology), and where the accepted Illuminationist doctrine of the fourth ontological realm, the mundus imaginalis, is fully integrated into the reconstructed cosmological system. This work is also the first Persian philosophical text that accepts Suhrawardi's psychological doctrine of knowledge by and of the self-conscious separate "I" – generalized as "I-it-thou-ness" (mam, tu'i, ut) – as the primary principle in epistemology as well as an alternative proof of prophecy. The only other epistemology that concerns the self in this way is the Peripatetic theory of the holy intellect and its conjunction with the Active Intellect. Shlrazi's work also discusses resurrection and metempsychosis (tandsukh) within the author's Illuminationist interpretation of gnosis ('irfdn).[7] In

my view this new grouping of ideas in Islamic philosophy was only the popular side of the theory, however, and is indicative of a trend that culminates with Mulla Sadra in the eleventh/seventeenth century. The more genuinely philosophical and theoretical Illuminationist legacy continued through less widely known texts, such as the works of Ibn Kammunah, which are discussed in detail later in this chapter.

The most recent of the medieval commentaries on Suhrawardi's texts was composed by Muhammad Sharif Nizam al-Dln al-HarawI, author of the most significant Persian commentary and translation of the Philosophy of Illumination. Harawi's work, composed in 1008/ 1600, includes a translation and commentary of Suhrawardi's "Introduction" and the majority of part two (al-qism al-thdni) of Philosophy of
Illumination? One of the important characteristics of Harawi's commentary is his attempt to compare Illuminationist principles with the Advaita system of Indian philosophy.

Anwariyyah is the only Persian translation and commentary on Suhrawardl's Philosophy of Illumination known to have survived, though others have been composed and may be found through further research in manuscript collections. Its author was probably an Indian Chishtl Sufi who also composed an independent Illuminationist work in Persian titled Siraj al'hikmah? Anwariyyah consists of a Persian translation and commentary of selected sections of the second part of Suhrawardl's Arabic text, which is on metaphysics, cosmology and the Illuminationist accounts of visionary experience. The work is typical of the first trend in post-Suhrawardian Illuminationist interpretation (by

Shahrazurl), and is also indicative of the period's general lack of interest in logic and philosophical methodology. It emphasizes the fantastic side of Illuminationist philosophy and draws heavily on Qutb al-Dln's earlier commentary but adds a great many examples drawn from popular mystical sources, especially from Mathnawl by Jalal al-Dln RumI (604/1206-672/1274). Harawi's work is also of interest for the study of comparative mysticism and for its overall attempt at a mystical interpretation of Suhrawardl's text, which was not always intended by Suhrawardl. Often, when commenting on a section, Harawl adds "and this is in accordance to the views held by the Sufi masters", or "this argument lends support to gnostic views". These comments are valuable in illustrating how mystics made use of the Illuminationist epistemological priority of the experiential mode of cognition.

Finally, Anwariyyah is also of specific interest for an understanding of how tenth/sixteenth-century Muslims in India viewed the prevalent Hindu views on mysticism. On several occasions, the author attempts to compare Illuminationist views with those of the Indian Advaita system, which he mentions by name. Examples are when he compares the Illuminationist cosmology, especially the mundus imaginalis, with the fourfold Sanskrit divisions of andaja, arayuta, udbhija and khanija, and Suhrawardl's discussion of eternal time with the Indian notions of yuga.[10]The work is also replete with words of reverence for "Indian sages and Brahmins", whom, we are told, the author had consulted on questions relating to philosophical and mystical questions.

Other Illuminationist Philosophers

Many other authors are known for having incorporated certain Illuminationist principles in their works but do not qualify as pure Illum-inationists. The following is a selected list of these thinkers.

Naslr al-Dln al-TusI (d. 672/1274) is the well-known philosopher, astronomer, mathematician and statesman whose commentary on Avicenna's al-Ishdrdt wal-tanblhdt has become one of the standard textbooks for the study of Avicenna's Peripatetic philosophy. Many generations of philosophers in Persia came to learn of the quintessence of Avicenna's teaching through this commentary. However the epistemo-logical priority given by Tusi to knowledge by presence does not qualify him as a purely Muslim Peripatetic. Given the impact that Tusi has had on all later Shi'ite authors, however, his Illuminationist attitude should not be overlooked.

Muhammad ibn Zayn al-Dln ibn Ibrahim Ahsa'l (d. after 878/ 1479), known as Ibn Abi Jumhur IshraqI Ahsa'l, is among those whom I have designated as "middle ishraq f thinkers.

Qadi Jalal al-Dln Muhammad ibn Sa'd al-Dln DawanI (d. 908/ 1501) is the author of the celebrated work onethics titled Akhldq-i jaldli, and held the position of vizier under the Aqquyunlii rulers of northeastern Persia. His commentary on Suhrawardi's Hayakil al-nur, titled Shawdkil al-hur fi sharh hayakil al-nur, is well known, though unpublished. It falls

under the category of popular syncretistic philosophy, which had a strong impact on the generation of thinkers that followed him in Persia and who were instrumental in shaping the Shi'ite world view that has continued to the present.[11]

Ghiyath al-Dln Mansur Dashtakl (d. 948/1541), too, wrote a commentary on Suhrawardi's Hayakil al-nur, entitled Ishraq hayakil al-nur li-kashf zulamdt shawdkil al-ghurur. This is not an important theoretical work but, once more, it is indicative of Suhrawardi's widespread impact.

Muhammad Baqir ibn Shams al-Dln Muhammad (d. 1040/ 1631), well known as Mir Damad, is perhaps the most significant philosopher of his age, more original and systematically philosophical an author than his famous pupil, Mulla Sadra. In my view Mir Damad is to be counted among the few truly Illuminationist philosophers, a company that would include the immediate followers of Suhrawardl, Shahrazurl and Ibn Kammunah, as well as, in most recent times, Sayyid Muhammad Kazim Assar. Mir Damad's poetic takhallus, or pen-name, is "Ishraq^ ("Illuminationist"), a clear indication of his alignment with Illuminationist philosophy. He considers himself a genuine upholder of the Illuminationist methodology of philosophy, combining discursive (bahthi) methods and principles (Avicenna's methodology of the Shifd') with intuitive (dhawqi) ones (Suhrawardi's methodology of Hikmat al-ishrdq), carefully stipulated by Suhrawardl to be the fundamental Illuminationist position. This philosophical stance is exemplified in Mir Damad's publicly proclaimed characteristic as "the greatest teacher of the Shi/a' of his time" and is clearly revealed in the structure as well as the philosophical intention

of his philosophical works, especially in his al-Ufuq al-mubin, Jadhawat and in his best-known work, Qabasdt. In his philosophical work, Mir Damad's intent is to construct a holistic philosophical structure based on the self-conscious I's ability to combine perfectly examination of sense-perceivable data with visions and illuminations.[12]

Sadr al-Din al-ShlrazI, well known as Mulla Sadra (d. 1050/ 1640), is recognized to be the main originator of still another synthesis in Islamic philosophy which has had a major impact on Shi'ite thought up to this day. This point of view will be examined in more detail in .

The fourteenth/twentieth-century Illuminationist philosopher Sayyid Muhammad Kazim Assar also deserves special mention. His Wahdat-i wujud wa bada' represents the most recent example of a discussion of the special Illuminationist ontological principle of "equivocal being" (tashklk fi Vwujud).

Finally, one must consider the possible impact of Suhrawardl's thinking in the West, specifically on the development of Jewish mysticism in the eighth/fourteenth century.[14] This is exemplified by the remarkable, though seldom mentioned, major paraphrase of important sections of the Philosophy of Illumination composed by the famous Nasirid vizier Lisan al-Din Ibn al-Khatlb in his Rawdat al-ta'rif bi'l-hubb al-sharff[15] Though he is not mentioned by name, the section is clearly a paraphrase of Suhrawardl's works.

The Illuminationist tradition and almost every other aspect of the intellectual dimension of Islam were revived and

re-examined in the tenth/sixteenth century during one of history's most active and prolifi-cally fruitful periods of Islamic philosophy. The tenth/sixteenth-century revival of philosophy took place in Isfahan in central Persia, and is of such integral quality that it has been designated "the School of Isfahan". The two main figures of this school – Mir Damad (with the poetic name "Ishraq") and Mulla Sadra, whose philosophical works are replete with Illuminationist terminology – studied and made use of the Illuminationist tradition. By this time almost all problems covering the entire philosophical corpus were discussed from both the Peripatetic and Illuminationist perspectives. It had become common practice in constructing arguments to pose the two positions first, then demonstrate the superiority of one over the other, attempt a new synthesis between the two, or formulate different arguments.

Philosophical activity from the eighth/fourteenth to tenth/sixteenth centuries is not well known. From the Illuminationist standpoint, a few commentaries on Suhrawardl's texts by the two Dashtakl brothers and by Jalal al-Din Dawani are known, though none has been published or studied. There is also known to be an Illuminationist tradition in India. A major commentary and Persian translation of Suhrawardl's Philosophy
of Illumination, titled Anwdriyyah, was composed in India by Harawl. This published work indicates the impact of the lUuminationist tradition on Islamic mystical philosophy in India.

Two Main Trends in Illuminationist Philosophy

Although we cannot give here an examination of the entire scope of lUuminationist tradition from the time of Suhrawardi to the present, the following will identify the two main trends present in seventh/ thirteenth-century lUuminationist compositions, both of which had an impact on the School of Isfahan.

The twofold dimension of seventh/thirteenth-century lUuminationist works is exemplified first by Shahrazurl. His commentaries on Suhrawardl's texts – Shark hikmat al-ishraq, Shark al-talwihat and the encyclopedic al-Shajarah al-ilahiyyah – not only emphasize the symbolic and distinctly anti-Peripatetic components of lUuminationist philosophy but further elaborate on them by extending their inspirational, allegorical and fantastic side. This trend, though of less philosophical significance than the one examined below, has had more impact in shaping views concerning mystical and religious philosophy. It may well be considered the origin of mystical and religious philosophy with the most popular appeal.

Second is Ibn Kammunah. In his Sharh al-talwihat, commentaries on Suhrawardl's Intimations, in his major independent philosophical work, al-Jadid fi'l-hikmah, as well as in his shorter works, such as Risdlah fi'l-nafs and al-Hikmah, Ibn Kammunah emphasizes the purely discursive and systematically philosophical side of the Philosophy of Illumination. These works go so far as to define

lUuminationist symbolism and allegories in terms of standard Peripatetic doctrine, thus further elaborating on the scientific aspect of Suhrawardl's original intention.

In a way, both of these trends are valid interpretations and refinements on Suhrawardl's system in that both are present in the original lUuminationist texts, although distinguished in terms of choice and emphasis.

Shahrazurī's Works

To determine why the more animated, symbolic and inspirational side of the Philosophy of Illumination, as emphasized by Shahrazurl, gained more popular appeal than Suhrawardl's own philosophical approach, one must first briefly examine the historical background of the Islamic medieval
world concerning attitudes to philosophy in general. By the middle of the second/eighth century, Arab rule over most of Western Asia, the Near East, North Africa and Spain (mainly Andalusia) was well established. The Abbasid Empire, founded in 132/750 by the caliph al-Saffah, emerged as a new civilization that drew material as well as intellectual strength from the conquered peoples and lands. The Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad's teachings and personal actions became the inspiration for a gradually codified set of laws. These laws, called the Shari'ah, were sanctioned and upheld by the state and regulated every facet of the public and private life of the multitudes of Muslims from India to Spain. While it can be argued that jurisprudence remained faithful to the letter of revelation and to the Prophet's own conduct, the powerful,

rich, diverse and vast empire was in need of a world view to sustain itself as a world power. Therefore it arduously sought knowledge of science, medicine and technology beyond what was revealed and written in a single book. The Greeks, Persians and Indians possessed vast learning manifest in their books, art, architecture, technology, medicine and other disciplines. "Sciences of the ancients" (al-'ulum al-awa'il) was the name given to every aspect of the sciences and of the techniques of the various civilizations encountered by the ruling Arabs. Baghdad, the new capital of the caliphate, was built from scratch near the ruins of Ctesiphon, the conquered centre of the Sassanian Empire, and soon became the centre of the new civilization. Persian statecraft and art of governance was employed to rule the vast dominion. Soon learned men of all nations gathered there, libraries were established, and book dealers travelled to faraway lands in search of ancient sciences.

By the end of the third/ninth century, a tremendous translation activity was fully under way, funded by state endowments. The Dar al-Hikmah, literally "Place of Wisdom" – the new academy, as it were – had become a learning centre of unprecedented dimension. Even the caliphs were in attendance at this academy, where the philosophy and the sciences of the ancients were being rewritten and transformed into a new world view. Of special significance was the translation into Arabic of the Greek philosophical and scientific tradition. By this time almost all of the Aristotelian corpus, plus much of the major Platonic works, some pre-Socratic fragments, Stoic treatises, Neoplatonist works – including parts of the Enneads erroneously thought to be a work by Aristotle called the "theology" -Porphyry's Isagoge, works by Proclus, as well as numerous shorter Greek

philosophical compilations, were all translated. The translations were initially from Syriac and eventually from the Greek. The Greek heritage was the most influential element in the rise of rational thought in Islamic civilization at this time. Philosophy, which was reformulated in Arabic and eventually also in Persian, was expanded and refined by such thinkers as al-Farabl (the "Second Teacher") and Avicenna, whose philosophical method survived in the Latin West for centuries.

For a short while, the rational heritage of the Greeks was even triumphant in state-sanctioned theology. The Mu'tazilite rationalist theologians attempted to apply their principal view, known as the "primacy of intellect" (asdlat al-'aql), to find a rational basis for revelation. They even went so far as to say that the revealed word cannot be in contradiction to rational thought. Philosophy and philosophical techniques became the sought-after tool by the empire's ruling elite, as well as philosophers and scientists. But the opposing theological view, called "primacy of revelation" (asalat al-wahy), was perpetuated by the Ash'arite school and eventually won out. This ended the Mu'tazilah's dominance as the official theology of the land. Rational thought, for a number of complex reasons, did not continue to influence people beyond its few proponents and never gained dominance as a widely accepted world view in Arab society.

In many respects Arabic Aristotelian philosophy had a much deeper impact in the West than in the East. Avicenna's Shifd known as Sufficiencia in Latin, was the primary source for the Latin West's first encounter with Aristotle many decades before any direct translation from the original Greek texts. Other works in Hebrew and Latin translation – such as

abridged versions of Avicenna's works, to a lesser extent of al-Farabl's works, and most important of the major works by the greatest Aristotelian Muslim commentator, Averroes – continued to keep the Greek philosophical heritage alive in the West as it was dying in the East.

This does not mean that philosophy did not continue in the Islamic world. Rather, it was reconstructed in the form of the Philosophy of Illumination. Peripatetic in method, Suhrawardl's philosophy employed a new and different technical language and revived many popularly held views concerning wisdom. It also included references to characters, themes, and sentiments of Persian mythological and religious beliefs, as well as Qur'anic decrees never discussed to such an extent in Islamic Peripateticism.

Later religious philosophy in Islam, exemplified by Shahrazuri's works, embraced this new philosophy at least in principle and used it as a point of departure for the depiction of an animated, more personalized and recognizable universe. This is where Greek methodology, Qur'anic dicta and other Islamic religious sentiments and Persian popular beliefs converge.

For example, the Qur'an talks about "jinn", or demonic spirits. The Mu'tazilah deny the existence of the 'ifrit, al-Farabl avoids discussing them and Avicenna denies that they exist. Nevertheless, by the seventh/ thirteenth century philosophers incorporate all manner of Qur'anic jinn, as well as a host of other demonic and benevolent creatures of the "unseen" world ('dlam al-ghayb) – which is itself a cornerstone of Qur'anic

proclamations – into their discussion of metaphysics. By doing so, the new philosophers became more accepted by both theologians and jurists as well as by the general public. Many people, learned as well as others, who had a hard time identifying with the abstract notions and terms of Peripatetic philosophy, were able to accept the new religious philosophy because it provided a scientific explanation of the world they had known and believed in as the real realm of prophecy as well as sorcery. Such an animated world is precisely what this larger audience found in Shahrazurl's works, some aspects of which are suggested in various places in Suhrawardl's texts but never fully explained.[16]

Shahrazurī's Illuminationist Philosophy

Shams al-Dln Muhammad ibn Mahmud Shahrazurl (d. after 688/1288), whose voluminous philosophical encyclopedia entitled al-Shajarah al-ildhiyyah, translated here as Metaphysical Tree or the "Divine Genealogy", is best known for his history of philosophy, Nuzhat al-arwdh. But it is the Metaphysical Tree that marks the denouement of Suhrawardl's primacy.

Shahrazurl's underlying method is Illuminationist. Philosophical construction based on a primary intuition of time-space, personal revelation and vision are given fundamental epistemological priority over the inherently rationalist, predicative Aristotelian principles. The Aristotelian hows is rejected as the primary epistemological

method. Priority is given instead to the Platonist view of knowledge based on an activity of the soul whereby innate knowledge is recovered, which then serves as the first step in constructing syllogistic arguments. Thus, knowledge recovered, or "seen", by the inner disposition of a knowing subject serves as the foundation for all subsequent philosophical construction. The knowing subject, when related to the manifest object, comes to know the object in a timeless instant (an). From this standpoint, definition of an object by genus and differentiae is not a prerequisite. This "knowledge by presence" has no temporal extension and supersedes acquired knowledge. Reincarnation, immortality of the soul and a cosmology that constructs a separate realm of ideas ('dlam al-mithdl) as the real and lasting mundus imaginalis ('dlam al-khaydl) are cornerstones of Shahrazurl's cosmos.

Shahrazuri consciously invokes Plato's authority in proving the validity of these ideas. As the Illuminationist philosophers stipulated, "this incorporates the divine philosopher Plato's Phaedo where the Peripatetics fail". The real, separate Platonic Forms may be known, not by the Aristotelian demonstration (burhari) of the Posterior Analytics but by intuition and vision—illumination. The notion of philosophical intuition is of central importance for the constructivist methodology of Illuminationist
philosophy. Intuition here may be shown to be, first, similar to the Aristotelian "quick wit", agkhinoia, where the truth of propositions may be known immediately, or a conclusion arrived at prior to constructing a syllogism; or, secondly, recovery by the subject of universals and of sensible objects. But intuition plays a further fundamental role as an activity of the self-conscious being in a state in which the subject and

object are undifferentiated. To use Illuminationist terminology, this means unity of perception, with the perceived and the perceiver (ittihdd al-mudrik wa'l-idrdk wa'l-mudrik) as an altered state in the consciousness of the knowing subject. This state exists when the subject is "linked", or otherwise related to the separate realm of the mundus imaginalis. This realm contains a multiplicity of self-conscious, self-subsistent "monads" designated as "abstract light" (al-nur al-mujarrad) in place of the finite number of Peripatetic "intellects" (al-'uqul al-mujarradah). Unlike the intellects, the abstract lights are continuous one with the other, differing only in their relative degree of intensity. Together they form a continuum designated as "the whole" (al-kull), which is also conscious of itself. Shahrazurl uses the term "intuitive philosophy" (al-hikmah al-dhawqiyyah) to distinguish Illuminationist thought from the purely discursive (al-hikmah al-bahthiyyah) Peripatetic approach.

Of further interest here is the manner in which fantastic beings -such as jinn, angels and so on – are incorporated within this religio-philosophical structure by Shahrazurl, specifically in his philosophical encyclopedia but also in his other works, notably the Commentary on the Philosophy of Illumination. By philosophically explaining the existence of all manner of non-corporeal, "intelligent beings" – which were previously rejected by all the major Islamic Peripatetics – Shahrazurl paves the way for the prevalent Iranian and Indian view of a world animated by spirits. This view is incorporated into subsequent religious philosophy and further affects theological development, especially of Shi'ite theology, in the tenth/ sixteenth century.

To appreciate the breadth of Shahrazurl's Metaphysical Tree, one must look at its overall structure,[17] which consists of five main treatises (risdlah) as follows:

1 On methodology and the division of the sciences; which serves as an introduction – marking the first work of its kind in which methodological questions, as well as problems of the philosophy of language are discussed separately and systematically.

2 On logic – one of the most comprehensive compilations including the Islamic Peripatetic corpus plus Stoic fragments and additions such as the long commentary on the Isagoge by Ghiyath al-Dln al-Abhari.

3 On ethics, political philosophy and statecraft – a recompilation of such works as al-Farabl's commentary on Plato's Republic, titled The
Opinions of the Inhabitants of the Virtuous City (Ara ahl al-madinah alfddilah), Tusl's Naslrean Ethics and many other works on practical philosophy.

4 On physics – a summary of Avicenna's Physics (Shifd'), plus arguments taken from other works, including those specifically designated as Stoic (riwdqi).

5 On metaphysics.

The fifth treatise, "On Metaphysical Sciences and Divine Secrets" (Fi'l-'ulum al-ildhiyyah wa'l-asrdr al-rabbdniyyah) is of particular significance here. It is divided into two major sections, each called techne (fann). The first deals with the subject of metaphysica generalis (al-'ilm al-kulli), and the

second with metaphysica specialis (al-'ilm al-ildhi). The latter contains the most comprehensive and lengthy treatments of metaphysics in Islamic philosophy. The ontological position upheld in the first section – after elaborate discussion pertaining to various philosophical, theological and mystical views – is one designated, perhaps clearly for the first time, as "primacy of quiddity" (asdlat al-mdhiyyah). Briefly stated, this position holds "existence" (wujud) to be a derived mental concept while "essence" (mdhiyyah) is considered to be primary and real. Of the seventeen chapters in this section, chapters 10, 11 and 17 are noted here.

Chapter 10 is entitled "On Determining the Platonic Forms" (Fi tahqiq al-muthul al-afldtuniyyah) chapter 11 "On Determining the Mundus Imaginalis" (Fi tahqiq al-'dlam al-mithdli [al-khaydli]; and the seventeenth and final chapter of the Metaphysical Tree is entitled "On the Jinn, Satans, Rebellious Angels; and therein the principle of the Devil and its state are explained" (Fi'l-jinn wa'l-shaydtin wayl-mardah$_y$ wa'l-ghuU waVnasdnis; wafihi bay an ad I bits wa ahwdluhu). Ifrlt, Ghul and Nasnas are categories of demons. According to Shahrazurl, they all dwell in the mundus imaginalis, where true dreams occur. This is the location of the sorcerers' power as well as the source of inspiration for saints and the revelations of prophets. Those who travel to this realm – not with the body but with the imagination – may, if they can withstand the terrible ordeal of the quest-journey, come to possess divinelike powers, the least of which are walking on water, traversing the earth, ability to foretell the future and power over the elemental world. Visitors to the mundus imag-inalis may tap the very source of the demons' powers and may even employ them for benevolent purposes back on earth, as did the kindly

mythological Persian, Jamshld. According to Persian tradition, this phenomenon also explains the miraculous powers of biblical figures such as Solomon.

To gain a better understanding of these philosophical views, it is helpful to look at the Platonic Forms and the Realm of Ideas in Islamic philosophy. In the Islamic Peripatetic scheme three realms are recognized:
intellect, soul and matter. In his Illuminationist philosophy Suhrawardl adds a fourth realm, generally called "the world of forms". This is further elaborated upon and enlivened by Shahrazurl, who calls it "the intermediary realm" (al-'dlam al-awsdt). Not confined to empirical appearance, this domain is between the purely intelligible and the purely sensory, where time and space are different from Aristotelian time as a measure of distance as well as from Euclidean space. The way to the intermediary realm is by the active imagination.[18] In the Metaphysical Tree, the intermediary realm is considered a "real" place where all manner of extraordinary phenomena, both good and evil, are said to occur, as Shahrazurl writes:[19]

This realm is called the Realm of Ideas and the mundus imaginalis. It is beyond the world of sense perception and beyond extended space [makdn] but below the realm of intellect ['dlam al- 'aql. It is an intermediary realm between the two. Everything imagined by the mathematicians, such as shapes (round, oblong, square, etc.), quantities (large, small, one, two, etc.), and bodies (cubes, tetrahedrons, spheres, etc.) and whatever relates to them such as rest, position, idea shape [hay ah], surface, line, point and other conditions all exist in this intermediary realm. This is why philosophers refer to the [study of] it as "intermediate philosophy" or "intermediate

science"…. Everything seen [and heard] in dreams such as oceans, lands, loud noises and persons of stature, all of them are suspended Forms not in space nor situated…. Archetypes of all known things on Earth exist as luminous Forms in this realm…. There are numerous multiple levels in this realm, and only God knows their number. But two bordering levels are known. The virtuous luminous level which lies at the horizon bordering on the realm of intellects; and the lowly dark level, which borders the realm of sense-perception. The numerous other levels are in between the two, and in each level dwell angels, jinn and Satans whose numbers are uncountable. Souls, when separated from the body will come to live in this realm. … In this realm are rivers wider than the Tigris and the Euphrates and mountains taller than any on Earth…. Souls of evil-doers will encounter scorpions and serpents larger than the largest mountain in this realm…. Things that exist in this realm have "formal" bodies and imaginary shapes [abddn mithdli wa ashkdl khaydli]…. Extraordinary events, miracles, sorcery and all manner of strange manifestations occur because of this realm…. Sages on spiritual journeys, who learn how to unravel the signs[20] have all attested to the powers that are manifest there.

The fourth dominion of the Illuminationist cosmos, the Realm of Forms, is the region of the dark (evil) forms, as well as the luminous
(good). Together they are described as constituting a land beyond the corporeal, of the essence of the fabulous (hurqalyd dhdt al-'ajd'ib), or an eighth clime (al-iqlim al-thdmin).[21] Access to this realm is gained through the active imagination when it becomes mirrorlike, turning into a place in which an epiphany (mazbar) may occur. One is said to travel in it not by traversing distances but by being witness to "here" or

"there", unsituated and without co-ordinates. Seeing sights in this region is identified as effects suffered by the soul, or experiences within the self-consciousness of the objective self. The mundus imaginalis is an ontological realm whose beings, though possessing categorical attributes – such as time, place, relation, quality and quantity – are abstracted from matter. That is, they are ideal beings with a substance, usually depicted metaphorically as "light" (nur). These light beings differ from the substances of other beings only in respect to their degree of intensity, or "darkness" (zulmah) which is also expressed in gradations.[22]

Creatures who dwell in this land exist in a space without Euclidean spatial extensions and in a time that is absolute, unrestricted and without duration. Things appear in this realm in what appear to be fleeting moments but involve processes that cover etenity and infinity. They possess shapes. This is why they may be seen, although their "bodies" are imaginary, or "ideal" ("badan mithdli wa khaydli"). This land has "cities" and "pavilions" with hundreds of thousands of gates and tiers. For all its imaginal qualities, this world is, in the words of Henry Corbin, a "concrete spiritual universe". Like Jacques Duchesne-Guillemin before him,[23]Corbin qualifies the mundus imaginalis in terms of what he calls a "neo-Zoroastrian Platonism". As he states, "it is most certainly not a world of concepts, paradigms, and universals", for the archetypes of the species that populate it have "nothing to do with the universals established in logic". Rather, they are an "autonomous world of visionary Figures and Forms" that belong to "the plane of angelology".[24]

Despite the apparent relationship, it would be inaccurate to identify the mundus imaginalis totally with Plato's Realm of

Ideas in the Dialogues. The Illuminationist philosophers are quite specific on this point and distinguish between the suspended forms (al-suwar al-muallaqah), which are the real beings of the eighth clime, and the Platonic Forms. This is because Platonic Forms are considered to be discrete, distinct entities, or "things", in the realm of intelligible lights, while the beings of the intermediary realm, though considered to be real, are part of the continuum of the imaginal, whether light or dark.[25] The significance of the realm of the mundus imaginalis to the history of Islamic philosophy is that it opens up an entirely new chapter, admitting an irrational dimension that the Islamic Peripatetics had vehemently rejected.

Shahrazurl builds upon the visionary foundations of Illuminationist philosophy by seeking to substantiate the existence of creatures in the
realm of the mundus imaginalis. The creatures of this realm, be they luminous or dark, are "proven", according to Shahrazurl, by the visions and intuitions of the divine philosopher-sages who have strengthened their intuitions and purified their imaginations by ascetic practices, not by mere recourse to rational demonstration. At every turn the author takes issue with the Peripatetics whose preoccupation with discursive philosophy, he claims, has weakened their ability to "see" (mushdhadah), reality as it is. Although the Active Intellect is clearly considered a guiding force for the Peripatetics, there is never a hint that it is personified, or in any way "seen" or perceived by the senses.

In contrast, by the sixth/twelfth century the Active Intellect appears in Illuminationist philosophy on several levels, sometimes personified as Gabriel, the archangel of revelation in the Qur'an; as Surush, one of the immortals of Iranian

Mazdayasnian cosmology; as Isfahbad al-A'zam, the great controlling archetypal light of Illuminationist cosmology; as Slmurgh, the mythological bird of the Persian epic; as the Holy Spirit (Riih al-qudus) of popular mysticism equated with Rawan Bakhsh, dator spiritis, of Persian legends. Finally, by the seventh/thirteenth century in Shahrazuri's Metaphysical Tree, the Active Intellect becomes fully personified as a rational creature who exists separately in the intermediary realm and who may appear to the adept who will actually see its ideal shape and imaginalis body and hear its shrill cry. This archetypal creature, now with enormous power, may serve, rule or crush the person who has, by use of magic (nayrang) and sorcery, or by other means, tapped into its power. To support this contention the new Illuminationist philosophy now invokes the memory of past philosophers and sages, as Shahrazurl states:[26]

The ancient philosophers such as Hermes, Aghathadhaemon, Empedocles, Pythagoras and Plato, as well as others from among the ancients, have all claimed to have "seen" them[27] [that is, the archetypal beings, angels, or demons]; and they have all clearly attested their existence by their visions in the realm of lights. Plato has related that when he elevated his soul from the dark shackles of the body he saw them. The Persian and Indian sages, as well as others, all adhere to this and are in agreement. Anyone who absolves himself of the body and rids himself of prime matter would certainly have a vision of these lights, the archetypal essences [dhawdt al-asndm]. Most of what the prophets and other sages have indicated by way of their metaphorical language refer to this.

At this juncture Shahrazurl turns to a rebuttal of Aristotelian methodology:

If the physical observations of a person in matters pertaining to astronomy are accepted, and astronomers accept Ptolemy's and Proclus' and others' observations, and the First Teacher [Aristotle] even accepts the astronomical observations of the Babylonians, why should then one not rely on the spiritual observations [irsdd ruhdni] and the luminous visions [mushdhadah wa mukdshafah] of the Pillars of Philosophy and Prophecy … so spiritual observation is just as significant in providing knowledge [ma'rifah] as physical observation [irsdd jismdm]. Rather, many types of error may occur in corporeal observation, as explained in al-Majisti, while spiritual observation, when based on the abstract, separate lights, which are all attested by Zoroaster and [King] Kay Khusraw [of Persian mythology], cannot fall into error.

The heritage of rational Greek philosophy so significant in shaping intellectual and even theological attitudes for several centuries in Islam now becomes but one dimension in Islamic Illuminationist philosophy which further defines religious philosophy. This new philosophical position characterizes religious philosophy in Persia from the seventh/ thirteenth century to the present.

The overall structure of Shahrazurl's Illuminationist elaborations is syncretic – that is, it is composed of divergent systems and beliefs that are grouped together under one school of thought. This juxtaposition continues to characterize the fantastic, supernatural, demon-ridden and generally Shi'i religious philosophy that allows Persian epic and religious figures to roam side by side with figures of Qur'anic and Islamic origin.

Equally significant is the fact that Shahrazurl's syncretic interpretation and elaboration of Illuminationist religious philosophy is not shunned by theologians nor even by jurists, as had been the case with earlier rational philosophies. In a recent major biographical study of philosophers in Persia from the tenth/sixteenth century to the present, some four hundred major thinkers, each with several works, were enumerated. With the exception of only a few, all were graduates of madrasahs, and many at one time or another had assumed specific public, religious and judicial duties.[28]

Islamic Illuminationist philosophy, as interpreted by Shahrazurl in a religious context, was able to accommodate revelation with all its metaphysical and fantastic implications to a degree Peripatetic philosophy was never able to do. It expanded and refined the powerful Greek analytical tools into well-defined domains comprising semantic, formal and material logic. Above all, it allowed for popular religious sensibilities, superstitions and beliefs to be given a "scientific" explanation within its reformulated cosmology. And finally, through its adoption in at least some of the higher-level school curricula, it even received legal sanction.

The seventeenth and final chapter of the Metaphysical Tree, titled "On the Jinn, Satans, Rebellious Angels: and therein the principle of the Devil and its state are explained", adds a new and significant dimension to Illuminationist thinking. The chapter begins with Shahrazurl stating that the philosophers both ancient and recent ("' mutaqaddimin wa muta'akhkhirin") have different opinions concerning the existence of jinn and Satans. Among the Muslims, three groups are identified and their views rejected. Avicenna's position, stated in the Book of Definitions, is: "The jinn are

[defined] as etherial beings, and take on different shapes; this being a mere lexical definition [sharh al-ism] of the utterance 'jinn', and this does not indicate an existence outside the mind (i.e. real)."[29]Shahrazurl discounts this reasoning because, he contends, arguments based on semantics do not necessarily reject (or prove) the real existence of the thing defined. That is, the reality of the jinn may or may not be indicated simply by naming them as such. Relying on arguments drawn from Illuminationist epistemology, which holds that intuitive experiential knowledge is prior to discursive knowledge, Shahrazurl asserts that since ancient philosophers, sages and prophets have "experienced" – or, in Illuminationist terms, have "seen" (yushahid) – the jinn, as the Qur'an also confirms, they must, therefore, have a separate existence. Here even Aristotle's authority is invoked along with that of a host of sages from Hermes to Plato – including Egyptian sages and Persian mythological figures, as well as Indian Brahmins – to prove the separate existence of such beings. Since actual experience of the phenomena is well verified by experts, the argument goes, therefore it must be real.

The statement concludes by claiming a substantial reality for the jinn who are embodied in the Realm of Forms and the mundus imagi-nalis and have non-corporeal, formal bodies and imagined shapes. Shahrazurl rebukes the Muslim theologians, insinuating that they should know better than to deny the separate reality of the jinn, who are after all authenticated in the Qur'an.

A summary of Shahrazurl's arguments in the final chapter of Metaphysical Tree also serves as a general account of his specific Illuminationist ideas, as follows. In the intermediary

realm, the mundus imaginalis, there are two types of entities: light and dark. Both are equally real, according to Shahrazurl, and are not simply the absence of the other. Suhrawardi's view that darkness is not real but simply the total lack of light, and the Peripatetic view that non-being is the privation of being (or that darkness is the privation of light), are both rejected. Light and dark entities differ in terms of intensity. Just as there is a continuum of light substances from weakest to strongest, there is also a parallel continuum of dark entities. Illuminationist philosophers vehemently deny that this position is a dualist one. Dualism in the Islamic period was identified with ancient Persian infidel beliefs, referred to as Manichaean
idolatry (jihad Mant). Shahrazuri defends his views against this attack by confining the existence of dark entities to substances which have assumed dark shapes, or forms – generally with imaginalis embodiment. All of these dark forms, he contends, exist in a limited tier of the intermediary realm of forms and the mundus imaginalis, while the light substances cover the whole of reality.

The dichotomy of light substance and dark entity in the Realm of Forms and the mundus imaginalis is a new addition to the Greek inspired cosmology of the earlier Islamic Peripatetic philosophy. Some scholars, notably Henry Corbin, have indicated that this cosmology represents an earlier Persian world view. While I disagree with Corbin that the Persian element of this new philosophy was based on an established textual philosophical tradition, I believe that the Mazdayasnian sentiments kept alive in popular and oral traditions and in poetic, epic and mystical compositions have been integrated into this new Islamic Illuminationist philosophy. The Qur'anic category of demons, satans and

other such creatures is introduced by Shahrazuri along with others from the Persian traditions, such as the category of creatures called the peris. However they are all integrated into a dualist cosmological structure that decidedly reflects the earlier tradition in which the Platonic world of Forms is used to portray a universe permeated with archetypes, good and bad, who affect earthly existence. Nowhere is this continuity more apparent than in Shahrazuri's Metaphysical Tree, and especially in the few chapters examined here.

Ibn Kammūnah's Illuminationist Philosophy

The second trend in the interpretation of Illuminationist philosophy is exemplified by Ibn Kammunah, whose Commentary on the Intimations (Sharh al-talwihat) completed around 669/1270 emphasizes the rational side of Suhrawardl's thought.[30] It concentrates on the initial, discursive cycle of the reconstruction of the Philosophy of Illumination, but also recognizes Suhrawardl's text to be a fundamentally non-Peripatetic work.

Moshe Perlmann, who edited and translated Ibn Kammunah's Tanqih al-abhath li'l-milal al-thalath (1967) – translated as Examination of the Inquiries into the Three Faiths (1971) – has examined every possible source for Ibn Kammunah's biography, and is the principal source for the following summary account.

Sa'd ibn Mansur ibn Sa'd ibn al-Hasan Hibat Allah ibn Kammunah was "a well-known occulist and teacher of philosophy, [and] lived in Baghdad during the seventh/ thirteenth century. He was a distinguished member of the Jewish community."[31] Perlmann translates the notice given for Ibn Kammunah in Ibn al-Fuwatl's al-Hawddith al-jdmi'ah wa'l-tajdrib al-ndfi'ah under the events of the year 683/1284. This is perhaps the most significant source on Ibn Kammunah's life now available.[32]

Leo Hirschfeld had in the last decade of the nineteenth century written a brief summary account of Ibn Kammunah's polemical work, titled Sad b. Mansur Ibn Kammuna undseinepolemische Schrift, in which he identified several other treatises, including most of Ibn Kammunah's philosophical and logical works.[33] These include:

1 A commentary on Avicenna's al-Ishdrdt wa'l-tanbihdt titled Shark al-usul waVjumal min muhimmdt al-'ilm wa'l-'amal (the title translated into German by Hirschfeld as Kommentar zu den Grund-lehren und dem Gesamtinhalt aus dem Gewichtigsten fur Theorie und Praxis). It is important to note that during the same period two other major commentaries on the same work by Avicenna were composed by Fakhr al-Dln al-RazI and by Naslr al-Dln Tusl. Commentaries on the Ishdrdt were the standard texts used by later Islamic philosophers to study Islamic Peripateticism. This, in my view, differs drastically from the manner in which the Latin West came to know Avicenna, which was mainly through translations of the Shifd'. It remains to be seen how Ibn Kammunah's commentary differs, or reflects, the synthetic style of the other two works which later found their way into the higher level madrasah curricula.[34]

2 Commentary on Suhrawardl's Intimations (al-Talwihdt), to which I will turn later.

3 An independent philosophical work which Hirschfeld titled al-Hikmah al-jadidah fiVmantiq (Neue Abhandlung uber die Logik) and has recently been published with the title al-Jadld fi'l-hikmah, or "Novum Organum".[35]

4 Another philosophical treatise by Ibn Kammunah, not listed by Hirschfeld or Brockelmann, is a short work called Risdlah fiVnafs or Risdlah ft baqd' al-nafs. Only one manuscript of this work is known to have survived, published by Leon Nemoy in facsimile, and later translated by him into English.[36]

5 Finally, Perlmann has brought to my attention an additional philosophical work by Ibn Kammunah bearing the generic title Risdlah fil-hikmah. Upon brief examination, I find it to be a different work from the one listed above. Apparently it is a summary of seventh/thirteenth-century attitudes in philosophy which combines Peripatetic terms and techniques with Illuminationist epistemolog-ical principles.

In the philosophical compilations of the eleventh/seventeenth century, numerous specific references are made only to Ibn Kammunah's
Commentary on the Intimations. Most notably, these references are found in al-Asfar al-arba'ah and in al-Qabasdt. One example will serve to indicate the significance of Ibn Kammunah's Commentary for the study of the development of Islamic philosophy in the post-Avicennan period. The reference is in Mulla Sadra's famous work, al-Asfar al-arba'ah, in the section, " al-Safar al-thalith: fi'l-'ilm

al-ildhi: al-Mawqif al-thalith: ft 'ilmihi ta'dld: al-Faslal-rdbi': fi tafsil madhdhib al-ndsft 'ilmihi bi'l-ashyd'''. Mulla Sadra here distinguishes seven schools of thought: four philosophical, two "theological", and one "mystical" (which combines 'irfdn and tasawwuf). This is typical of Mulla Sadra's classification of the history of philosophy, theology and mysticism and further reflects the same classification found for the first time in Shahrazurl's al-Shajarah al-ildhiyyah?s The four philosophical "schools" – referred to as madhhab — which concern us here are:

1 The school of the followers of the Peripatetics ("madhhab tawdbi' al-mashshd'in"). Included in this category are the "two masters" (al-shaykhdn) al-Farabl and Avicenna, as well as Bahmanyar (Avicenna's famous student and author of al-Tahsil), Abu'l-Abbas al-Lawkari and "many later Peripatetics" ("kathir min al-muta'akh-khirin").

2 "The school of the Master Shihab al-Dln [Suhrawardl] al-Maqtul follower of the Stoics [madhhab shaykh atbd' al-riwdqiyyah Shihb al-Dln al-MaqtuF] and those who follow him, such as al-Muhaqqiq al-TusI, Ibn Kammunah, al-Allamah [Qutb al-Dln] al-ShirazI and Muhammad al-Shahrazurl, author of al-Shajarah al-ildhiyyah"[39]

3 "The school attributed [al-mansiib] to Porphyry, the First of the Peripatetics [muqaddam al-mashshd'in], one of the greatest followers of the First Teacher."

4 "The school of the divine Plato."[40]

The "second school" represents the characteristic position of Ibn Kammunah's Commentary on the Intimations. It is

distinguished from the other schools in all philosophical domains: methodology and the division of the sciences, logic, ethics and political philosophy, physics, metaphysics and eschatology. But the question of the immortality of the soul and its "ranks" after separation from the body is a fundamental eschatological position on which Ibn Kammunah wrote an independent treatise.

Suhrawardl, TusI, ShlrazI, Ibn Kammunah and Shahrazuri are together considered the followers of Stoic philosophy and form the group of major Illuminationist philosophers of the post-Avicennan period. Excluded from this group is Fakhr al-Dln Razi, who is considered a mutakallim by the Illuminationist philosophers, notably Shahrazuri as well as Mulla Sadra. The inclusion of TusI in this group may also be doubtful in that his views on cosmology and ontology do not coincide with the
overall Illuminationist approach and philosophical technique, although his position in epistemology does.

Ibn Kammunah's specifically philosophical arguments may best be exemplified by considering sample problems taken from his Shark al-talwihat. Before considering these, however, it is important to remember that al-Talwihat is the first work in a series of four which constitutes the Philosophy of Illumination as Suhrawardl constructed it. As the first work in the series, this concise treatise tends to emphasize the discursive side of Illuminationist philosophy. However it is not a Peripatetic work nor was it composed during Suhrawardl's youth when, as alleged by some scholars, his position had been that of a pure Peripatetic.[41]

Methodology and the Division of Sciences

Al-Farabl's Enumeration of the Sciences is the model for Ibn Kammunah's methodology and division of the sciences, with minor modifications. However, it may be noted that by the seventh/thirteenth century every philosophical work – be it a commentary or an independent composition – is prefaced with questions pertaining to these issues. The distinction between theoretical philosophy and practical philosophy is a matter of methodology. Theoretical philosophy is said to deal with things whose existence does not depend on human action. This type of philosophy leads to pure truth (al-haqq al-sirf). Practical philosophy is said to be a tool (dlah) that aims to obtain the "pure good" (al-khayr al-mahd) to be utilized in the service of just rule, as well as for the attainment of happiness.

Ibn Kammunah follows Suhrawardl's divisions within theoretical philosophy, but further elaborates and fills in the gaps as follows. Theoretical philosophy is divided into three parts. First is the "highest science" (al-'ilm al-a'la), also called "first philosophy" (al-falsafat al-uld), also called "metaphysical science" (Him ma ba'd al-tabi'ah). This primary division is further divided into metaphysica generalis (al-'ilm al-kullt), having as its subject "being qua being" (substance, accident, one, many, etc.), and metaphysica specialis (al-'ilm al-ildhi, or al-ildhi bi-ma'nd al-akhass), having as its subject the Necessary Being (its essence and acts, God's knowledge, etc.).

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The second division is "middle philosophy" (al-hikmah al-wustd), having "quantity" (al-kamm) as its subject matter. This has two parts also: continuous quantities, such as geometry; and discrete quantities, such as arithmetic. Middle philosophy is of particular interest in Illuminationist philosophy because in the Illuminationist cosmological scheme the "fourth realm" is also called mundus imaginalis, and the Realm of Forms is
designated "the intermediary or middle realm". Thus, the subject matter of both continuous imagination (al-khaydl al-muttasil) and discrete imagination (al-khaydl al-munfasil) falls under this branch of metaphysics. The third division is "physics", whose subject matter is corporeal bodies.

Ibn Kammunah assigns subdivisions, called furu to each of the three major divisions. Subdivisions within metaphysics include such areas of inquiry as revelation, resurrection, angels and demons, dreams and extraordinary acts. Subdivisions within middle philosophy are more clearly defined and numbered as "twelve sciences": addition and subtraction, algebra, computational geometry, mechanics ('Urn al-hiyal al-mutaharrakah), cranes and pulleys ('Urn harakat al-athqdl), measures and weights, war machines, optics, mirrors, hydro-dynamics, astronomical tables and calendars, and musical instruments. Finally, physics has the following seven subdivisions: medicine, astronomy, physiognomy, interpretation of dreams, talismans, occult sciences ('Urn al-nayranjiyydt) and alchemy.

Logic

One of the characteristics of Illuminationist logic is that its structure divides logic into three parts: semantics, formal and material. There is no "book" of categories. As in the Stoic—Megaric tradition, the categories are first examined in physics and then in metaphysics.[42] This structure is upheld by Ibn Kammunah in his Commentary as well as in his other works.

Two fundamental problems traditionally presented in logic – universal propositions and essentialist definition – are isolated by Ibn Kammunah and are considered to have a principal significance for the Illuminationist theory of knowledge, or "Illuminationist knowledge by presence" (al-'ilm al-hudun al-ishrdqt).

First, the problem of universal propositions (al-qaddyd al-kulliyyah) is introduced in formal logic. In the Illuminationist scheme, a conclusion reached by using a formally established syllogism has no epistemological value as a starting point in philosophical construction. The argument for this rests on the mode "necessary" (al-wajh al-darurt) and the modal "always" (dd'iman). For a universal affirmative proposition to have philosophical value as a foundation of logic, it must be "necessary and always true". By introducing the mode "possibility" (imkdn) and by giving it an extension in time as in "future possibility" (al-imkdn al-mustaqbal), the universal affirmative proposition cannot be "necessarily true always", the Illuminationist position contends. This is because of the impossibility of "knowing", or deducing, all possible future instances. The

epistemological implication of this logical position is clear. Formal validity ranks lower than the certitude obtained by the selfconscious subject who, when alerted to a future possible event through knowledge by presence, will simply "know" it; the future event cannot be "deduced".[43] Therefore, philosophical intuition has precedence over deductive reasoning, and this intuitive knowledge is renewed in every age by the philosopher—sages of that era. In other words, formal structure without philosophical "wisdom" has no actual (haqiqi) validity.

The second philosophical problem introduced by Ibn Kammunah is the rejection of the Aristotelian essentialist definition, hows, and of the Avicennan complete essentialist definition, al-hadd al-tdmm, as once again not a valid first step in the construction of philosophy. Following Suhrawardi, Ibn Kammunah holds that true knowledge cannot be obtained from the formula which brings together the summum genus and the differentiae. Knowledge must depend on "something else", which is stated to be a psychological process that seeks the unity of the thing defined in its Form, which is fully defined only by and in the person's self-consciousness as the individual recognizes the thing to be defined (the definiendum).

These two philosophical problems bear directly on the methodology of the Philosophy of Illumination. Ibn Kammunah makes numerous references to other works by Suhrawardi, is clearly familiar with the range of his works and is capable at every turn of applying germane arguments to the whole of the tradition. As such, the Commentary serves well to indicate the entire scope of Suhrawardl's Illuminationist compositions. Other significant areas of the

numerous aspects of logic covered by this work include semantics and problems of formal logic.

Suhrawardl's theory of semantics (lilm dildlat al-alfdz) indicates a Stoic-Megaric influence, and is specifically mentioned by Ibn Kammunah to be different from the "standard" Avicennan.[44] Problems in this area of logic include: types of signification; relation of class names to constituents (members) of the class; types of inclusion of members in classes (indirdj, istighrdq, indikhdl, shumult, etc.); and perhaps most significantly from the standpoint of the history of logic, a fairly well defined theory of supposition (the restricted and unrestricted use of quantification).

There are a number of problems of formal logic, such as iterated modalities; the construction of a superaffirmative necessary proposition (al-qadiyyat al-daruriyyat al-battdtah) the question of negation (al-salb), especially in the conversion of syllogism (al-'aks); reduction of terms; construction of a single "mother" figure for a syllogism (shakl al-qiyds) from which all other figures are to be derived; temporal modalities (al-qaddyd al-muwajjahah); especially non-admittance of an unrestricted validity of the universal affirmative proposition (al-qadiyyat al-miijibat al-kulliyyah); and future contingency (al-imkdn al-mustaqbal). All these problems, as well as others, are identified by Ibn Kammunah to be part of the significant changes made by Suhrawardi to Peripatetic logic. In
every case Ibn Kammunah's analysis both distinguishes the problem and provides a fuller account than Suhrawardl's own short description.[45]

Epistemology

Perhaps the most widespread impact of Illuminationist philosophy has been in the area of epistemology. The impact of Illuminationist knowledge by presence, al-'ilm al-huduri, which posits a posterior epistemological position to acquired knowledge, al-'ilm al-husiili, has not been confined to philosophical and other specialist circles, as has Illuminationist logic, for example. The epistemological status given to intuitive knowledge has fundamentally influenced what is called "speculative mysticism" ('irfan-i nazart) in Iran as well as informing Persian poetry. The way Persian poetic wisdom, for example, seeks to unravel the mysteries of nature is not through the principles of physics (as with Aristotelians, for example) but by means of the metaphysical world and the realm of myths, dreams, fantasy and the emotions.

Ibn Kammunah starts his commentary on Suhrawardl's dream-vision of Aristotle (described in the previous chapter) by stating that "this story includes five philosophical problems" ("tasbtamil hddhihi'l-hikdyalah 'aid khamsah masd'il 'ilmiyyah"),[46] There are: (1) unity of the intellect, thinking and the object in the rational soul, in the state when the subject and the object are not differentiated. Knowledge by presence takes place when the rational soul, aware of its essence, is related (by Illuminationist relation, al-iddfah al-ishrdqiyyah) to the object. This is tantamount to the recovery of prior unity, which is how the soul by knowing itself can know other things. (2) The soul's knowledge of something other than itself is not by acquiring a form of that thing within itself – which is the Peripatetic position – but by

the mere presence (bi-mujarrad hudur) of the other thing. (3) Types of thinking (aqsdm al-ta'aqqul) are described. (4) How God knows its essence and knows other things is said by Ibn Kammunah to be based on the principle of knowledge by presence. But since God's essence and existence are the same – in other words, God's consciousness as subject and as object are never differentiated, then God's knowledge by presence never ceases. For God, there is no process of recovering a prior state because prior and future conditions do not apply to God. "God's knowledge of other things is by virtue of the other's presence to it" ("'ilmuhu bi-md 'addhu'l-huduruhu lahu"), to use Ibn Kammunah's own phrase. (5) On the meaning of union and connection (al-ittihdd wa'l-ittisdl), the principle of "knowledge by presence" is explained by comparing it to the Peripatetic notion of union with the Active Intellect. Union or connection with the Active Intellect is a corporeal phenomenon, whereas the "relation" (al-iddfah) between the knowing subject and the manifest object allows the

subject to know with certainty and takes place without temporal or spatial extension. In a sense, the soul recovers essences that are already present and have an independent as well as real existence.

Ontology

Ibn Kammunah's views on the Illuminationist ontological position, called "primacy of quiddity", is a longstanding problem that is said to distinguish philosophical schools in the development of Islamic philosophy in Iran up to the present day.[47] It is also a matter of considerable controversy. Those

who believe in the primacy of existence (wujud) consider essence (mdhiyyah) to be a derived, mental concept (amr i'tibdri); while those who believe in the primacy of quiddity consider existence to be a derived, mental concept. The Illuminationist position, elaborated by Ibn Kammunah, is this: should existence be real outside the mind (muta-haqqaq ft khdrij al-dhihn), then the real must consist of two things – the principle of the reality of existence, and the being of existence, which requires a referent outside the mind. And its referent outside the mind must also consist of two things, which are subdivided, and so on, ad infinitum. This is clearly absurd. Therefore existence must be considered an abstract, derived, mental concept devoid of a real existence which may be referred to outside the mind.

Philosophical Allegory

Finally, among the distinguishing marks of Ibn Kammunah's Commentary is the manner in which he analyses the metaphorical passages in Suhrawardl's work. What I have called the "fourth stage" of Illuminationist constructivist methodology is the use of a special language, a symbolic mode of expression designated as Lisdn al-ishrdq. Shahrazuri and later Harawl are the only two Illuminationist philosophers after Suhrawardl who continue using this special language in their works. Most others, including Ibn Kammunah, attempt to explain the symbolism in terms of standard philosophical language.

One such instance concerns Suhrawardl's allegory of the dream-vision of Aristotle. Another example is the story of

Hermes having a vision in which he meets God,[48] which in my view is further indication of the fact that Suhrawardl's Intimations includes a clear Illuminationist side. The story is short and reads as follows:

One night when the sun was shining, Hermes was praying in the Temple of Light (haykal al-nilr); when the pillar of dawn ripped
asunder. He saw a land, with cities, upon which the wrath of God had descended. They were entering into an abyss, [disappearing] therein. So Hermes cried out: "O father, deliver me from the abode of the evil neighbours." He was thus summoned: "Catch the edge of [our] rays and fly to the Heavens." So he ascended and saw the Earth and the sky beneath him.[49]

Ibn Kammunah calls this story "one of the difficult metaphors" (al-rumuz al-mushkilah) and makes the following attempt at a "rational" interpretation. The ripping of the pillar of dawn is equated with the appearance of the light of knowledge to man; the earth symbolizes the body, or matter in general; the cities are equated with embodied souls, or with their faculties, and so on. Clearly, his intention is somehow to make "philosophical" sense of Suhrawardf s allegorical style.

In conclusion, it should be emphasized that Ibn Kammunah's interpretation of Suhrawardfs Philosophy of Illumination as presented in his Commentary on the Intimations greatly influenced the later development of philosophy in Persia. Specifically, both Mir Damad and subsequently Mulla Sadra refer to his interpretations and employ many of his arguments in their own work. Part of Ibn Kammunah's purpose was to clarify and explain Suhrawardfs often terse and difficult style.

He further attempted to reduce the philosopher's symbolic language – which was so characteristic of Suhrawardl – to a more standard analytical one. In so doing, Ibn Kammunah helped the Philosophy of Illumination to become, in my view, more easily accepted by philosophers and accessible to them.

NOTES

1 See, for example, Solomon Pines, Nouvelles etudes sur Awhad al-Zamdn Abu 7-Barakdt al-Baghdddi (Paris, 1953); "Studies in Abu'l-Barakat al-Baghdadl's Poetics and Metaphysics", In Scripta Hierosolymitana, vol. 6, Studies in Philosophy, ed. S. H. Bergman Qerusalem, 1960): 120-98.

2 Shahrazurl's Sharh hikmat al-ishrdq ("Commentary on the Philosophy of Illumination") has not been published. I have prepared a preliminary critical edition: however, prior to its publication I shall refer to the folios of the Istanbul, Saray Ahmad III, MS no. 3230.

3 Moshe Perlmann's text edition and translation of Ibn Kammunah's polemics Tanqih al-abhdth li'l-milal al-thaldth are among the few studies on Ibn Kammunah. See Moshe Perlmann, Sad b. Mansur Ibn Kammunas Examination of the Inquiries into the Three Faiths: a Thirteenth-Century Essay in Comparative Religion (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1967 (text) and 1971 (translation)). Ibn Kammunah is an important figure in the history of post-Avicennan philosophy. His Sharh al-talwihdt ("Commentary on Suhrawardfs Intimations") has not, however, been printed. He is also an important logician

of the post-Avicennan period. His al-Hikmat al-jadidah fi'l-mantiq ("Neue Abhandlungen iiber die

Logik") – which is probably the section on logic of his al-fadid fi'l-hikmah — and his commentary on Avicenna's Directives and Remarks entitled Shark al-usul wa'lfumal min muhimmat al-'ilm wa'l-'amal ("Kommentar zu den Grundlehren und dem Gesamtinhalt aus dem Gewichtigsten fiir Theorie und Praxis") deserve a special study; see Leo Hirschfeld's short monograph, Sa'd b. Mansur Ibn Kammuna (Berlin, 1893): 11-13.

4 See Shirazi, Sharh hikmat al-ishraq [Commentary on the Philosophy of Illumination], lithograph edition by Ibrahim Tabataba'l (Tehran, 1895).

5 See DawanI, Sharh hayakil al-niir [Commentary on the Temples of Light) Tehran, Majlis Library, MS no. 1412.

6 See Harawl, Anwariyyah [Abodes of Light], ed., with introduction and notes, Hossein Ziai (Tehran, 1980).

7 I have chosen not to discuss Shlrazl's Illuminationist works because of the availability of an excellent analytical study on him recently published. In this book readers will find an in-depth study of the post-Suhrawardian tradition. See John Walbridge, The Science of Mystics Lights: Qutb al-Din Shirazi and the Illuminationist Tradition in Islamic Philosophy (Cambridge, Mass., 1992).

8 See my "Preface" to Harawl's Anwariyyah. 13-19.

9 In his Anwariyyah, Harawl informs us of his independent Illuminationist work entitled Siraj al-hikmah. This work,

however, has not survived, but is indicative of the impact of Illuminationist philosophy in India. See my edition of Anwariyyah: 212, 245.

10 See Anwariyyah: 150-4.

11 See Bakhtiyar Husain Siddiqi, "Jalal al-Din Dawwanl", in A History of Muslim Philosophy, ed. M. M. Sharif (Wiesbaden, 1966), 2: 883-8.

12 For a general account of Mir Damad's life and works see S. H. Nasr, "The School of Ispahan" and "Sadr al-Din Shirazi", both in A History of Muslim Philosophy, ed. M. M. Sharif: 904-60.

13 Sayyid Muhammad Kazim 'Assar, Vahdat-e vojud va bada ed. Jalal AshtiyanI (Mashhad, 1970). Assar has been hailed by AshtiyanI, himself one of the most important figures in the tradition of Islamic philosophy of the contemporary period, as the foremost Illuminationist philosopher of recent decades.

14 Christian Jambet in his "Introduction" to Shihaboddin Yahya Sohravardiy Le Livre de la Sagesse Orientale, traduction et notes par Henry Corbin (Paris, 1986) states a possible influence of Illuminationist doctrine on Jewish mysticism. See also p. 75 n. 85 where notice of Paul Fenton's Deux traites de mystique juive (Lagrasse, 1987) is given. See also Paul Fenton, Treatise of the Pool (London, 1983).

15 See Lisan al-Din ibn al-Khatlb, Rawdat al-taWif bVl-hubb al-sharif ed. Muhammad al-Kattanl (Ribat, 1981).

16 For example Suhrawardi in his Philosophy of Illumination (as well as in other texts) states, without further explanation, that "Jinn and satans are obtained from the Suspended Forms" (Hikmat al-ishraq: 232), a subject taken up by Shahrazurl, who treats it in great detail.

17 The work is as yet unpublished – and I am using the Berlin manuscript formerly of the Koniglischen Bibliothek, Sprenger Collection, now in the Staatsbibliothek, MS no. 5026. It is a long manuscript comprising 319 folios of 18 X 27 cm, 33 lines per page in a small highly cursive script. I have elsewhere discussed this manuscript in detail. See my "The Manuscript of al-Shajarat al-ilahiyyah:
a Philosophical Encyclopedia by Shams al-Din Muhammad Shahrazuri", Iran-shenasi, 2(1) (Spring 1990): 14-16 and 89-108.

18 Henry Corbin has discussed this realm in many of his works. See especially H. Corbin, Terre celeste, trans. Nancy Pearson (Princeton, 1977): 82-9.

19 Shahrazuri, al-Shajarah al-ildhiyyah, fols 267vfif. Translation mine.

20 The term used here is simiyd probably derived from the Greek semeion.

21 See Suhrawardl, Opera II: 254-5; cf. al-HarawI, Anwdriyyah: 222, where Hurqalaya is said to be one of the imaginal spheres, afldk-i mithdli, "travelled" to by Pythagoras.

22 Cf. Corbin, Terre celeste: 82-9. Suhrawardl's own theory of the categories bears directly on this issue, in which he considers only substance, quality, quantity, relation and motion – all of which are given to degrees of intensity and are processes more than they are ontic distinct entities.

23 Duchesne-Guillemin, The Western Response to Zoroaster (Oxford, 1958): 132.

24 Corbin, UHomme de lumiere dans le soufisme iranien (Paris, 1971): 6.

25 See, for example, ShlrazI, Sharh: 511: "wa'l-suwar al-mu'allaqah laysat muthul Aflatiln fa-innah muthul Afldtun nuriyyah thdbitah ftdlam al-anwdr al-'aqliyyah", ("the suspended forms, suwar, are not the Platonic Ideas, muthul Aflatun, because the latter are luminous and fixed in the realm of intelligible lights").

26 Shahrazuri, al-Shajarah al-ildhiyyah, fols 292ff. Translation mine.

27 The term used here is mushdhadah, which indicates a special cognitive mode as I have explained elsewhere. See my Knowledge and Illumination (Atlanta, 1990), chapter 4.

28 See Manuchehr Sadughi Soha, A Bio-bibliography of Post Sadr-ul-Muta'allihin Mystics and Philosophers (Tehran, 1980).

29 See Avicenna, Kitdb al-hudud, trans. A.-M. Goichon in Introduction a Avicenne: son epitre des definitions (Paris, 1933): 124.

30 This work has not been published. I refer to the Leiden MS no. Or. 137.

31 Moshe Perlmann, Sad b. Mansur Ibn Kammuna's Examination: ix.

32 Ibid.

33 See Leo Hirschfeld, Mansur Ibn Kammuna: 11-13. The list of works relies primarily on Hajjl Khallfah and is incomplete.

34 Both TusI and RazI stress the 'irfan element of Avicenna's work, which was also later integrated into al-Hikmat al-muta'dliyah by Mulla Sadra, influencing both the intention as well as style of religious philosophy in Persia to the present.

35 This important text by Ibn Kammunah is edited by Hamld al-KablsI (Baghdad, 1982).

36 See Leon Nemoy, Ibn Kammuna's The Arabic Treatise on the Immortality of the Soul (New Haven, 1945); translation in Ignaz Goldziher Memorial Volume II Qerusalem, 1958).

37 Sadr al-Din al-ShlrazI, Mulla Sadra, al-Asfdr al-arba'ah (reprint: Tehran, n.d.), 6: 180ff.

38 See Hossein Ziai, "The Manuscript": 89-108.

39 Mulla Sadra, op. cit., 6: 187. The attribution of "Stoic" to the Illuminationist school appears in many places in this work. However, concerning certain "novel" philosophical issues, such as the distinction between the idea of "intellectual

form" (al-surah al-'aqliyyah) and the idea of "archetypal form" (al-surah al-mithdliyyah) — the latter also as "the idea shape", or "imagined shape" – Mulla

Sadra is careful to use only the attribution "Illuminationist". See, for example, al-Asfar, 3: 504ff In general the Stoic epithet is added to the Illuminationist designation only in conjunction with questions that relate to logic and physics, but in matters that pertain to epistemology, cosmology and eschatology, "Illuminationist" is used alone. See also my Knowledge and Illumination, chapter 1, for a discussion of Stoic influences on Illuminationist logic.

40 It is possible that Mulla Sadra here means only Plato himself and not a "school of thought" that had continued after him. I take this reading because of the phrase "ma dhahaba Hay hi Aflatun al-ilahV The distinction would indicate an attempt on the part of Mulla Sadra to indicate the philosophical position of Plato himself as distinct from later syncretic texts designated "Platonic". See, for example, Mulla Sadra, op. cit., 3: 509, where he clearly attempts to specifically refer to Plato himself by stating "qala Aflatun al-sharif", and not "ft madhhab al-aflatuniyyati.

41 Among the authors who have categorized al-Talwihat as a Peripatetic work Helmut Ritter should be noted. See Helmut Ritter, "Philologika IX: Die vier Suhrawardl", Der Islam, 24 (1937): 270-86 and 25 (1938): 35-86.

42 Suhrawardl discusses the categories at great length in his major Arabic and Persian systematically philosophical works. His theory of categories, which are attributed by him to some Pythagorean person (shakhs flthaghurithi) by the name of Arkhutus, has had a major impact on subsequent philosophy

in Persia. What is later designated by Sadr al-Dln al-ShlrazI "motion in category substance" (al-harakat al-jawhariyyah), translated as "substantial motion" and "transubstantial motion", is a direct corollary to Suhrawardfs theory. Briefly the theory states that "intensity" (shaddah wa dafl) is predicated of all categories which are reduced to five: substance (jawhar), quality (kayf), quantity (kamm), relation (nisbah) and motion (harakah). This is in direct agreement with Suhrawardfs special theory of being as continuum, as well as with his theory known as "theory of future contingency" (lit. theory of the contingency of the most noble, qaidat imkan al-ashraf).

43 The favourite example given by Suhrawardl in support of his arguments, one discussed in detail by Ibn Kammunah in his Shark al-talwihat, is: Take the universal affirmative proposition "All animals move their lower jaw when they chew". This proposition is valid only prior to the "discovery" of the alligator, who moves both jaws when chewing. A single exceptional instance negates the proposition in question. By analogy, the Illuminationist critique goes on to stipulate that the Peripatetic definition of "man" as "rational animal" – which is reduced to the generalized form $(Vx)(f(x)\text{-}^\wedge g(x)$ – has only formal validity. This is because for it to be valid it must exhaustively enumerate all differentiae combined in the formula, which is negated because of future possibility of one differentia not known "now". Thus, Ibn Kammunah concludes that the essentialist definition of man does not establish the essence "man" – also here called "man-ness" (al-insaniyyah) — which is established by other types of argument resting in the idea of self-consciousness and is picked up in physics and further developed in metaphysics.

44 As I have shown elsewhere there may here be certain connections with the Stoic theory of lekton. See my Knowledge and Illumination: 42ff.

45 Ibn Kammunah himself indicates that one of his reasons for writing the commentary is to provide the details left out by Suhrawardl. See Sharh al-Talwihat, fol. 23v.

46
Ibid., fols 235v -_238v.

47 See Jalal al-Din Ashtiyanl, Hasti az nazar-i falsafih wa 'irfan (reprint: Tehran, 1982): 1-39.

48 Also discussed by Corbin in his Terre celeste: 2.1.

49 See Suhrawardl, Opera I: 108. Translation mine.

CHAPTER 30

Ibn ʿArabī

William C. Chittick

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Abu Abdallah Muhammad ibn al-'Arabl al-Ta'l al-Hatiml is usually referred to as Muhyl al-Din ibn Arabi. He was born in Murcia in al-Andalus on 17 Ramadan 560/28 July 1165 and died in Damascus on 22 Rabl' II 638/10 November 1240.[1] Known by the Sufis as al-Shaykh al-Akbar, "The Greatest Master", he wrote voluminously at an exceedingly high level of discourse, making him one of the most difficult of all Muslim authors. His al-Futuhdt al-makkiyyah, which will fill a projected thirty-seven volumes of five hundred pages each, is only one of several hundred books and treatises.

Ibn Arabi discusses in extraordinary detail most if not all of the intellectual issues that have occupied Muslim scholars in fields such as Qur'anic commentary, Hadith, jurisprudence, kaldm, Sufism anfalsafah. He was both intensely loyal to the tradition and exceedingly innovative. His works present us with a remarkable reservoir of rich and fecund meditations on every intellectual dimension of Islam, and it would not be inappropriate to claim him as the most influential thinker of the second half of Islamic history. What Franz Rosenthal has called Ibn Arabl's "scintillating personality and thought"[2]

have continued to fascinate and inspire Muslim thinkers down to the present. In the words of James Morris, "Paraphrasing Whitehead's famous remark about Plato -and with something of the same degree of exaggeration – one could say that the history of Islamic thought subsequent to Ibn Arabi (at least down to the 18th century and the radically new encounter with the modern West) might largely be construed as a series of footnotes to his work."[3]

The extent to which Ibn Arabi can be called a "philosopher" depends, of course, upon our definition of philosophy. If we take the word falsafah to refer to the specific school of thought in Islam that goes by the name, then Ibn Arabi cannot properly be called a faylasuf. But if
we consider philosophy as a much broader wisdom tradition, rooted both in Islamic sources and in various pre-Islamic heritages, then Ibn 'Arabl certainly deserves the name faylasuf, or, as he would probably prefer, hakim. He himself distinguishes between these two senses of the term falsafah by speaking of those who truly (bi'l-haqiqah) deserve the name hakim and those who have adopted the title (laqab); the former are the messengers, prophets and friends of God (awliyd'), while the latter are the falasifah proper.[4] When Ibn 'Arabl praises "the divine Plato" as a faylasuf, he explicitly has this wider sense of the term falsafah in view.[5]

Whether we consider philosophy in a narrow or broad sense, we need to ask three questions: To what extent was Ibn 'Arabl conversant with and influenced by the school of falsafah proper? What were his views on falsafah? What were his contributions to philosophical thinking?

Acquaintance with Falsafah

The idea proposed by Asin Palacios and others that Ibn Arabl's philosophical theories can be traced back to certain strands in the Greek tradition is no longer taken seriously by specialists. What is certain is that most of what he says is rooted in his own mystical intuition, or, to use his terminology, his unveiling (kashf) and opening (fath, futuh). This having been said, it is also clear that he was conversant with the fundamental sources of the Islamic tradition and the intellectual currents of his day, especially the wisdom tradition. Most of what he says is presented as commentary upon specific verses of the Qur'an or passages from the Hadith. He employs terminology current in Sufism, falsafah, kalam jurisprudence, grammar and other sciences.

According to Rosenthal there is little evidence that Ibn Arabl actually read any books of falsafah, with the sole exception of the pseudo-Aristotelian Sirr al-asrdr or Secretum secretorum, the political parts of which were of interest to him. He seems to have been more familiar with kalam. He sometimes refers to well-known mutakallimun, but again it is not clear whether he had actually read their works – which he practically never cites – or was relying on general knowledge present in the intellectual circles in which he moved.

Although sometimes Ibn Arabl ascribes wise sayings to specific Greek philosophers, he almost never mentions Muslim philosophers by name. The major exception is provided by his well-known account of his encounter with Ibn Rushd, which took place when he was about fifteen. But there is no evidence that he had actually read any of Ibn Rushd's

books, and he describes him as a scholar of the Shari'ah rather than as a faylasuf[6]

Most major philosophical issues are at least mentioned in Ibn Arabi's works. As Rosenthal remarks, "All the accepted parts of philosophy were alive in his educational background. It was almost inevitable for him to touch on them."[7] It is perhaps fair to say that the type of philosophizing in which he engages has deep kinships with that of the Ikhwan al-Safa', but it is going too far to claim, as Nyberg did, that the Ikhwan's work provided him with a direct source.[8]

In discussing Ibn Arabi's acquaintance with philosophical issues, Rosenthal outlines the importance he gives to epistemology and logic, ethics, politics, man as microcosm, cosmology (especially time) and metaphysics. He summarizes his remarks on Ibn Arabi's philosophical leanings by saying:

It would be possible to go on and investigate everything Ibn Arabl says page by page, line by line, and find that there always is a close connection with ideas "philosophical" in origin…. Philosophy, whether in the Muslim or the classical meaning of the term, constitutes the frame of reference for Ibn Arabi's view of the world.[9]

This is certainly true as long as we keep in mind that for Ibn Arabl himself, "philosophy" in this wide sense of the term is identical with the wisdom about which the Qur'an says, "He who has been given wisdom has been given much good" (2: 269).

To provide an idea of the nature of Ibn Arabi's specific references to falsafah in its narrow sense, we can mention a few of his many references to the faldsifah or the hukamd'.

According to Ibn Arabl, the philosophers can be divided into two groups, the Islamic (isldmt) and those who do not consider themselves bound by the revealed religions (al-shard'V)) The philosophers are mistaken in their understanding of the famous aphorism, "Nothing emerges from the One but one"[11] and in their idea that God can be the "cause" ('illah) of the cosmos.[12] Their position on the order of the coming into existence of the cosmos (tartib takwin al-'dlam) is different from Ibn Arabi's.[13] They can be divided into two groups on the question of the resurrection, those who deny it completely, and those who deny the return of physical bodies but affirm spiritual retribution.[14]

Ibn Arabl sometimes refers to the philosophers as those who recognize that purifying the soul takes human beings to a place where knowledge and moral perfections can be acquired from the celestial spheres. However, they attribute what they acquire to the spiritual powers and disengage it from God's consideration, and to this extent they are known as kuffdr, "truth concealers" (or "unbelievers", though the first translation is closer to Ibn Arabi's understanding of kufi))^ When the philosophers say that the goal of philosophy is gaining similarity to God
or theomorphism (al-tashabbuh bi'l-ildh), they mean the same thing that the Sufis mean when they talk about assuming the character traits of God (al-takhalluq bi akhldq Allah). Nevertheless, their idea of tashabbuh is untenable.[16]

Although Ibn ʿArabl is often critical of the philosophers, in general he prefers their views to those of the mutakallimun)[7] One weakness of kalam is that it has no entrance into cosmology or psychology. As Ibn Arabl puts it, the philosopher is "he who combines knowledge of God, nature, mathematics, and logic". But the theologian as theologian has no knowledge of nature.[18]

In a few issues, Ibn Arabl does prefer the theological over the philosophic position. Thus he supports the Ash'arite doctrine that prophecy can only be attained by God's designation (ikhtisds), not by effort (iktisdb), and he extends this discussion to include knowledge of the soul's entelechy. Since knowledge of the nature of everlasting felicity depends upon a knowledge of God's own self (nafs al-haqq), none can acquire this knowledge unless God provides it, and God provides it only by means of the prophets.[19]

View of Falsafah

Generally speaking, it is impossible to disengage Ibn Arabl's position on falsafah from his views on kalam. He usually lumps together the authorities in both traditions and refers to them by such terms as "the people of theory" or "consideration" (ahl al-nazar), "the rational thinkers" (al-'uqald') and "the people of thought" or "reflective thinkers" (ashdb al-fikr). Sometimes he considers jurists in the same category, but he is likely to treat the latter more harshly and call them ahl al-rusilm, "the people of designations", or "the exoteric thinkers".

To grasp Ibn Arabl's views on the rational thought processes typical of philosophy and kalam, we need to take a broad view of his whole intellectual project. Certainly he wants to affirm that the unveiling achieved by Sufi practitioners is a mode of knowing superior to reason (aql). Nevertheless, he also affirms that reason is necessary for acquiring a true knowledge of things, and this affirmation is deeply rooted in his fundamental vision of reality. In fact, reason is so necessary in his view of things that tawhid, the sine qua non of salvation, depends upon it.[20]

Ibn Arabl maintains that human beings owe their uniqueness to the fact that they were created in the image of God and are able to actualize within themselves all God's Attributes. This involves a simultaneous transformation of both existence and knowledge: perfected human beings come to know God as God is in Himself and, at the same time, to manifest God's Attributes through their mode of existence in the cosmos. The modalities of human perfection are infinitely diverse, but the highest stages of perfection demand that the Divine Attributes be so harmoniously balanced in their manifestation that the person represents a perfect image of the "Divine Presence" (al-hadrat al-ildhiyyah), i.e., the all-embracing Being that is designated by the word "Allah".

Ibn Arabl refers to this highest stage of human perfection by many names. For example, he calls it the "station of no station" (maqam la maqam), because people who achieve it, while participating in every Attribute of God, cannot be limited or defined by any Attribute whatsoever. He calls the one who reaches this station the "Verifier'" (muhaqqiq) or "the possessor of two eyes" (dhu'l-'aynayn). With one eye, such people see their own creaturely uniqueness; with the

other, they see their identity with God. They witness themselves as both near to God and far from Him, both real and unreal, both existent and nonexistent. In one respect they make manifest all Divine Attributes, and in another respect they conceal them all.

In theological language, Ibn Arab! describes the vision achieved through human perfection as the balanced combination of the declaration of God's incomparability (tanzih) and that of His similarity (tashbih). The mutakallimun considered tanzih the correct position and condemned tashbih. Ibn Arabl embraces tashbih so long as it is kept in balance with tanzih. Neither term can be employed to refer to God in any exclusive sense.

It is important to grasp how Ibn Arabl correlates tanzih and tashbih with the two broad categories of Divine Attributes that are often discussed by Muslim thinkers. These are called the Attributes of Mercy (Rahmah) and Wrath (Ghadab), or Bounty (Fadl) and Justice ('Adl), or Beauty (Jamdl) and Majesty (Jaldl), or Gentleness (Lutf) and Severity (Qahr). The Qur'an and the tradition associate gentle and beautiful Attributes with God's nearness to His creatures, whereas they connect severe and majestic Attributes with His distance from creation.

Generally speaking, Ibn Arabl maintains that God is understood in terms of tanzih inasmuch as He is inaccessible, but He is grasped in terms of tashbih inasmuch as He is "closer to the human being than the jugular vein" (Qur'an 50: 16). When the Qur'an says that God created human beings with His own two Hands (38: 75), Ibn Arabl understands this to mean that He employed Attributes of both tashbih and

tanzih to bring His own image into existence. Hence God is both present with His creatures and absent from them.[21]

Ibn Arabl's position on the intimate connection between tanzih and tashbih has a direct bearing upon epistemology. In brief, reason is innately constituted to set up distinctions and differentiations and thus to think abstractly. In Ibn Arabl's view the rational thinkers – whether mutakallimun or philosophers – dissect reality such that they lose sight
of the underlying unity of all things, and they do this because of the inherent nature of the rational mode of understanding. In other words, rational perspicuity keeps God at a distance by affirming tanzih and denying tashbih. As a result, both falsafah and kaldm focus on God's Majesty, Severity and Wrath and tend to lose sight of His Beauty, Gentleness and Mercy.

In contrast, those who undergo unveiling (ah I al-kashf, al-mukdshifun) perceive God's presence in all things, and they do so through the fact that unveiling is rooted primarily in imagination (khaydl), which bridges gaps, establishes relationships and understands by means of concrete images. As a result, unveiled Sufis see God in all things and focus on His nearness – His Mercy, Compassion, Gentleness and Love.

Through affirming tanzih, people recognize the otherness ighayriyyah) of all things; through affirming tashbih, they acknowledge God's "withness" (ma'iyyah, a term derived from the Qur'anic verse "God is with you wherever you are" (57: 4). To focus upon either tanzih or tashbih and to de-emphasize the other perspective is to distort the actual relationship between God and the world. True knowledge

depends upon seeing all things with both the eye of imagination and the eye of reason.

The harmony that needs to be established between reason and imagination does not mean that tanzih and tashbih have equal rights in all situations. In the last analysis, tashbih predominates, even if tanzih has a certain priority in the present world. The theological principle here is set down in the famous hadith, "My [God's] Mercy takes precedence over My Wrath." In other words, nearness to the Real (al-haqq), which is Sheer Being (al-Wujad al-Mahd) and Absolute Good (al-Khayr al-Mutlaq), is more basic to existence than distance from Him, because nearness provides existent things with everything they have. Their distance, though necessary in order for creation to take place, marks their connection with non-existence ('adam), also known as the unreal (bdtil).

God's never-ceasing presence with the creatures must show its effects. Absence has no roots in Being, no foundation in the Real. Hence God's presence – Mercy – predominates, in this world and the next. Wrath and chastisement pertain to situations that are accidental to the universal economy of the Good and the Real. A Qur'anic proof text that Ibn Arab! often cites here is 7: 156: "Said He, 'My Chastisement – I strike with it whom I will, and My Mercy embraces all things.'" Ibn Arabi constantly comes back to the theme of mercy as the underlying, all-embracing, fundamental quality of reality that must show itself in the end (bi'l-ma'dl).

Prophetic revelation appeals to both reason and imagination. Through presenting reason with the fact of God's distance, it allows human beings to establish tanzih and to recognize their created nature as God's servants. To the extent that people

actualize servanthood by following the Shari'ah, they will be brought into nearness with God. Ibn

Arabl frequently tells us that unveiling depends upon careful observance of the Qur'anic instructions as embodied in the Prophet's Sunnah. The proof text that he cites most often is Qur'an 2: 282: "Be godfearing, and God will teach you", through a teaching without any intermediaries. This God-given knowledge allows people to see God's presence, as they will in the next world. There they will no longer reason, they will simply see. Instead of being cut off from reason's distant object, they see God's self-disclosure (tajalli).[22] But those who have been dominated by reason and separation in this world will perceive God as distant, i.e., in terms of Attributes of Wrath and Severity; in contrast, those who gave unveiling the pride of place will perceive God as near, i.e., in terms of Attributes of Mercy and Gentleness.

Looked at in broad terms, Ibn Arabl's position on tanzlh and tashbih reveals his project to integrate all Islamic learning under the umbrella of tawhid. But the Sufi perspective, which by and large emphasizes tashbih and stresses God's Mercy and nearness rather than His Wrath and distance, is seen as having the upper hand. The rational endeavours of the philosophers and theologians, though useful and sometimes necessary, need to be subordinated to the direct knowledge that is made accessible through the prophetic messages and is actualized through unveiling. The Verifiers, who see with both eyes, realize perfect knowledge through the heart (qalb), which "fluctuates" (qalb) between reason and unveiling and sees God in terms of both tashbih and tanzihP

Most of Ibn Arabl's frequent mentions of the rational thinkers are found in contexts in which he is explaining the

inadequacies of reason and reflection (fikr) for a full knowledge of the truth. Philosophers and theologians deceive themselves by thinking that they can know God's Essence (Dhdt) through reflecting upon it. Moreover, because of reason's inability to grasp tashbih, they insist upon explaining away (ta'wil) those Qur'anic verses that speak of God in creaturely terms. If they were able to see with the eye of unveiling, they would recognize that God expresses the nature of His own self-disclosures through the very verses that they want to explain away.[24]

Contributions to Philosophy

Many of Ibn Arabl's writings, especially the Fusus al-hikam, were widely disseminated within a century of his death.[25] Little research has been carried out either on the contents of these writings or on the ways in which they may have influenced later thinkers. But it is sufficient to open any work on metaphysics, cosmology or psychology in the later period to see traces of his terminology and ideas, if not explicit indebtedness to his theories. Three specific questions to which Ibn Arabl made major
contributions are pervasive in much of the later philosophic literature (in both the broad and the narrow senses of the term philosophy): the Oneness of Being (wahdat al-wujud), the World of Imagination (dlam al-khaydl), and the perfect human being (al-insdn al-kdmil). In what follows, I summarize these theories, which are intimately intertwined.

Ibn 'Arab! himself never employs the expression wahdat al-wujud, but the term gradually came to be adopted by his

followers to designate his position.[26] Nevertheless, the idea permeates his thinking, and its philosophical relevance is apparent already in the words. Wujud dominated the concerns of the philosophers, and falsafah itself had sometimes been defined as the study of wujud as wujud. By Ibn 'Arabi's day the term was employed by philosophers, theologians and Sufis in reference to God.

In using the term wujud, Ibn Arabl usually keeps its etymological sense in view. For him wujud means not only "to be" or "to exist", but also "to find" and "to be found". As applied to God, the word means both that God is and cannot not be, and that He finds Himself and all things and cannot not find them. In other words, wujud designates not only existence but also awareness, consciousness and knowledge.

When applied to creatures, the word wujud demands the question, "In what sense is it proper to use the term?" Falsafah provided the standard answer: God's wujud is Necessary (wdjib), while the creature's wujud is possible or contingent (mumkin). Ibn Arabl frequently employs this terminology, but he uses many other terms and images to bring out the ambiguous nature of the possible things, hanging as they do between the absolute wujud of God and absolute nothingness (al-'adam al-mutlaq).

Ibn Arabl by no means spends as much time discussing wujud as one might think if one were to look only at the later literature, which habitually associates his name with the term wahdat al-wujud. The fact that wujud was singled out as representing his primary focus of attention has more to do with the philosophical orientation of the later Sufi tradition than with Ibn Arabi's actual writings. Nevertheless, if Ibn

Arabi's discussions of the term were gathered together under one cover, they would certainly represent a major book.

Ibn Arabi's critics, most notably Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728/ 1328), claimed that he made no distinction between the wujud of God and the wujud of the cosmos. In fact, it is easy to pick out passages from the Futuhdt that support this claim. But from what has already been said about the pivotal nature of the dialectic between tanzih and tashbih in Ibn Arabi's writings, it should be clear that passages identifying the wujud of God with that of the cosmos represent the perspective of tashbih. They are always offset, in Ibn Arabi's own writings, by discussions of tanzih, in which the distinction between God and the world is vigorously affirmed. In several passages Ibn Arabl sums up his position with the statement "He/not He" (huwa Id huwd). The nature of the world's wujud
can only be understood by both affirming and denying its identity with God's wujud. One must look upon things with both eyes. Neither reason, which affirms God's otherness, nor unveiling, which affirms God's sameness, allows for a global understanding of the nature of things.

It needs to be kept in mind that the term wahdat al-wujud in its literal sense does not do justice to Ibn Arabl's position. It is true that he frequently affirms that wujud is a single reality. But this single reality is self-aware – it "finds" itself- and in finding itself it knows the infinite possibilities of its own deployment in every mode of being found. The universal categories of these possible modes are designated by the Divine Names, but their particularities are known as the "things" (ashyd') or the "entities" (aydn), and these are immutably fixed (thdbii) in God's Knowledge. By knowing

Himself, God knows all the possibilities of wujud, which are all things. Hence God is the One/Many (al-Wdhid al-Kathir) — One in His wujud and Many in His knowledge. If wujud is one, yet wujud's one knowledge comprehends the reality of all manyness. It is highly significant that the first direct member of Ibn Arabl's school of thought to employ the term wahdat al-wujud in a technical sense, Sa'id al-Dln FarghanI (d. 695/1296), juxtaposed it with the expression kathrat al-'ilm ("the manyness of knowledge").[27]

The cosmos can come into existence only on the basis of these two poles of reference – wujud and knowledge. On the basis of the manyness of knowledge, God gives each thing a dependent or contingent wujud in keeping with the demands of the thing's specific reality. Inasmuch as a thing has wujud, it is He, but inasmuch as it represents a determined and defined reality that does not allow it to manifest wujud as such, it is not He. Wujud is one in itself, but infinitely diverse in its self-delimitations. The diversity of the universe represents a true diversity of realities, but in the matrix of a single wujud.

Wujud in Ibn Arabl's view is analogous to light, while each thing is analogous to a specific and distinct colour. The reality of the distinct colours is not compromised by the fact that each colour makes a single light manifest. No colour has any existence whatsoever without light. Every colour is identical with light, but light remains distinct and incomparable with each colour as also with the sum total of colours. Each thing "exists" (mawjud), but in a specific mode that does not detract from the incomparability of wujud itself. Each thing is thus identical with wujud and distinct from it at one and the same time.

Ibn Arabl's teachings on imagination (khaydl, mithdl) apply the ontology of He/not He to every level of existence. He employs the word imagination to refer to everything that pertains to an intermediate state, not only to the faculty of the mind that complements reason. The standard example of an imaginal reality is a mirror image, which is neither the mirror nor the thing that is imaged, but a combination of the two sides.

Imagination in the broadest sense applies to the cosmos itself and to everything within it, since the cosmos is neither wujud nor 'adam but something in between. In a narrower sense, the universe is made up of two grand worlds, delineated in the Qur'an and the tradition as the Visible (al-shahddah) and the Invisible (al-ghayb), or the world of bodies and the world of spirits, or the world of meaning (ma no) and the world of sense perception (hiss). Between the two worlds lies a World of Imagination that is neither purely spiritual nor purely bodily, neither perceptible by the external senses nor free of sensory qualities. Within the World of Imagination, unveiling takes place, the angels descend to the prophets with revelation, and all the after-death events described in the Qur'an and Hadith take place as described.

On the microcosmic level, imagination pertains to the domain of the soul, which is intermediate between Spirit (God's breath) and body (clay). Practically all human awareness occurs within imagination. The imaginal nature of human awareness is especially obvious in dreaming, where each dream image is both the same as and different from what it images; alternatively, it is both the same as and different from the soul.

Meaning and sense perception, or the spiritual and the bodily, interact within the soul in two basic ways. Either spiritual things become corporealized, or corporeal things become spiritualized. In other words, the pure awareness of the spirit becomes present to the soul through words and imagery, while the external world of corporeality is lifted up to the soul's imaginal level of existence by means of the senses. Ibn Arabi's psychology, which involves enormously complex discussions of many stages of perfection leading to the ability to see God with both eyes, depends upon a conscious representation of the soul's infinite interior world as one of imaginal existence.

The idea of the perfect human being provides Ibn 'Arabi's vision of God and the universe, or of wujud and imagination, with a teleology. God created the universe in order to be known, as the famous hadith of the Hidden Treasure tells us. But this knowledge can be actualized only through human beings. Created in God's image, they possess the potential to know and to live all His Attributes. Those people who do so are the perfect human beings, commonly called the prophets and the friends (awliyd') of God.

Human existence represents the great middle point of reality. It is wrapped in ambiguity, since every attribute of wujud – save only the necessity that pertains exclusively to the Necessary Being – is present within it. In any given case, the possibilities that have been actualized remain unknown to all but God.

As microcosms, human beings embrace the three worlds: spirit, imagination and body. Either of the two sides or the

middle can dominate in their make-up, and, at each point in the trajectory of their becoming,

the relationship among the three levels changes. If, in Ibn 'Arabfs way of looking at things, all things are imagination, the human being represents the sum total of every modality of imagination. Each thing in the universe, Ibn 'Arabl tells us, is a barzakh, an "isthmus" or intermediary stage of existence, since "wujud has no edges".[28] Human beings are -potentially, at least – the Supreme Barzakh, embracing every possibility of existence. Human becoming represents the unfolding of what people are, but, from the human perspective, the course of this unfolding is not fixed. Freedom plays an important role. Revelation, and more specifically the prophetic Sunnah as set down in the Shari'ah, designates the proper road of human development. Those who follow the Prophet perfectly become his inheritors (warith) in knowledge, stations (maqdmdi) and states (ahwdl). Ibn 'Arabl constantly comes back to the theme that those who wish to achieve perfection must observe the prophetic model in all its details.

The perfect human being, having actualized every possibility of knowledge and existence placed within Adam when God "taught him all the names" (Qur'an 2: 31), fulfils the purpose of creation. This purpose is rooted in the nature of wujud itself and necessitated by the One/Many, though God remains free of all external constraint, since He is "independent of the worlds" (Qur'an 3: 97). As the infinite middle ground -the Supreme barzakh or Nondelimited Imagination – the perfect human being manifests within his own becoming all the Attributes of God and creation, without being constricted and confined by any of them. He is the incarnation of He/not He, standing in the station of no station.[29] As Ibn Arabl writes,

The Divine Presence has three levels – manifest, non-manifest, and in-between. Through this last the Manifest becomes distinct and separate from the Non-manifest. This last is the barzakh, because it has a face toward the Non-manifest and a face toward the Manifest. Or rather, it itself is the face, for it cannot be divided. It is the perfect human being. The Real made him stand as a barzakh between the Real and the cosmos. Hence he makes manifest the Divine Names, so he is Real, and he makes manifest the reality of possible existence, so he is creature. That is why God made him in three levels: intellect and sense perception, which are the two sides, and imagination, which is the barzakh between meaning and sense perception.[30]

NOTES

1 By far the best and most thoroughly documented account of his life is provided by Claude Addas, Quest for the Red Sulphur – the Life of Ibn 'Arabi, trans. P. Kingsley (Cambridge, 1993). On Ibn Arabi's philosophic ideas, see W. Chittick, The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-Arabi s Metaphysics of Imagination (Albany, 1989); M. Chodkiewicz, An Ocean Without Shore – Ibn Arabi, the Book, and the Law, trans. D. Streight (Albany, 1993); Seal of the Saints – Prophethood and Sainthood in the Doctrine of Ibn Arabi, trans. L. Sherrard (Cambridge, 1993); M. Chodkiewicz, W. C. Chittick, C. Chodkiewicz, D. Gril and J. W. Morris, Les Illuminations de La Mecque/The Meccan Illuminations: Textes choisisi'Selected Texts (Paris, 1988); H. Corbin, Creative Imagination in the Sufism of Ibn Arabi, trans. R. Mannheim (Princeton, 1969); T. Izutsu, Sufism and

Taoism (Los Angeles, 1983); and S. H. Nasr, Three Muslim Sages, chapter 3.

2 Franz Rosenthal, "Ibn Arabi between 'Philosophy' and 'Mysticism'", Oriens, 31 (1988): 33. This is a fine study to which I owe a number of details of what follows.

3 "Ibn Arabi and his Interpreters", Journal of the American Oriental Society, 106 (1986): 539-51, 733-56; 107 (1987): 101-19. Morris provides a good deal of evidence for this statement (which is found on p. 733) in the text of this article.

4 Ibn Arabi, al-Futuhat al-makkiyyah (Cairo, 1911; reprinted Beirut, n.d.), 1: 240, 1. 32.

5 See Rosenthal, op. cit.: 15; for the whole passage, see Chittick, op. cit.: 202-4.

6 For accounts of this meeting, see Addas, op. cit.: 53—8; Corbin, op. cit.: 38-44; Chittick, op. cit.: xiii—xiv. For Ibn Arabi's reference to Ibn Rushd as a master of the SharVah, see his Futuhat, 1: 325, 1. 16, discussed in Chittick, op. cit.: 384 n. 13.

7 Rosenthal, op. cit.: 21.

8 H. S. Nyberg, Kleinere Schriften des Ibn al-Arabi (Leiden, 1919): 145; Rosenthal, op. cit.: 19. M. Takeshita has illustrated some of the precedents for a few of Ibn Arabi's ideas in Ibn Arabi s Theory of the Perfect Man and its Place in the History of Islamic Thought (Tokyo, 1987).

9 Rosenthal, op. cit.: 33.

10 Ibn Arabi, op cit., 2: 591, 1. 35; this helps explain his reference to a faylasuf islam! in ibid. 2: 124, 1. 23.

11 Ibid., 2: 434, 1. 22; 4: 231, 1. 31.

12 Ibid., 1: 261-2.

13 Ibid., 2: 469, 1. 23; 677, 1. 8.

14 Ibid., 2: 599, 1. 20.

15 Ibid., 3: 84, 1. 30. Ibn Arabi sometimes contrasts the mVraj or spiritual ascension of the follower of the Prophet with that of the "considerative thinker" (sahib al-nazar), by whom he certainly means the philosopher (e.g., of the type represented by the Brethren of Purity) rather than the mutakallim. See ibid., 2: 273-83.

16 Ibn Arabi, op. cit., 2: 126, 1. 8; 483, 1. 28; 3: 190, 1. 30; see the translation of the second passage and the detailed discussion of takhalluq in Chittick, op. cit.: 75-6, 283-8.

17 Ibn Arabi, op. cit., 1: 240, 1. 32.

18
Ibid., 1: 261, 1. 7.

19 Ibid., 2: 595, 1. 32; 3: 37, 1. 8; 79, 1. 28.

20 See Chittick, op. cit.: 232-5.

21 See ibid.: 277-8. For the broad ranging implications of this view of complementary Divine Attributes for Islamic thought,

with frequent reference to Ibn Arabl's position, see Sachiko Murata, The Tao of Islam: a Sourcebook on Gender Relationships in Islamic Thought (Albany, 1992).

22 For Ibn Arabl's views on after-death experience and eschatology, which also influenced later Islamic philosophy deeply, see Chittick, "Death and the Afterlife", chapter 7 of Imaginal Worlds: Ibn Arabl and the Problem of Religious Diversity (Albany, 1994); Morris, "Lesser and Greater Resurrection", in Chodkiewicz et al, op. cit.: 159-84.

23 On the heart, see Chittick, Sufi Path: 106-12.

24 For details on the relationship between tashbih and tanzih on the one hand and reason and unveiling on the other, see Chittick, Sufi Path, especially parts 4 and 5.

25 The Fusus has been translated into English several times, most notably by R. W. J.'Austin, Ibn al-Arabi: The Bezels of Wisdom (Ramsey, N. J., 1981). For translations of other works, see the bibliographies of Chittick, Sufi Path, and Addas, op. cit.

26 For a detailed discussion of the history of the term and the meanings that have been given to it by various authors, see Chittick, "RumI and Wahdat al-Wujud", in The Heritage of Rumi, ed. A. Banani and G. Sabagh (Cambridge, 1994).

27 Cf. Chittick, "Spectrums of Islamic Thought: Sa'ld al-Dln FarghanI on the Implications of Oneness and Manyness", in The legacy of Mediaeval Persian Sufism, ed. L. Lewisohn (London, 1992): 203-17. See also Murata, op. cit.: 67.

28 Ibn Arabl, op. cit., 3: 156, 1. 27; Chittick, Sufi Path: 14.

29 On the perfect human being and the station of no station, see Chittick, Sufi Path, chapter 20.

30 Ibn Arabl, op. cit., 2: 391, 1. 20.

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CHAPTER 31

The school of Ibn ʿArabī

William C. Chittick

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The term "school of Ibn Arabl" was coined by Western scholars to refer to the fact that many Muslim thinkers – most of whom considered themselves Sufis – took seriously Ibn Arabl's title as the "Greatest Master" (al-shaykh al-akbar) and consciously rooted their perspective in their own understanding of his theoretical framework. They considered their approach as different from that of falsafah and kaldm as well as from that of the vast majority of Sufis. Sometimes they referred to their specific way as "verification" (tahqiq) and called themselves "the verifiers" (al-muhaqqiqun)) Who exactly fits into this category is an open question.

Ibn Arabl established no specific madhhab or tariqah. He did have spiritual disciples and does seem to have passed on a cloak of investiture (known to later generations as al-khirqat al-akbariyyah) that passed through his disciple Qunawi, but there is no recognizable organization that carries his name. No Sufi order has attempted to claim him as its exclusive heritage, and his books were studied and considered authoritative by members of most orders at one time or another.[2] For other reasons also, we have to use caution in

talking about Ibn Arabl's "school". The term may suggest that there is a set of doctrines to which a group of thinkers adhered. In fact, Ibn Arabl's followers did not accept some common catechism, nor did they all follow the same approach to Islamic thought. James Morris's observation here should be taken seriously:

The real philosophic and theological unity and diversity of these writers have not begun to be explored in modern research…. None of the writers are mere "commentators" of Ibn Arabl…. As with "Aristotelianism" or "Platonism" in Western thought, Ibn Arabl's writings were only the starting point for the most diverse developments, in which reference to subsequent interpreters
quickly became at least as important as the study of the Shaykh himself.[3]

In what follows, I will limit myself to discussing a few figures who considered themselves Ibn Arabl's followers and who are looked back upon as Sufis. No attempt can be made here to investigate the larger radiation of the Shaykh's influence among, for example, thinkers who have been called faldsifah and/or mutakallimun, such as Sa'in al-Din All Turkah IsfahanI, Jalal al-Din Dawani, Mulla Sadra or Mulla Muhsin Fayd KashanI; nor can we look at the ways in which Ibn Arabl's practical instructions and spiritual blessing permeated the Sufi organizations in general.[4]

Ibn Arabl had a number of close disciples, including Badr al-Habashl and Ibn Sawdakln al-Nuri, who wrote works that are more important for the light that they throw on the Shaykh's teachings than for their influence on later Islamic thought.[5] The most influential and at the same time

independently minded of Ibn Arabl's immediate disciples was Sadr al-Din Qunawl (d. 673/1274). He can be given more credit than anyone else for determining the way in which the Shaykh was read by later generations. This means, among other things, that Qunawl began the movement to bring Ibn Arabl into the mainstream of Islamic philosophy. As a result, he and his followers placed many of Ibn Arabl's important teachings in the background. Michel Chodkiewicz considers this to have been a necessary, though perhaps unfortunate, adjustment of Ibn Arabl's teachings to the intellectual needs of the times.[6]

Sadr Al-Dīn Qūnawī and His Circle

Ibn Arabl met Qunawl's father, Majd al-Din Ishaq, during his first pilgrimage to Mecca, when he began writing the Futuhdt. In the year 601/1204-5 they travelled together to Anatolia. Sadr al-Din was born in 606/1210 and, according to some early sources, Ibn Arabl married Sadr al-Dln's mother after Majd al-Din's death. When Ibn Arabl died, Qunawl seems to have taken over the training of some of his disciples. Presumably those with a philosophical bent would have been attracted to him. The most important of these was probably Aflf al-Din al-Tilimsani (610/1213-690/1291), who is mentioned as one of the listeners on a manuscript of Ibn Arabl's al-Futuhdt al-makkiyyah that was read in the author's presence in 634/1236-7. Al-Tilimsani seems to have become Qunawi's closest companion; Qunawl dedicated a short treatise to him and left his books to him when he died.[7]

Al-Tilimsanl's writings have played some role in the spread of Ibn Arabl's school, but they have not been studied in modern times. He is
the author of a published Diwdn as well as a Sharh al-asma al-husnd and a commentary on the Mandzil al-sd'inn of 'Abd Allah Ansari (d. 481/1089). At least one contemporary Sufi shaykh felt that al-Tilimsanl had surpassed his master Qunawl in matters of verification. This was Ibn Sab'ln (d. 669/1270-1), who was discussed by early Western scholars as a philosopher because of his answers to the "Sicilian Questions" posed by Emperor Frederick II Hohenstaufen.[8] However, Ibn Sab'ln was a Sufi with connections to Ibn Arabl, though he probably cannot be considered a member of his school. He seems to have been the first to employ the famous expression wahdat al-wujud as a technical term.[9]

The first firm record we have of Qunawl's teaching activities pertain to the year 643/1245-6, five years after Ibn Arabi's death. At that time Qunawl travelled to Egypt, where he began to comment on Ibn al-Farid's 700-line poem, Nazm al-suluk, for "a group of the learned [fudald'], the great possessors of tasting [akdbir-i ahl-i dhawq], and the reputable [mu'tabardn]". During the return journey and back in Konya, he continued the lessons, teaching all the while in Persian. Several of the scholars who attended his lectures took notes with the aim of composing books, but only Sa'ld al-Dln FarghanI (d. 695/1296) succeeded. All this Qunawl tells us in a letter of approval found at the end of Farghanl's introduction to Mashdriq al-dardri, a work that fills six hundred pages in its modern edition. According to Hajjl Khallfah, al-Tilimsanl also attended these lectures and wrote a commentary, but FarghanI finished first; despite the brevity

of al-Tilimsanl's commentary, Hajjl Khallfah opines, it is to be preferred over Farghanl's.[10]

Having written his Persian commentary, FarghanI rewrote the text in Arabic with many additions, especially to the introduction. He named the Arabic version MuntahaVmaddrik, and it was being taught in Cairo in 670/1271.[11] Both the Persian and the Arabic versions of Farghanl's commentary were widely read. The great poet and scholar Abd al-Rahman Jami (d. 898/1492), one of the most learned and successful popularizers of Ibn Arabi's teachings, considered the introduction to Farghanl's Arabic work the most disciplined and orderly exposition of the problems of the "science of reality" (ilm-i haqiqat) ever written.[12]

Qunawl taught Hadith in Konya and attracted students such as the philosopher and astronomer Qutb al-Dln ShlrazI (d. 710/1311). Presumably Qunawl explained Hadith in the manner found in his Sharh al-hadith al-arba'in. This work aims to bring out the deepest philosophical, theological, cosmological and mystical implications of the Hadith discussed, and many of the explanations run into dozens of pages.[13]

Qunawl is the author of at least fifteen Arabic works, along with a few Persian letters; his longest book is only about four hundred pages long, making him laconic compared to his master.[14] Seven of these works
can be considered significant, book-length statements of his teachings. But the influence that these books – and the books of Qunawl's immediate disciples – exercised upon the way in which Ibn 'Arabl was interpreted by later generations was enormous. Jami presents a view of Qunawl that seems to have been accepted, in practice at least, by most of Ibn Arabl's

followers, especially in the eastern lands of Islam. Note in the following that, like most scholars from about the ninth/fifteenth century onwards, Jami associates Ibn 'Arabl's name with wahdat al-wujiid: "Qunawl is the assayer of Ibn Arabl's words. One cannot grasp Ibn Arabl's purport in the question of wahdat al-wujiid in a manner that accords with both reason and the Shari'ah unless one studies Qunawl's verifications and understands them properly."[15]

What is especially obvious in all of Qunawl's writings is the systematic nature of his thinking. If Ibn Arabl's writings dazzle because of the non-stop rush of inspirations, Qunawl's soothe because of his calm and reasonable exposition of metaphysical principles. Some of the contrast between the two is caught in a remark attributed to their disciple al-Tilimsanl: "My first shaykh was a philosophizing spiritual [mutarawhin mutajalsif], whereas my second was a spiritualizing philosopher [faylasuf mutarawhin]"[16] Though more philosophically inclined than Ibn Arabl, Qunawl also experienced the lifting of the veils between himself and God, and he frequently tells us that this is how he knows what he knows. In fact, Qunawl considered himself the most spiritually gifted of Ibn Arabl's disciples. He writes that fifteen years after the Shaykh's death, on 17 Shawwal 653/19 November 1255, Ibn Arabl appeared to him in a vision and praised him for having achieved a spiritual rank greater than that of all his other disciples.[17] But even when Qunawl speaks of visionary affairs that are inaccessible to reason, he presents the discussion in an eminently rational and lucid manner.

Qunawl's style of exposition is certainly indebted to his knowledge of the Islamic philosophical tradition. Where this

is proven beyond a shadow of a doubt is in his correspondence with Naslr al-Dln TusI (d. 672/1274), the great scientist and theologian who revived Avicenna's philosophy. Qunawl opened the correspondence by sending TusI a warm letter in Persian. This was accompanied by an Arabic treatise explaining the limitations of the rational faculty ('aql) and presenting a series of technical questions concerning Avicenna's positions on such issues as the wujud that is attributed to the Necessary Being, the nature of the possible quiddities, the relationship between wujud and the possible things, and the reality of the human soul. TusI replied with an even warmer Persian letter and a relatively brief, but precise, answer to all the questions.

In the Persian letter accompanying the third instalment of the correspondence, Qunawl clarifies his motivation for writing to TusI:

"Concerning certain basic problems I had hoped to bring together the conclusions derived from logical proofs with the fruits of unveiling [kashf] and direct vision ['iydn]." In his Arabic response to Tusl's answers, Qunawl demonstrates an excellent knowledge of Avicenna's writings. In one passage, he suggests that Tusl's answer shows that his copy of Avicenna's Ta'liqdt must be defective. He also refers to the text of Tusl's commentary on Avicenna's al-Lshdrdt wa'l-tanbihdt. His argument represents an important attempt to show that the Sufi position – i.e., Qunawl's interpretation of Ibn Arabl's teachings, which he refers to here as the "school of verification" – agrees by and large with that of falsafah. Generalizing about this position, Qunawl writes,

The Verifiers agree with the philosophers concerning those things that theoretical reason [al-'aql al-nazan] is able to

grasp independently at its own level. But they differ from them in other perceptions beyond the stage of reflection [fikr and its delimiting properties. As for the mutakallimun in their various schools, the Verifiers agree with them only in rare instances and on minor points.[18]

Qunawl's direct disciples do not demonstrate the same explicit attempt to bring the School of Verification into harmony with falsafah. However, as a rule their works contain highly sophisticated expositions of Ibn Arabl's philosophical teachings, in particular wahdat al-wujud, the perfect human being (al-insdn al-kdmil), the immutable entities (al-aydn al-thdbitah), and the levels of existence (maratib al-wujud). These last are often presented in terms of the "five divine presences" (al-hadarat al-ildhiyyat al-khams), an expression that seems to have been coined by Qunawl.[19]

Two more of Qunawl's students deserve special mention. One is Fakhr al-Dln 'Iraqi (d. 688/1289), author of the short classic of Persian prose, Lama'dt, which was written after he attended Qunawl's lectures on the Fusus. The work presents Qunawl's rendition of Ibn Arabl's teachings accurately, coherently and with great poetical beauty, but in a highly abbreviated form. The earliest of several commentaries on the Lama'dt, by Yar All ShlrazI, explains it largely by quoting passages from Qunawl and Farghanl. The introduction to and commentary on the Lama'dt's English translation provide a relatively detailed analysis of Qunawl's metaphysics.[20]

It is sometimes claimed that Jalal al-Dln Rumi (d. 672/1273), the most famous of the Persian Sufi poets, was influenced by Ibn Arabl's teachings, and the fact that he was a good friend of Qunawl is cited as proof. However, there no evidence in

Ruml's writings for this claim, and the early hagiographical literature suggests that Rumi was highly sceptical of the philosophical approach of Qunawl and his followers.[21]

The Fuṣūṣ AL-Ḥikam

Ibn Arabl wrote numerous works. By far the most famous and widely read of these was the Fusus al-hikam ("The Ringstones of Wisdom"). There is no doubt that the Shaykh considered this relatively short text one of his key writings. Although he claims divine inspiration for several of his books and treatises, including the Futuhat$_y$ the Fusus is the only one that was, on his own account, handed to him in a vision by the Prophet. According to Qunawl's disciple Jandl, Ibn Arabl forbade his disciples from having the Fusus bound together with any other book.[22]Qunawl explains the importance of the work in terms that must have found favour with most of Ibn Arabl's followers:

The Fusus al-hikam is one of the most precious short writings of our Shaykh, the most perfect leader, the model of the perfect human beings, the guide of the Community, the leader of leaders, the reviver of the truth and religion, Abu Abdallah … Ibn al-Arabl…. The Fusus is one of the seals of his writings and one of the last books to be sent down upon him. It came to him from the Muhammadan Station, the Fountainhead of the Essence, the Unitary All-Comprehensiveness. It brought the quintessence of the tasting [dhawq] of our Prophet – God's blessing be upon him – concerning the knowledge of God. It points to the source of the tasting of the great prophets and friends of God mentioned

within it. It guides all those who seek insight into the prophets to the gist of their tastings, the results of the focus of their aspirations, the sum of all they achieved, and the seals of their perfections. The book is like the stamp upon everything comprised by each prophet's perfection. It calls attention to the source of everything which the prophets encompassed and which became manifest through them.[23]

More than a hundred commentaries have been written on the Fusus, and they continue to be written in modern times. In addition, an extensive parallel literature was written attacking and condemning the text or its author.[24]

Authors wrote commentaries for many reasons. Clearly, they considered the book of great importance, either because of its intrinsic content or because others had paid so much attention to it. The first commentaries dealt only with ideas, but as time passed the general tone of the commentaries changed. The early works typically cite a paragraph or a page and then provide detailed philosophical explanations. Gradually, however, commentators pay more attention to the meaning of sentences and technical terms. This becomes so much of a preoccupation with Abd al-Ghanl al-Nabuls! (d. 1143/1730) that he finds it necessary to explain
the meaning of practically every word, technical term or otherwise, and he pays little attention to the grand ideas that underlie the text. Though this work suggests a steep decline in understanding in the Arabic-speaking countries, commentaries being written elsewhere are seldom so elementary.[25] As the commentary tradition developed, many authors took into account the broader issues raised not only by the numerous theoretical works being written by those

who considered themselves Ibn Arabl's followers but also by works written by faldsifah and mutakallimun.

The earliest commentary on the Fusus al-hikam is Ibn Arabl's own short treatise Naqsh al-fusus ("The Imprint of the Ringstones") in which he re-expressed the essential prophetic wisdom discussed in each chapter. The connections between this work and the Fusus are not always clear, and several commentaries were written upon it.[26] The first commentary on the Fusus by Ibn Arabl's followers seems to be that by al-Tilimsanl, who presents us with the whole text but singles out a relatively small number of passages for comment, frequently remarking, "The meaning of the remainder of the chapter is obvious." It certainly was not obvious to later generations.

Al-Tilimsanl's work illustrates already that the great reverence in which the Fusus was held did not prevent the commentators from expressing their opinions or interpreting Ibn Arabl in new ways. He focuses mainly on wujud, non-existence ('adam) and the immutable entities, issues that were to concern most of the later commentators as well. He registers his difference of opinion (khildf) with "my master, Shaykh Muhyl al-Dln" in several passages. In particular, he disagrees with Ibn Arabl's explanation of the nature of the immutable entities, the idea that "they are immutable before they become engendered" (thubutuhd qabl kawniha). Al-Tilimsanl claims that the entities must be non-existent in every respect. Hence they cannot be immutable (thus contradicting, for example, the first sentence of the Futuhdi).[27] Typical are his remarks in the following:

Wujudy which is light, is that which is thing [shay'] in every respect. Hence, it must have controlling power over an infinite number of attributes that become manifest. However, before they become manifest, these attributes have no immutable entities, because no existence can precede a thing's existence. … As for the Shaykh, he says that their existence is distinct, but this is contradictory. Even though the Shaykh would not deny what I say, I deny what the Shaykh says.[28]

In another passage, al-Tilimsanl excuses himself for disagreeing with the Shaykh by suggesting that Ibn Arabl had rhetorical reasons for expressing himself as he did:

The Shaykh's words here come not from the presence of gnosis [ma'rifah] but rather from that of learning ['Urn], except for a small amount. And that small amount is not pure. The reason is that he observed the levels of the rational faculties of those who are veiled…. Learning, not gnosis, is appropriate for the [common] people.[29]

Al-Tilimsanl's critical remarks are not untypical for Ibn Arabl's followers, although few are quite as overt. Even Ibn Arabl's most fervent admirers did not take too seriously his statement that he had received the book from the hand of the Prophet; otherwise, they would not have dared to differ with him. This is further indication that being a member of Ibn Arabl's school, even a faithful member, does not suggest slavish repetition of the master. In fact, Sadr al-Dln Qunawl is the great model here, for his relatively systematic exposition and his focus on philosophical issues rather than on Qur'an and Hadith do not square with his sources, and presumably

not with the oral instructions that he had received from his master.

Qunawl did not write a commentary on the Fusus, but he did explain the significance of each chapter heading of the work in his al-Fukuk, and in the process he brought out the basic points made in the book. The later commentators all concerned themselves with this issue of chapter headings, and most of them followed Qunawi's leads.[30]

Qunawl also exercised influence on the tradition of Fusus commentary through his disciple Mu'ayyid al-Dln Jandl (d. c. 700/1300), who is arguably the most widely influential of Qunawi's students because of this commentary. Jandl wrote a number of books in both Persian and Arabic. He tells us in the introduction to his Fusus commentary that he owes the work completely to the spiritual influence of his master. As Qunawl began to explain to him the meaning of the book's preface, he took spiritual control of Jandl's understanding and taught him in one instant the meaning of the whole book. Qunawl then told him that Ibn Arabl had done the same thing to him. This account establishes a claimed spiritual unity with the source of the book. At the same time, the author is saying that he had no need for a line by line explication of the text. His understanding and interpretation are "original", that is, tied to the book's very origin, and hence they do not have to follow explicit texts in Ibn Arabl or Qunawl. This clearly gives him authority to express his own opinions.

Jandl's work is by far the longest of the early commentaries, and it sets the pattern for the theoretical discussions in many of the later commentaries. This is obvious, for example, in the famous work by Abd al-Razzaq KashanI (d. 730/1330), a

prolific author of works in Arabic and Persian. In fact KashanI studied the Fusus with Jandl, and he frequently paraphrases or quotes his commentary.

In an autobiographical remark in the midst of his famous letter to the Sufi 'Ala' al-Dawlah SimnanI (d. 736/1336), who criticized Ibn Arabi's position on wujud, KashanI maps out his own pilgrimage to certainty. His account would seem to be typical for those followers of Ibn 'Arab! who engaged in philosophical writing. Like all scholars, KashanI began by studying basic sciences such as grammar and jurisprudence. From there he went on to the principles of jurisprudence (usul al-fiqh) and kalam, but he found no way to verify his understanding. Then he thought that investigating the rational sciences (ma'quldt) and metaphysics ('ilm-i ilahi) would provide him with true knowledge and deliver him from wavering and doubt. For a time he pursued this investigation. He writes, "My mastery of it reached a point that cannot be surpassed, but so much alienation, agitation and veiling appeared that I could find no rest. It became obvious that the true knowledge I sought was found in a stage beyond reason."[31]

Then, like al-Ghazzall, KashanI turned to Sufism. He was eventually able to find the certainty that he was looking for. Given his early philosophical training, it is not surprising that his Fusus commentary accentuates the trend established by Qunawl to present the text in philosophical terms. The manner in which KashanI's approach differs from that of Ibn Arabl is especially obvious in his Ta'il al-qur'dn, which, ironically, has been published in Ibn Arabi's name.[32]

Perhaps the most widely read commentary on the Fusus in the eastern lands of Islam was that by Sharaf al-Dln Dawud Qaysarl (d. 751/1350), who wrote several books in Arabic, but none, apparently, in Persian. Qaysarl studied the text with KashanI and sometimes paraphrases Jandi's explanations. His introduction to his commentary is one of the most systematic philosophical expositions of this school of thought, and commentaries on his introduction have continued to be written down to modern times.[33]

The first Persian commentary on the Fusils was probably written by Rukn al-Dln ShlrazI (d. 769/1367), a student of Qaysarl. As a rule the several Persian commentaries are heavily indebted to one or more of the Arabic commentaries.

The process of integrating Ibn Arabi's teachings into the Shi'ite intellectual perspective was undertaken with great perseverance by Sayyid Haydar Amull (d. 787/1385). The 500-page introduction to his Fusus commentary has been published, but not the text itself, of which the introduction represents only about ten per cent. Amull investigates each passage of the Fusus in terms of three levels: transmitted teachings (naql), including the Qur'an and the Shi'ite Hadith literature; reason ('aql), i.e., kalam and falsafah; and unveiling (kashf), in particular the writings of Ibn Arabl and his followers.

This hierarchy of naql, (aql and kashf is already implied or explicitly discussed in the teachings of many earlier Sufis, and by the time of Amull
it has become a commonplace. The third and highest approach was seen as attainable only after thorough training in the lower-level sciences, includ-ingfalsafah. This helps

explain why even today many of the 'ulamd'm Iran, although typically condemning Sufism because of its popular elements, consider Hrfdn or "gnosis" a path that leads to the highest spiritual attainments. Those texts that discuss 'irfan present it in terms that show it to be a direct continuation of the attempts by Ibn Arab! and Qunawl to harmonize reason and unveiling, or philosophy and Sufism.

Other Members of the School

Several seventh/thirteenth-century authors not directly affiliated with Qunawl deserve mention as important conduits of Ibn Arabl's teachings. Sa'd al-Dln Hammuyah (d. 649/ 1252) corresponded with Ibn Arabl and was a friend, but probably not a student and certainly not a disciple, of Qunawl. He wrote many works in Arabic and Persian, most of which are difficult to decipher. His terminology suggests that he was influenced by Ibn Arabl's teachings, but he was far less interested than Qunawl, or even Ibn Arabl himself, in the rational exposition of Sufi teachings in a manner that would have found favour with the philosophically or theologically inclined. JamI seems to be on the mark when he remarks about Hammuyah, "He has many works … full of symbolic speech, difficult words, numbers, diagrams and circles. The eye of reason and reflection is incapable of understanding and deciphering them. Until the eye of insight is opened with the light of unveiling, it is impossible to perceive their meaning."[34]

Probably more important than Hammuyah himself for the dissemination of Ibn Arabl's teachings was his disciple Aziz al-Dln Nasafl (d. before 700/1300), who wrote exclusively in Persian. He makes no claims to represent Ibn Arabl's teachings, but he uses terms such as wahdat al-wujud and "perfect human being" and explains them in ways that are not unconnected with discussions found in Ibn Arabl's writings. Ibn Arabl and Qunawl wrote mainly for the 'ulamd whereas Nasaft's works are directed at a less learned audience.

Another contemporary of Qunawl who deserves mention is Awhad al-Dln BalyanI (d. 686/1288), a native of Shiraz. The English translation of his short Arabic treatise Risdlat al-ahadiyyah has been published in Ibn Arabl's name, thereby helping Westerners to gain a skewed picture of the Shaykh's position on wahdat al-wujud. Balyani's mode of expression, which harmonizes with some rather ecstatic Persian verses of his cited by JamI, represents a relatively peripheral development in Ibn Arabl's school. No one should be surprised to hear that his treatise aroused the ire of those who attacked the supporters of wahdat al-wujud for believing that "All is He" (hama ust).[35]

By the eighth/fourteenth century, it becomes increasingly difficult to say who deserves to be called a member of Ibn Arabi's school. For example, some Sufis begin to take issue with his positions in rather severe fashion, but they do not necessarily step out of his intellectual universe. Ibn 'Arabi's most severe early critic had been Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728/ 1328), who was affiliated with a Sufi order, but had no sympathy for falsafah or philosophizing. In contrast, the already mentioned Ala' al-Dawlah Simnani was an important shaykh of the Kubrawl Order and wrote works in both Arabic

and Persian. He was highly critical of Ibn Arabi's ascription of the term mutlaq to wujud. Some observers have suggested that Simnani opposed Ibn Arabi's school of thought, but his writings show that most of what he says is prefigured in the ideas and terminology of the "school of verification". The same goes for the writings of Indian Sufi critics of Ibn Arabl such as Glsu Daraz (d. 825/1422) and, most famous of all, Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindl (d. 1034/1634). The last proposed wahdat al-shuhud ("the oneness of witnessing") as a corrective to wahdat aUwujud.

Among eighth/fourteenth-century authors who were especially influential in spreading Ibn Arabi's teachings was Sayyid All of Hamadan (d. 786/1385), the patron saint of Kashmir. He wrote a Persian commentary on the Fusiis and several short Persian and Arabic works that deal with Ibn Arabi's teachings. His sometime travelling companion, Sayyid Ashraf Jahanglr Simnani (d. probably in 829/1425), studied as a youth with Ala' al-Dawlah Simnani but sided with Kashani in the dispute over Ibn Arabl. Especially interesting is the Lataif-i ashrafi, put together by his disciple Nizam Hajjl al-Yamanl. This long work is Jaml's source for the text of the Simnani—Kashani dispute and also for the idea that it concerns wahdat al-wujud, since the two principles do not mention the term.

Ala al-Dln All ibn Ahmad Maha'iml (d. 835/1432), from Gujrat, wrote several important Arabic works in the philosophical style of Qunawl, including commentaries on Ibn Arabi's Fusiis', Qunawl's Nusus, and a tafsir of the Qur'an, called Tabsir al-rahman. He also wrote an Arabic commentary on Jam-i jahannumay, a Persian work by the poet Shams al-Dln Maghribl (d. 809/1406—7). Maghribl's

work was largely inspired by Farghanl's Mashariq al-darari. Several more commentaries were written upon Jam-i jahannumay in India, all in Persian.

It would be possible to enumerate dozens of other authors from the Indian subcontinent who deserve to be called members of Ibn Arabi's school,[36] but I will limit myself to probably the most learned and faithful of all his followers there, Shaykh Muhibb Allah Mubariz Ilahabadl (d. 1058/ 1648). He is the author of commentaries on the Fusiis in both Persian and Arabic and of several other long works explaining Ibn Arabi's teachings. He appears to be the best informed of all the Indian authors on the contents of the Futuhat.

Coming back to the central Islamic lands, a number of names need to be mentioned simply to indicate that they represent some of the most famous figures in the history of Ibn 'Arabi's school. As Morris remarks about Abd al-Karim al-Jlll (832/ 1428), he is "undoubtedly both the most original thinker and the most remarkable and independent mystical writer" among Ibn Arabi's well-known followers.[37] Two of the most prolific supporters of Ibn Arabi's teachings in the Arab countries are Abd al-Wahhab al-Sha'ranl (d. 973/1565) and the aforementioned Abd al-Ghanl al-NabulsI. In the Ottoman domains, 'Abdallah of Bosnia (d. 1054/1644) made an especially valuable contribution to the philosophical exposition of Ibn Arabi's ideas. About each of these authors, and dozens more down into the twentieth century, a great deal deserves to be said.[38]

The study of Ibn Arabi's influence is still in its infancy. Without doubt many more important authors will come to

light when further research is carried out. Enough has been said to suggest the rough outlines of his "school" and the tasks that remain to be accomplished.

NOTES

1 Qunawl sometimes refers to his position as madhhab al-tahqlq, "the school of verification", and tahqiq is Ibn 'Arabi's preferred term to refer to his own approach. However, diverse Sufis, philosophers and other thinkers both before and after Ibn 'Arabl referred to what they were doing as tahqiq to differentiate themselves from the common people, who were in the grips of taqlld, "imitation" or "following authority".

2 See Addas, Ibn l Arabl (Paris, 1989): 276, 341; Chodkiewicz, Emir Abd el-Kader: Ecrits spirituels (Paris, 1982): 22; "The Diffusion of Ibn Arabi's Doctrine", Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn Arabl Society, 9 (1991): 36—57.

3 Morris, "Ibn 'Arabl and his Interpreters"', Journal of the American Oriental Society, 106 (1986): 751-2.

4 On the second point, see Chodkiewicz, op. cit.

5 See D. Gril, "Le Kitab al-inbdh 'aid tarlq Allah de 'Abdallah Badr al-Habashl: un temoignage de l'enseignement spirituel de Muhyi 1-dln ibn 'Arabl", Annales Islamologiques, 15 (1979): 97-164; M. Profitlich, Die Terminologie Ibn Arabls im "Kitab wasa'il as-sa'il" des Ibn Saudakln (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1973).

6 Chodkiewicz writes that Qunawl "a donne a la doctrine de son maitre une formulation philosophique sans doute necessaire mais dont le systematisme a engendre bien des malentendus". Epitre sur VUnicite Absolue (Paris, 1982): 26.

7 O. Yahia, Histoire et classification de Voeuvre dlbn Arabl (Damascus, 1964): 209, sama no. 12; Chittick, "The Last Will and Testament of Ibn 'Arabi's Foremost Disciple and Some Notes on its Author", Sophia Perennis, 4(1) (1978): 43-58. The treatise addressed to al-Tilimsanl is called Kitab al-ilma' bi ba'd kulliyyat asrar al-sama Turkish manuscripts include Ibrahim Efendi 881/8, Kara (Jelebi Zade 345/15, ĩ§ehid Ali Paĩ§a 1344/4, and Konya Muzesi 1633, 5020.

8
Ibn Sab'in was asked, "How did you find Qunawl with the eye of the knowledge of tawhid?" He answered, "He is one of the verifiers, but there was a young man with him even more proficient [ahdhaq], al-Aflf al-Tilimsanl." Quoted by A. TaftazanI, Ibn Sab'in wa falsafatuhu al-sufiyyah (Beirut, 1973): 81. On Ibn Sab'in's philosophical writing, see S. Yaltkaya, Correspondancephiloso-phique avec Vempereur Frederic II de Hohenstaufen (Paris and Beirut, 1941).

9 See Chittick, "Rumi and Wahdat al-Wujud", in The Heritage of Rumi, ed. A. Banani and G. Sabagh (Cambridge, 1994).

10 Hajjl Khallfah, Kashf al-zunun, (Istanbul, 1971), cols 265—6, s.v. Taiyyah.

11 See Chittick, Faith and Practice of Islam: Three Thirteenth Century Sufi Texts (Albany, 1992): 258-9.

12 Jami, Nafahat al-uns, ed. M. Tawhldlpur (Tehran, 1957): 559.

13 Published with a Turkish introduction by H. K. Yilmaz, Tasavvufi Hadls serhleri ve Konevinin Kirk Hadis ĩ§erhi (Istanbul, 1990). For a translation of two passages from the text, see S. Murata, The Tao of Islam: a Sourcebook on Gender Relationships in Islamic Thought (Albany, 1992): 101—2, 219-22.

14 For a tentative list, see Chittick, "Last Will". I would remove from that list the two Persian works, Tabsirat al-mubtadi and Matdli-i imdn (on which see Chittick, Faith and Practice), and would add two short Arabic works, Tahrir al-baydn fi taqrir shu (ab al-iman and Maratib al-taqwd.

15 Jami, op. cit.: 556.

16 Ibn Taymiyyah, Majmitat al-rasa'il wa'l-masd'il, ed. Muhammad Rashld Rida (n.p., n.d.), 1: 176.

17 Qunawl, al-Nafahdt al-ildhiyyah (Tehran, 1898): 152-3.

18 On the correspondence, see Chittick, "Mysticism versus Philosophy in Earlier Islamic History: the al-TusI, al-QunawI Correspondence", Religious Studies, 17 (1981): 87—104. A critical edition is being prepared by G. Schubert [Manuscripts of the Middle East (1988), 3: 73-8).

19 See Chittick, "The Five Divine Presences: From al-QunawI to al-Qaysari", Muslim World, 72 (1982): 107-28.

20 Chittick and P. L. Wilson, Fakhruddin Iraqi: Divine Flashes (New York, 1982).

21 I have investigated this question in some detail. See Chittick "Rumi and Wahdjat al-Wujud". See also Chittick, "Rumi and the Mawlawiyya", in Islamic Spirituality: Manifestations, ed. S. H. Nasr (New York, 1991): 113-17.

22 Sharh Fusus al-hikam, ed. S. J. AshtiyanI (Mashhad, 1982): 5.

23 Qunawl, al-Fukiik, on the margin of KashanI, Sharh mandzil al-sa'irin (Tehran, 1897-8): 184.

24 For a list of commentaries and criticisms, see O. Yahia, Arabic introduction to Sayyid Haydar Amull, Nass al-nusus (Tehran, 1971).

25 See Chittick, Persian introduction to Jami, Naqd al-nusus ft sharh naqsh al-fusus (Tehran, 1977): 38-44.

26 The most famous is by Abd al-Rahman Jami, Naqd al-nusus, mentioned in the previous note. This work, which is Jaml's earliest theoretical work on Sufism, is an explicit compendium of some of the key theoretical discussions by Qunawl and his direct followers. For a translation of Naqsh al-fusus along with many pages from Jaml's commentary, see Chittick, "Ibn Arabl's own Summary of the Fusus: 'The Imprint of the Bezels of Wisdom'", Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi Society, 1 (1982): 30-93.

27

See Ibn Arabi's comments on the meaning of this sentence in Chittick, The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-Arabi's Metaphysics of Imagination (Albany, 1989): 103.

28 Istanbul MS sehid Ali Paa, 1248, commentary on the chapter on Abraham. Compare his remarks in the chapter on Joseph.

29 Ibid., chapter on Solomon.

30 For passages on this issue from al-Fukuk and the major early commentaries, see Chittick, "The Chapter Headings of the Fusus Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi Society, 2 (1984): 41-94.

31 Jami, op. cit.: 486; the full correspondence is translated in Landolt, "Der Briefwechsel zwischen KasanI und SimnanI uber Wahdat al-Wugiid", Der Islam, 50 (1973): 29—81; and in P. Lory, les Commentaires esoteriques du Cor an dapres Abd ar-Razzaq al-Qashani (Paris, 1981).

32 On KashanI, see Morris, op. cit.: 101-6. Kashani's philosophical strength helps explain why his commentary was chosen by T Izutsu, whose later works focus on the Islamic philosophical tradition, to help him explain Ibn Arabi's teachings to English-speaking readers. See Izutsu, Sufism and Taoism (Los Angeles, 1983). For passages from Kashani's Qur'an commentary and other works, see Murata, op. cit., index under KashanI.

33 The latest of these is by the contemporary hakim S. J. AshtiyanI, Sharh-i muqad-dima-yi qaysari bar fusils (Mashhad, 1966).

34 Jami, Nafahat al-uns 429. The only work of Hammuyah to have been published is the Persian al-Misbah fi'l-tasawwufi ed. N. Mayil Harawl (Tehran, 1983).

35 See Chodkiewicz's important study and translation of this work, Epitre sur TUnicite Absolue; see also Chittick, "Rumi and Wahdat al-Wujud".

36 See Chittick, "Notes on Ibn al-Arabi's Influence in the Subcontinent", Muslim World, 82 (1992): 218-41.

37 Morris, op. cit.: 108.

38 Among the most fascinating late representatives of Ibn Arabi's school is Amir Abd al-Qadir of Algeria (d. 1300/ 1883), the well-known freedom fighter. For his connection to the school and samples of his writings, see Chodkiewicz, Emir Abd el-Kader.

V

Later Islamic philosophy

CHAPTER 32

Khwājah Naṣīr aI-Dīn al-Ṭūsī: the philosopher/ vizier and the intellectual climate of his times

Hamid Dabashi

In the year 597/1201, about five years before St Albertus Magnus and some twenty-three years before St Thomas Aquinas (1224–74) were born, far from Lauingen in Swabia and far from the castle of Roccasecca near Naples, a kindred soul of these two great medieval philosophers was born in the city of Tus in the eastern province of Khurasan in Persia. Khwājah Naṣīr aI-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (597/1201–672/1274) would live simultaneously with St Albertus Magnus and St Thomas Aquinas and share much of their theological and philosophical concerns - and then some more. He would serve in the court of a world conquerer, witness the destruction of Baghdad and the downfall of the 'Abbasid caliphate, found one of the greatest institutions of higher learning in the form of a teaching observatory, contribute massively to all major branches of Islamic philosophy and then die in exactly the

same year that St Thomas Aquinas died, some six years before the death of St Albertus Magnus. Had their respective faiths and languages and their opposing locations around the dividing lines of the Crusades permitted it, the two Christian and one Muslim philosopher would have found much, much indeed, to talk about and to discuss. And the three of them would have had much to learn from yet another philosopher, their senior by almost a century. Khwājah Naṣīr was three years old when the eminent Jewish philosopher Moses Maimonides (1135–1204) died in Cairo. These lour represented the peak of philosophical activity in the three Abrahamic religions at that time. Ruling over their minds with almost the same intensity as the Old and
the New Testaments and the Qur'an was the legacy of Greek philosophy and especially Aristotle.

Remembering Khwājah Naṣīr

Preserved in the margins of a rare miniature portrait of Khwājah Naṣīr al-Dln al-Ṭūsī in the Malik Library in Tehran are two calligraphic descriptions of him, representing the high esteem in which he was held by his more contemporary commentators. The phrase in the right margin reads, "Naslr al-Dawlah wa al-Dln [the Sustainer of the State and of the Faith] Muḥammad-i Ṭūsī, that unique [individual] the like of whom the mother of time did not give birth to". The one to the bottom left reads, "the Portrait of the Most Significant of all 'ulamā' the most distinguished of all philosophers, Ustad al-Bashar Khwājah Naṣīr al-Dln Ṭūsī, Sanctified be the site of

his Tomb, Noble and Benevolent" (Mudarris Raḍawī (1955): 2). Allowing for all the necessary and customary hyperbole representative of the time and the culture, there is still an irreducible sense of significance and admiration for the intellectual legacy produced and left for posterity by this remarkable hallmark of medieval Islamic learning.

"Qudwa-yi Muhaqqiqin wa Sulṭān-i Ḥukamā' wa Mutikallimīn, Ustdd-i Bashar wa 'Aql-i Hadl 'ashar, Muhammad ibn Muhammad ihn al- Hasan ah Tim, mukannd' bi Abu Ja 'far wa mulaqqab bi Khwājah Naṣīr al-Dln wa mashhur bi Muhaqqiq-i lusi yd Khwdjah-yi 7 'isi" is the full honorific title with which this prominent intellectual figure in the history of Islamic philosophy is known, praised and honoured by his fellow Muslims (Mudarris Raḍawī (1955): 2; Tunikābunī (1985): 367; Shūshtarī (1986), 2: 201; Khwansari (1981), 7: 221). Sometimes the honorific title of Rasadi, a reference to his status as a prominent astronomer, is also added to his name (Tunikābunī (1985): 767).

Khwājah Naṣīr is one of the greatest pillars of Shī'ī theology, on a par with such seminal doctrinaires of the faith as Thiqat al-Islam al- Kulaynī (d. 329/940), Shaykh al-Sadduq (d. 381/991), Shaykh al-Mufid (d. 413/1022), 'Alam al-Hudā' Sayyid al-Murtada (d. 436/1044), and Shaykh-i Ṭūsī (d. 460/1067). After the devastating effects of the Mongol invasion early in the seventh/thirteenth century, Khwājah Naṣīr is credited with having rescued, consolidated and systematized the best and most enduring aspects of Shī'ī (Islamic) scholastic learning. He left his indelible mark on theology, jurisprudence, philosophy, astronomy, politics, ethics and poetics. The Shfis are particularly proud, in their hagiographical remembrances of him, of his services to their dogmatics (Tunikābunī (1985):

374; Shūshtarī (1986), 2: 201–2). He is credited with having won the greatest intellectual and political forces of his time for Shi'ism. He is believed to have converted the distinguished philosopher Quṭb
aI-Dīn al-Shīrazī to Shi'ism (Tunikābunī (1985): 374). The utmost expression of Khwājah Naṣīr's Shī'ī piety is evident in a treatise he wrote on the virtues of the first Shī'ī Imam, 'Ali ibn Abl Talib, whom he describes as successor of the prophets (al-Ṭūsī (1982): 2–3). There are many other books and treatises in which his devout and doctrinal Shi'i convictions are evident (e.g., al-Ṭūsī (1988): 338—76; al-Ṭūsī (1984b): 183–5).

On the model of Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna), Khwājah Naṣīr ought to be considered as an example par excellence of that peculiarly Persian institution of the philosophers/viziers, men of unusual scholastic learning who combined their philosophical quest with a unique penchant for political power. Khwājah Naṣīr, for example, is reported to have dictated a full treatise on logic while preparing a contingent of Hūlāgū's army for battle (Tunikābunī (1985): 374). Having lived through one of the most tumultuous centuries of Persian history, Khwājah Naṣīr tamed and controlled the ferocious violence of the Mongol invasion with remarkable poise and tact, managed to produce canonical texts on an astonishing number of intellectual disciplines, created institutional centres of learning and research and left a permanent mark on Islamic intellectual and scientific history.

Biography

Khwājah Naṣīr aI-Dīn al-Ṭūsī was born in Tus in the early morning hours of'Saturday 11 Jamadi'l-'ula 597/16 February 1201 (Tunikābunī (1985): 367; Shūshtarī (1986), 2: 203). The origin of his family is traced back to Jahrud of Sawah (Tunikābunī (1985): 367). But by the time he was born in Tus, his family had long been established there. He received his early education in Tus under the supervision of his father, Muhammad ibn al-Hasan, a prominent Shī'ī jurist. Topics of his early education included Arabic language and grammar, Quranic and Ḥadith studies, as well as Shi'i jurisprudence, law, logic, natural sciences and metaphysics. His early education in Tus also included mathematics (Mudarris! ZanjanI: 23; Shūshtarī (1986), 2: 203).

Very early in his youth, Khwājah Naṣīr left Tus and went to Nishapur to pursue his studies. Early in the seventh/thirteenth century Nishapur had retained its status as the intellectual capital of the eastern Islamic world, and an array of distinguished scholars taught there. Among those with whom Khwājah Naṣīr studied was Farid al-DTn Damad Nlshapurl, who was a student of Sadr aI-Dīn SarakhsI, who was a student of Afdal aI-Dīn Ghllanl, who was a student of Abu'l-Abbas Lukarl, who was a student of Bahmanyar, who was a student of Ibn Sīnā (Shūshtarī (1986), 2: 203; Mudarris Raḍawī (1955): 2). Thus, through five generations of philosophers, Khwājah Naṣīr was directly linked to the master of Peripatetic philosophy (Tunikābunī (1985): 381; al-Ṭūsī (1982): 9). With Farid aI-Dīn Damad, Khwājah Naṣīr studied Ibn Slna's al-Ishārāt wa'l- tanbihdt. He studied the Qanun of

Ibn Sīnā with Quṭb aI-Dīn al-Misri, who was a student of Imam Fakhr aI-Dīn al-Razi. He studied mathematics with Kamal aI-Dīn ibn Yunus al-Misri. By the year 619/1222, he received his formal "licence" (ijdzah) to transmit Ḥadith. He took advantage of being in Nishapur and studied a variety of different subjects with an array of other distinguished scholars (Mudarris Raḍawī (1955): 2—3; MudarrisI Zanjani (1984): 24—6).

The Mongol invasion of Khurasan in the early seventh/ thirteenth century occurred while Khwājah Naṣīr was completing his studies in Nishapur, which became an increasingly dangerous place to live in. When a local Ismaili prince, Nasir aI-Dīn 'Abd al-Rahim ibn Abi Mansur, the governor, or muhtasham, of Quhistan, invited Khwājah Naṣīr to join him in his fortress, he immediately accepted and sought haven with the local Isma'llis (Daftary (1990): 408—9). His tenure with Nasir al-Dln Abd al-Rahim, which was some time between 624/1226 and 632/1234, was very fruitful. Here he translated and expanded Abu 'All Muskuwayh al-Razi's Kitdb al-tahdrah as Akhlāq-i nāṣirī, in his patron's name. He also wrote Risdlat al-mu'iniyyah in astronomy for his patron's son, Mu'In aI-Dīn. Akhlāq-i muḥtashamī, Sharḥ al-ishārāt, Asds al-iqtibds and a few other books are also the products of this period (Mudarris Raḍawī (1955): 4—5; Khwansari (1981), 7: 224).

Some time before 632/1234, Khwājah Naṣīr is summoned from Nasir al-Dln's court to the court of 'Ala aI-Dīn Muhammad, the Isma ill prince, who had heard of the young scholar and wished to enjoy his company. Accompanied by Nasir aI-Dīn, Khwājah Naṣīr moved from Quhistan to the fortress of Maymun Diz, to the care and patronage of 'Ala

aI-Dīn Muhammad (Mudarris Raḍawī (1955): 5–6). Although his sojourn with the Isma ill patrons was quite productive, he does not seem to have been particularly happy or content with his fate. Towards the end of Sharḥ al-ishārāt, he complains of the difficult conditions under which he had been writing that particular book. "I wrote a considerable part of it, " he complains, "in an extremely difficult condition, a more difficult condition than which is impossible" (al-Ṭūsī (1983): 145; Mudarris Raḍawī (1955): 7). In the middle of his Arabic reflection on his intolerable condition, he seeks refuge in a Persian poem: "As far as I can see around me / Calamity is a ring and I its bezel" (al-Ṭūsī (1983): 145). While Khwājah Naṣīr was in Quhistan, Hūlāgū, the Mongol warlord, was dispatched by his brother Mangu Khan (Mongke, the Great Khan), successor to Chingiz Khan (Chinggis Khan), to fight the Isma'llis (Daftary (1990): 418—19). In 653/1255 Hūlāgū invaded Persia (Boyle (1968): 340—1). In 654/1256, he defeated the Ismaili ruler Rukn

aI-Dīn Khurshah, and captured the fortress of Alamut, where Khwajah NasTr had been, in effect, a prisoner. Khwājah Naṣīr's role in peacefully making the Isma'lll ruler submit to Hūlāgū made him particularly valuable to the Mongol warlord (Boyle (1968): 341—3; al-Juwayni (1937), 3: 114–42).

The Mongol Invasion of Persia

In 649/1251, the Great Khan Mangu (Mongke) dispatched his brother Hūlāgū to consolidate his conquest of Persia. The army that Hūlāgū led into Persia is estimated to have been

larger than that led by Chingiz Khan himself (Boyle (1968): 340). In 651/1253 Hūlāgū left his encampment in central Asia and advanced south to central Persia. By 653/1255 he met with the founder of the Kart dynasty of Herat, Shams aI-Dīn Muhammad (Potter (1992): 40—3), and then began to send his emissaries to various Persian provinces, informing them of his intention to eradicate the Ismalll presence. By Sha'ban 654/September 1256, he received the brother of Rukn aI-Dīn Khurshah, the Grand Ismalll Master, in whose service Khwajah NasTr aI-Dīn was by now employed. By Shawwal/ November of that year, Rukn aI-Dīn surrendered and received ajydrllgh (mandate to rule) from the Mongol warlord. Khwājah Naṣīr was among the entourage that accompanied Rukn aI-Dīn Khurshah to meet with Hūlāgū. Through the good offices of the historian al-Juwayni and probably Khwājah Naṣīr, the library and astronomical instruments of the Alamut fortress were saved from the Mongol destruction. At this point, Khwajah NasTr enters the service of the Great Mongol warlord. In Rabi' al-Awwal 655/April 1257 Hūlāgū left Qazwin for Hamadan and from there marched towards Baghdad.

Khwājah Naṣīr and the Conquest of Baghdad

When Hūlāgū's army approached Baghdad, among the prominent members of his immediate entourage was Khwājah Naṣīr (Rashid aI-Dīn Fadl Allāh (1959), 2: 707). Khwajah NasTr was actively involved in the long process of skirmishes and negotiations between Hūlāgū and caliph al-Musta'sim. At

one point Hūlāgū dispatched Khwājah Naṣīr to negotiate on his behalf with the 'Abbasid caliph (ibid.-. 711). When Hūlāgū finally attacked Baghdad, he had Khwājah Naṣīr stationed at a gate to the capital to protect the innocent people.

After consulting with Khwājah Naṣīr on the astrological timing of invading Baghdad, Hūlāgū attacked the 'Abbasid capital. Qadi Niir
Allāh Shūshtarī, in Majalis al-mu 'minin, attributes this to the philosopher's Shl'T faith. The occurrence of a major flood in late summer 654/1256 in Baghdad (Rashid aI-Dīn Fadl Allāh (1959), 2: 698—9) had considerably jeopardized al-Musta'sim's already weak rule. Confusion and anarchy pervaded the 'Abbasid capital. On 10 Ramadan 655/20 September 1257 Hūlāgū left Hamadan for Baghdad and sent a message to the caliph asking him to surrender. There are even some claims not substantiated of secret communications between Ibn 'AlqamI, al-Musta'sim's Shī'ī vizier, and Khwājah Naṣīr on inducing the Mongol warlord to attack Baghdad (Mudarris Raḍawī (1955): 13). On Tuesday 22 Muharram 656/29 January 1258, Hūlāgū headed for Baghdad with Khwājah Naṣīr among his immediate entourage. At one point during the siege of Baghdad, he sent Khwājah Naṣīr to persuade the caliph to surrender. Al-Musta'sam initially refused but finally, on Sunday 4 Safar 656/9 February 1258, he and his family surrendered to Hūlāgū (Rashid aI-Dīn Fadl Allāh (1959), 2: 712). The caliph was killed ten days later in a manner also attributed to Khwājah Naṣīr by some sources. It is reported (Tunikabun! (1985): 380) that Hūlāgū, on the advice of an astrologist, rival to Khwājah Naṣīr (a certain Hisam aI-Dīn al-Munajjim), was reluctant to kill the caliph, lest something terrible would happen to him and his army.

Khwājah Naṣīr insisted that these were all superstitious beliefs and that nothing would happen to Hūlāgū by killing the Abbasid caliph. To ease the Mongol warrior's mind, he suggested that the caliph be wrapped in a carpet and rolled by hand to death. If any change in the world, the climate, or Hūlāgū's health were to appear, they would stop the execution immediately. Hūlāgū agreed, and poor al-Musta'sim was rolled around to death. There are, however, other less dramatic accounts of the caliph's execution, such as starvation, with no involvement by the Shl'l vizier (Mudarris Raḍawī (1955): 16). Some members of the caliph's family, such as his youngest son, Mubarak-Shah, were saved by the intervention of Hūlāgū's wife, Uljay-Khatun (Rashid aI-Dīn Fadl Allāh (1959), 2: 714). Khwājah Naṣīr took this son to Marāghah, where he married a Mongol woman and lived under the vizier's protection (Rashid aI-Dīn Fadl Allāh (1959), 2: 714; Mudarris Raḍawī: 17).

Khwājah Naṣīr is credited with having saved the lives of many Muslim scholars who resided in Baghdad during the Mongol invasion, e.g., Ibn AbiTHadid, the famous commentator of Nahj al-baldghah (Mudarris Raḍawī (1955): 17—18). He is also reported to have cast the libraries of his enemies into the Euphrates (Tunikabun! (1985): 373). However, none of these stories can be independently verified. Al-Tusl's Shi'i biographers are quite adamant in attributing pro-Shl'l, anti-Sunni sentiments to him (Tunikabun! (1985): 373; Shūshtarī (1986), 2: 203; Khwansari (1981), 7: 221–2).

Khwājah Naṣīr remained with Hūlāgū in Baghdad for a while and helped him to consolidate his authority in the former 'Abbasid capital. Then he went to Hillah, the great centre of Shī'ī learning in Iraq, where he visited Muhaqqiq-i Hilli, the

prominent Shfi jurist, and engaged in juridical discussions with him. Through Muhaqqiq-i Hilli, Khwājah Naṣīr met with other prominent theologians and jurists of the area. On his return to Marāghah, following Hūlāgū's command, he supervised the construction of the famous observatory. Hūlāgū died before Khwājah Naṣīr could finish a full cycle of astronomical observations. He then became vizier to his succeeding son, Abaqa Khan (ruled 663/1265- 680/1282), who had equal trust in him and his judgments. There are reports that Khwājah Naṣīr became the personal physician to the Mongol leader as well (Mudarris Raḍawī (1955): 33—5).

In 655/1257 Khwājah Naṣīr travelled to Khurasan. On this trip he was joined by the other distinguished philosopher of the time, Quṭb aI-Dīn al-Shirazi. The last we hear of Khwājah Naṣīr is on a hunting expedition with Abaqa' Khan. After his second enthronement in 12 Rabi' II, 669/1270, Abaqa was on a hunting chase when he was wounded by a bison (Boyle (1968): 360). Under Khwājah Naṣīr's supervision, a physician performed surgery on the Great Khan. On his final official trip to Baghdad in 672/1273 with Abaqa' Khan, Khwājah Naṣīr fell ill. The Mongol leader, accompanied by Quṭb aI-Dīn al-Shīrazī, visited the ailing Khwājah Naṣīr. The Persian philosopher died of this illness on Monday 18 Dhu'l-Hijjah 672/25 June 1274. His body was taken to Kazimayn and buried there. It is reported (Mudarris Raḍawī (1955): 35—6) that when they were digging Klnvajah Naslr's grave near the mausoleums of Musa al-Kazim, the Seventh Shl'l Imam, the gravediggers discovered a subterranean vault which turned out to be a grave that caliph al-Nasir had constructed for himself, although his son had buried him elsewhere. The construction date on that caliph's grave was

Saturday 11 Jamadi'l- 'ula' 597/16 February 1201, Khwājah Naṣīr's birthday.

Khwājah Naṣīr as a Shifi Philosopher

Khwājah Naṣīr's Shi'I biographers are particular in their details of the philosopher's Shī'ī affiliations. He is reported, for example (Tunikabun!

: 367) to have spent twenty years writing a book on the virtues of the Shfi Imams and to have gone to Baghdad to show it to the Sunni caliph. The caliph and his distinguished scholar, Ibn Hajib, are on a boat on the Euphrates when they receive Khwājah Naṣīr. The Shī'ī philosopher presents his book, and when the Sunni scholar sees its exclusive attention to the Shi'I Imams, he throws it into the Euphrates. Ibn Hajib then admonishes Khwājah Naṣīr and asks him where he is from. "From Tus", he responds. "Are you from the Ṭūsī cows or Ṭūsī asses?" the Sunni vizier retorts. "The cows", Khwajah NasTr answers. "Where are your horns?" Ibn Hàjib continues. "They are in Tūs. I will go and get them", Khwājah Naṣīr responds with an obvious reference to his coming back to Baghdad in Hūlāgū's army to destroy Baghdad, to kill the caliph and all his entourage. The story goes on to report that Khwājah Naṣīr throws Ibn Hājib's entire library into the Euphrates in retaliation for what the Sunni vizier had done. Although the Shfi biographers are quick to discern any number of historical inaccuracies in this story (Tunikabun!

(1985): 369), they still consider it of particular pedagogic value.

Khwājah Naṣīr is also credited with having converted many prominent Sunni scholars to Shi'ism, and if they refused they were executed (Tunikābunī (1985): 373). Among these Sunni-turned-Shfi philosophers are Quṭb aI-Dīn al-Shirazi, whose lectures Khwājah Naṣīr is believed to have attended anonymously. When Quṭb aI-Dīn al-ShiRāzī was once publicly embarrassed, he yielded to Khwājah Naṣīr's superior intellect and converted to Shi'ism. Quṭb aI-Dīn is reported to have rejoined Sunnism, and been converted back to Shiism by Khwājah Naṣīr, altogether three times. Finally, he told Khwājah Naṣīr that he could not argue with him and that he would convert to Shi'ism if Khwājah Naṣīr would have one of his students debate with him. The student won, and Quṭb aI-Dīn converted to Shi ism, this time for good. These hagiographical anecdotes are particularly important in understanding the necessity of a total appropriation of the philosopher/vizier into Shfi collective sentiments.

Colleagues and Students

Khwājah Naṣīr frequently corresponded and exchanged ideas with a number of prominent contemporary philosophers and scientists, e.g., Najm aI-Dīn Dablràn-i Kàtibī (d. 675/1276), a prominent philosopher, mathematician and logician whose works in logic, such as 'Ayn al-qawaid, became rather influential. He worked in Marāghah with Khwājah Naṣīr. These correspondences were occasions for exchanges of ideas, sending books and requesting answers to difficult

philosophical questions. There is also a letter from Sadr aI-Dīn al-Qūnawi, the distinguished contemporary of Khwājah Naṣīr, to him. It is evident from this letter (al-Ṭūsī (1966): 165–7) that it was the first correspondence between the two. In it Sadr aI-Dīn expresses his great admiration for the Persian philosopher and his desire to have regular correspondence with him and thus learn from this contemporary master of Peripatetic philosophy. Along with the letter, Sadr aI-Dīn sends a copy of one of his writings which he had written "a long time ago on the conclusion of [my] thoughts"

(ibid.: 166). He kindly asks Khwājah Naṣīr to read his book, the result of his discussions with some of his philosopher friends, and comment on some of its problematic issues. Khwājah Naṣīr responds immediately in kind and opens his letter with a beautiful Arabic couplet in which he says that after the books of God he had not seen any book like the one Sadr aI-Dīn had sent him. He expresses his equal, or higher, admiration for Sadr aI-Dīn al-Qūnawī, calling him "our master" and "our guide". He writes that, of course, he had long known and admired al-Qūnawī and that he had intended to write to him and begin a regular correspondence. He was pleasantly surprised and honoured to receive a letter from Sadr aI-Dīn. "In everything you have the virtuous nobility of having been the first", Khwājah Naṣīr writes to al-Qūnawī. In this respect, too, he had proved his being the first (ibid.: 168).

Khwājah Naṣīr's most distinguished student/colleague was ʿAllamah Quṭb aI-Dīn al-ShiRāzī (d. 710/1310), who became a prominent philosopher/scientist in his own right (Walbridge 1992). His Durrat al-tdj li-ghurrat al-dubaj is one of his most important works. This text, written in Persian, is an encyclopedic summary of philosophical and non-philo-

sophical topics. Among the students who attended Khwājah Naṣīr's lessons on jurisprudence was 'Allamah Hilli, the great Shl'l jurisconsult, who considered his teacher "the most noble man we have ever seen" (Mudarris! ZanjanI (1984): 14). Moreover, Khwājah Naṣīr's influence is not limited to his immediate students. Since the seventh/thirteenth century, his books have been studied uninterruptedly in all scholastic institutions of higher learning in Persia and many other lands.

Khwājah Naṣīr's Ismā'īlī Connection

Khwājah Naṣīr's Ismā'īlī connection has been subject to considerable controversy. Nasir aI-Dīn 'Abd al-Rahlm (d. 655/1257), under whose patronage Khwājah Naṣīr produced some of his most significant works, is reported to have been a particularly erudite Ismalll leader who invited Khwājah Naṣīr to join him in the Quhistan fortress. Probably Khwājah Naṣīr's attention to Nasir al-Dln's court for patronage was subsequent to his unsuccessful bid to get close to Mu'ayyad aI-Dīn al-Alqami, the Shfi vizier of caliph al-Musta'sim (Tunikabun! (1985): 378). Two of Khwājah Naṣīr's most important texts, Akhlāq-i ndsiri and Akhlāq-i muḥtashamī, were written for this Nasir aI-Dīn Abd al-Rahlm, who was muhtashim or head of the Quhistani Nizarls (Daftary (1990): 408). Khwājah Naṣīr is also reported (Shūshtarī (1986), 2: 207) to have translated 'Ayn al- Qudat al-Hamadanl's Zubdat al-haqa'iq for Nasir aI-Dīn and to have added a commentary to it. The productive relationship between the

Persian philosopher and his Ismāʼīlī patron was not to last; and, as we noted earlier, when the Isma ills were defeated by Hūlāgū's army, Khwājah Naṣīr joined the Mongol warlord and accompanied him on his victorious expedition to Baghdad.

Twelver-Shīʼī authors are adamant in rejecting any Ismāʼīlī connection for Khwājah Naṣīr (Mudarris Raḍawī (1955): 6—9; Mudarris! Zanjani (1984): 49–51). More pious authors are hagiographical in celebrating Khwājah Naṣīr's Twelver Shiʼism (Tunikabun! (1985): 367; Khwansari, 6: 221—2; Shūshtarī (1986), 2: 201—2). There are enough historical references (Huma'i (1956): 17; Shūshtarī (1986), 2: 202—8; Isfandyar (1983), 1: 258; Mudarris Raḍawī (1955): 8–9; Mudarris! Zanjani (1984): 24–6; al-Tus! (1982): 10—14; Daftary (1990): 408–11, 423–4, 693–4), however, to suspect a genuine Ismail! connection (Huma! (1956): 22–5). The original introduction of Akhlāq-i ndsiri testifies to Khwājah Naṣīr's outright devotion to Nasir aI-Dīn ʻAbd al-Rahim. A number of scholars have indeed postulated the possibility of Khwājah Naṣīr's Ismaili connection (Minuwi in al-Ṭūsī (1977a): 14—32; Danishpazhdh in al-Ṭūsī (1982): 14; Daftary (1990): 408—11), and some have condemned (Rypka (1968): 313—14) or pardoned it (Buzurg ʻAlawl in al-Ṭūsī (1977a): 4). In so far as it affects his philosophical writings, this connection is believed (Danishpazhuh in al-Ṭūsī (1982): 10—14) to have influenced Khwājah Naṣīr in a number of ways. His Aghaz iva anjam is identified as an Isma ill tract in its basic gnostic assumptions. While in Quhistan, Khwājah Naṣīr composed some of his other significant philosophical treatises. His Asds al-iqtibds, his translation of Ibn Maqaffa''s al-Adab al-wajiz (ordered by Nasir aI-Dīn ʻAbd al-Rahim) and his translation of ʻAyn al-Qudat al- Hamadanl's Zubdat

al-haqd'iq all come from this period, as does his treatise Tawalld' wa tabarrd' (again in an Isma'lll discourse) and his major work on poetics, Mi'yar al-ash'dr.

Hūlāgū: Khwājah Naṣīr's Patron

Next to Nasir aI-Dīn Abd al-Rahim, in patronage of Khwājah Naṣīr, stands the great Mongol warlord Hūlāgū (see Quatremere (1834): 85–425), who was equally protective of the Persian philosopher in his philosophical and scientific pursuits. There are major distinctions between these two patrons in their own respective political and intellectual dispositions, differences which are reflected in their attitude towards Khwājah Naṣīr. Whereas the Ismalll patron was personally attracted to Khwājah Naṣīr's intellectual endeavours, the Mongol warlord was more interested in the astronomical and medical expertise of his vizier. Nevertheless, Khwājah Naṣīr's ability to contribute immensely to the intellectual history of the seventh/thirteenth century was due to a considerable degree as much to the patronage of
Hūlāgū as to that of Nasir aI-Dīn 'Abd al-Rahlm. Under Hūlāgū's patronage, Khwājah Naṣīr was able to tame the Mongol warlord, create and sustain a level of limited civility and comfort for educated people, and manage to make the seventh/thirteenth century one of the most productive in Islamic intellectual history. He not only contributed enormously to a range of intellectual disciplines himself, but also under Hūlāgū's protective patronage created a congenial

political and social atmosphere in which a host of other philosophers and scientists could work in comfort, undisturbed by forces of dogmatic and juridical opposition to the reign of reason in scientific and philosophical matters. If the claims of his devoted Shi'I biographers are to be trusted, Khwājah Naṣīr secretly converted Hūlāgū and his wife to Islam and, in fact, personally performed a circumcision on Hūlāgū (Mudarris! Zanjani (1984): 13). Other sources confirm this report of conversion and attribute it to Hūlāgū's desire to marry a Persian girl who had refused matrimony unless the Mongol warlord converted to Islam (ibid.).

In an introduction to his astronomical treatise Zij-i ilkhdnl, Khwājah Naṣīr praises Hūlāgū for having come to Persia at his brother's command, defeated the Ismā'īlīs, and established law and order. Then "he patronized and attended to men of [knowledge and] art of all kinds, so that they demonstrated their talents. He established good customs. When he captured the lands of the | lsrna ill] infidels, where I was kept, he released me, the humble servant, Nasir from Tus, and ordered me to chart the stars" (quoted in Mudarris Raḍawī (1955): 29). Hūlāgū's generosity in letting Khwājah Naṣīr spend as much as was necessary on the construction of the Marāghah Observatory has stunned many contemporary historians (ibid.: 32).

A "Renaissance Man"

Well protected and patronized by two prominent patrons, Khwājah Naṣīr worked relentlessly on a range of intellectual disciplines. A remarkable aspect of his intellectual disposition

was the comprehensive range of his knowledge. It is in this particular respect that he is reminiscent of Ibn Sina, with whom he most immediately identified himself. Elis Aqsdm al-hikmah is evidence of his attempt to provide a general epistemological typology of all branches of knowledge, from al-'ulūm al-'aqliyyah to al-'ulūm al-naqliyyah (Ṣafā (1959—85), 3: 1.239). Khwājah Naṣīr had a thorough knowledge of Persian and Arabic and wrote all his major works in these two languages. But there are also indications that he knew Turkish (Mudarris Raḍawī (1955): 196). As a prominent philosopher/vizier, he corresponded widely with the most distinguished philosophers, theologians, mystics and men of knowledge. The texts of these letters have

mostly been preserved. The range and depth of his knowledge are legendary and, in fact, have given rise to many anecdotes about his unusual erudition. Tunikābunī, for example, reports that Quṭb aI-Dīn Shiraz! once noticed that Khwājah Naṣīr disguised himself as a student and attended his classes. He decided to humiliate Khwājah Naṣīr in front of all the students by forcing him to discuss a subject of which he was sure Khwājah Naṣīr had no knowledge. He gave a lecture on Ibn Sin as treatise on pulse and took a number of exceptions to it, and then asked Khwājah Naṣīr to repeat his lecture. Khwājah Naṣīr asked, "Should I repeat your mistakes or what is right?" And he proceeded to give a full exposition of Ibn Sīnās text and a critique of Quṭb aI-Dīn al-Shirazi's lecture, thus demonstrating his knowledge of medicine (Tunikabun! (1985): 373). Quṭb aI-Dīn ShiRāzī is reported to have arisen and given Khwājah Naṣīr his teaching chair.

Khwājah Naṣīr's simultaneous attention to both philosophy and the sciences, as well as his concurrent mastery of theology, dogmatics and mysticism, leads us to believe that

nothing short of a full and comprehensive knowledge of whatever there was to know was his constant concern. It is rather remarkable that he produced at least nineteen treatises on mathematics (Ṣafā (1956–85), 3: 1.13—20) as well as an equal number of books and treatises on dogmatic theology. Yet the Persian philosopher/vizier produced all these and many other works while heading a vast administrative apparatus in charge of an empire.

Writings in Persian

Although the majority of Khwājah Naṣīr's writings are in Arabic, a significant number were written in his mother-tongue, Persian. An important by-product of his writings is his contribution to the development of a rich Persian philosophical discourse (Bahar (1952), 3: 156—65; Ṣafā (1956–85), 3: 2.1203–5; Browne (1906), 2: 485–6; Rypka (1968): 313—14). His writings on logic, for example, were particularly consequential in enriching the Persian logical terminologies. His major work in logic, Aslis al-iqtibas, was writen in Persian, and in it he gave a full Aristotelian account of logical categories. His writings in Persian not only established this language on solid ground for philosophical discourse, they also encouraged others, notably his students and contemporaries, to write in Persian. Quṭb aI-Dīn al-Shirazi, Khwājah Naṣīr's most distinguished student/colleague, wrote his Durrah al-tdj in Persian. This encyclopedic summary of philosophical and theological topics made a major contribution to the further expansion of Persian technical vocabularies. The seventh/thirteenth

century, in which Khwājah Naṣīr produced his major prose works, was a particularly prolific period in the flourishing of philosophical Persian prose (Khatlbi (1956): 21; Mu'in (1956): 30). Khwajah NasTr is believed to have made a major contribution to the development of technical Persian prose during this period (Khatlbi (1956): 21; Muin (1956): 30). Of more than one hundred books and treatises attributed to him, close to 25 per cent are in Persian. Nothing more needs to be said about his contribution to the development of philosophical prose in Persian. Ibn Sīnās brief, however groundbreaking, attempt in the fifth/eleventh century to produce a bona fide Persian philosophical prose, evident in his Danish-ndmah (Ibn Slna 1974abc), had left much to be desired. In both the quantity and quality of his Persian philosophical prose, Khwājah Naṣīr advanced the technical possibilities of this language to unprecedented degrees and thus significantly contributed to making Persian the second (after Arabic) most important language of the Islamic intellectual world.

In theoretical and practical philosophy, astronomy, mathematics, natural sciences, dogmatics, occult sciences, poetics, prosody, history, geography and Ismailism, Khwājah Naṣīr produced a range of influential texts in Persian (Mu'In (1956): 30—3), which forced non-Persian speakers interested in Islamic philosophy and sciences to learn the Persian vizier's mother-tongue. A remarkable aspect of Khwājah Naṣīr's Persian philosophical prose is that instead of coining Persian words to correspond to Arabic technical terminologies, like Ibn Slna, he, in effect, persianized the Arabic prose by assimilating it into an eloquent and fluent Persian diction following the model of Suhrawardi (Mu'in (1956): 33). His As as al-iqtibds in logic, his Akhlāq-i nasin

in ethics, his /ij-i ilkhdni in astronomy, his Risdlah dar hisdb in mathematics, his MVyar al-ash'dr in poetics and prosody, his brief addition to al-Juwayni's Tdrikh-i Jahdngiishd and his Awṣāf al-ashrāf in ethics, among many other books and treatises, are models of graceful and eloquent Persian prose.

The Great Centres of Learning

Khwājah Naṣīr's massive contribution to medieval Islamic philosophy, in both Arabic and Persian, must be understood in the context of the social and intellectual history of his times. The Mongol invasion of Islamic lands in the seventh/ thirteenth century was a landmark in an intellectual history which by then had already produced and legitimated its major paradigmatic discourses. Despite the massive material devastation that the invasion caused, the enduring patterns of intellectual engagements survived and, in some respects, even flourished. From the remaining works of Rashid aI-Dīn Fadl Allāh we can deduce (Minuwi (1955): 7—10) that Hūlāgū's conquest of medieval Persia was concomitant with remarkable activity in philosophical and scientific learning. Although many Muslim
historians of the time lamented the destruction of the institutional bases of scholastic learning (Ṣafā (1959–85), 3: 1.206—7), the fact still remains that the rise of luminaries of Islamic philosophy such as Khwajah NasTr in the seven th/ thirteenth century testifies to a certain degree of intellectual continuity between the pre- and post-Mongol periods.

Even the most important institutional bases of higher learning continued to function and flourish after the invasion. In 670/1271, the Nizamiyyah of Baghdad was renovated by 'Ata Malik al-juwaynT. In 727/1325, Ibn Battutah visited this school and admired its prosperity (Ibn Battutah (1969), 1: 242). The Mustansariyyah of Baghdad was also renovated in 668/1269 by 'Ata Malik al-Juwayni. There were other, less famous, schools in Baghdad, such as Madrasah Sharabiyyah (established in 628/1230 by Iqbal al-Sharabl), Madrasah Mujahidiyyah (established in 637/1239 by Mujahid aI-Dīn Atabak), Madrasah Bashiriyyah (established in 653/1255 by one of al-Mustansir's slaves) and Madrasah 'Ismatiyyah (established in 671/1272 by 'Ata Malik al-Juwayni's wife) (see Huma'i (1984): 42). Closer to Khwājah Naṣīr's homeland, Ibn Battutah reports the existence and active operation of a number of scholastic centres in Shushtar, Nishapur and Mashhad (Ibn Battutah (1969), 1: etpassim). In 640/1242, Mangu Qa'an's mother established a school in Bukhara. The mausoleums of the Great Mongol warlords were also transformed into important and opulent centres of learning. We also know of "mobile schools", one of them associated with the army camp of Sultan Muhammad Khudabandah. The library of this school was carried on mules and other animals (Ṣafā (1959—85), 3: 1.207–15).

Although these institutions of higher learning were by and large devoted to the study of one school of Islamic law or another, and philosophy, as such, was not taught there, still their existence indicates a thriving intellectual climate in which any other mode of scholastic learning was, if not condoned, then at least possible. The great urban centres of learning in the seventh/thirteenth century included Baghdad, Shiraz, Nishapur, Kirman and Tabriz. Added to these

cosmopolitan centres of higher learning in the seventh/ thirteenth century was Marāghah, where a thriving atmosphere of intellectual engagement was created around its famous observatory, thanks to Khwājah Naṣīr, who invited the leading scholars of his time to that centre. Immediately related to these varied institutions of higher learning is an abundance of "textbooks" in any number of disciplines. Titles such as mukhtasar ("summary") and tajrid ("principles"), of which Khwājah Naṣīr has a number in his oeuvre, indicate the transformation of a debating discourse into an established pedagogical one. These transformations simultaneously consolidated earlier philosophical reflections into doctrinal positions. Khwājah Naṣīr's Sharḥ al-ishārāt, Tahrir al-majisti and Tahrir al-uqlidus fall into this

category. The consolidation of enduring philosophical issues into principles of doctrinal beliefs is also evident in a decree issued in 645/1247 by the caliph, in which the professors at Mustansariyyah were prohibited from teaching their own texts. They had, according to this caliphal decree, to use only the canonical sources of the masters (Safa: 236—7).

The Marāghah Observatory

As historians of exact sciences have noted (Kennedy (1968): 672), "the installations at Marāghah set up by NasTr al-DTn under the patronage of Hūlāgū can be called the first astronomical observatory in the full sense of the term". According to RashTd al-DTn Fadl Allāh, when Hūlāgū came to Persia, he brought with him a group of Chinese philosophers, physicians and astronomers (Jahn (1971): 21—2). He instructed Khwajah NasTr to incorporate the

Chinese astrological knowledge into his before he prepared the famous Zij-i llkhdm. According to RashTd aI-Dīn, Khwajah NasTr learned everything that the Chinese scholar knew in two days (Jahn (1971): 21–2; and Tafel 2 of the "Persische Version aus der Bibliothek des Topkapi Sirayi", Hazine, Nr 1653).

In 658/1259, the observatory began to function as a major scientific centre under Khwājah Naṣīr's directorship (SayilT (1956): 58). "The professional staff included about twenty well-known scientists drawn from many parts of the Islamic world, and at least one Chinese mathematician" (Kennedy (1968): 672). The Marāghah Observatory thus became one of the greatest centres of higher learning during this period, a centre which was of Khwājah Naṣīr's own making. The observatory, built and operated under Khwajah NasTr's authority, was a remarkable institution dedicated not just to astronomical but especially to mathematical and philosophical learning (SayilT (1956): 58—9). Scholars and students from all over the Islamic lands gathered there to engage in scientific and philosophical studies. Khwājah Naṣīr's reputation in mathematical and astronomical studies preceded the Mongol invasion of Iran. ManguQa'an, Elulagu's brother, had originally asked his brother to send Khwajah NasTr to Mongolia to establish an observatory there (Rashid aI-Dīn Fadl Allāh (1959), 2: 718; Mudarris Raḍawī (1955): 27; SayilT (1956): 58), but, following Hūlāgū's victory over the Isma'llls, the Mongol warlord decided to keep the Persian astronomer with him. In 657/1258, Khwajah NasTr was given full authority and financial resources by Hūlāgū to build the Marāghah Observatory. Having full control over religious endowments under Hūlāgū's authority, Khwājah Naṣīr, in effect, turned the Marāghah Observatory into a cosmopolitan

centre of research and education in a range of intellectual disciplines, from philosophy to mathematics and astronomy. Although Hūlāgū's interest in the Marāghah Observatory could not have gone much beyond astrological inquiries into the proper time of doing any number of activities, the functions of the centre far exceeded those limited objectives.

Khwājah Naṣīr persuaded Hūlāgū to build the observatory in Marāghah patently to inform the Mongol warlord of astrological events affecting his future. With the financial resources at his disposal, Khwājah Naṣīr hired a local architect, Fakhr aI-Dīn Ahmad ibn 'Uthman Amin al-Maraghl, to build the observatory. Hūlāgū had ordered the finances of the observatory to be arranged through the religious endowments (Sayili: 61). At Khwājah Naṣīr's invitation, scientists from Damascus, Mawsil, Baghdad, Tiblisi, Qazvin, and Shiraz joined him in Marāghah. Construction of the observatory began in 657/1258 and was completed in 660/1261 (Mudarris Raḍawī (1955): 28). Having convinced Hūlāgū to build this observatory, Khwājah Naṣīr also recorded his concern that observation and preparation of astronomical charts (rasad) would take at least thirty years if not more, while the Mongol patron was impatient and had ordered him to finish them in twelve (ibid.: 29). Khwājah Naṣīr then proceeded by taking advantage of previous astronomical charts in order to construct his own.

Adjacent to the observatory, Khwājah Naṣīr built a library that, according to some reports (Mudarris Raḍawī (1955): 31), contained some forty thousand volumes, a good number of which were, in fact, taken from libraries in Baghdad, Damascus and Mawsil. He also dispatched couriers to other parts of the Muslim world to procure and send books as well

as various tools for astronomical observations. During his own trips he collected books and instruments for the Marāghah Observatory library. The observatory was financed entirely by the proceedings of the religious endowments under Hūlāgū's control. Khwājah Naṣīr was personally in charge of collecting one-tenth of these proceedings and spending the money as he saw fit on financing the construction, collecting the library and paying the salaries of the scientists who worked in the observatory (ibid.: 32).

It is suggested (Sayili (1956): 61) that Khwājah Naṣīr's unprecedented way of having the Marāghah Observatory financed by religious endowments established a norm that was followed by many subsequent scientific institutions. If the report was true that some ten per cent of the proceedings of the religious endowments was dedicated to the Marāghah Observatory – or more realistically to all scientific institutions (ibid.: 62) – this would indicate a remarkable way of institutionalizing scientific research that was relatively immune from the whimsical vicissitudes of the political and religious authorities. The solid financial foundation of the Marāghah Observatory was instrumental in its long historical endurance, as well as its character not only as a research but also as a teaching institution (ibid.: 65). The course of study was not
limited to astronomy but included mathematical and other related sciences. Both Hūlágū and Khwajah NasTr died before the astronomical observations of Marāghah could be completed. But for years the observatory functioned as a central institution of mathematical and astronomical (and then, by extension, philosophical) studies.

The significance of the Marāghah Observatory and the scientific research carried out there under the general directorship of Khwajah NasTr is just beginning to be acknowledged (Saliba (1987): 370). Particularly in the field of astronomy, the role of the observatory has now been recognized as "a scientific revolution before the renaissance" (ibid.: 361). Based on scientific research carried out during the preceding two or three centuries, the group of scientists who gathered in north-western Persia in the seventh/thirteenth century launched what has now been recognized as "the Marāghah School Revolution" [ibid.: 366) in Ptolemaic astronomy. Fundamental theoretical and methodological changes were made in Ptolemaic astronomy by this group of scientists that Khwajah NasTr brought together in Marāghah (Nasr 1976a; Saliba 1987).

The Exact Sciences

As the head of the Marāghah Observatory, Khwajah NasTr himself contributed heavily to all branches of "exact sciences" directly related to astronomy. His Kitdb shikl al-cjitdcompleted in 658/1260 (Kennedy (1968): 666—7), is a landmark in mathematics, trigonometry and computational mathematics. This text has been credited as "the first treatment of trigonometry … as such" (ibid.: 667). Flistorians of science also maintain that "until the work of NasTr al-DTn, trigonometric techniques were closely associated with problems in spherical astronomy. This did not cease in his time or later, but his book makes no reference to astronomy and marks the emergence of trigonometry as a branch of pure mathematics" (ibid.). In other related areas, Khwajah NasTr's

contribution is equally recognized: "The apogee of Islamic work in computational mathematics did not occur until the TTmurld period, but steady progress in the field was maintained during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. As an illustration we cite the table of the tangent function which appears in the Zij-i Tlkhdini turned out at NasTr al-Dln's Marāghah observatory" (ibid.)

Khwajah NasTr's trigonometrical work on the complete quadrilateral is also distinguished in the history of mathematics for having "demonstrated the commutative property of multiplication between pairs of ratios (i.e., real numbers)" (Kennedy (1968): 664). But perhaps Khwajah NasTr's greatest contribution to exact sciences is his works on astronomy and, in particular, planetary theory. As a historian of science has noted, "until
Il-Khanid times no one seems to have produced a model capable of competing with Ptolemy's in terms of accuracy, and which would at the same time involve only uniform circular motions. Such a development was, however, inaugurated by NasTr al-DTn TusT and carried through by associates of his at Marāghah observatory" (ibid.: 669). The development of the so-called "Tusl-couple" in the history of planetary theory is a mark of Khwajah NasTr's achievement. Khwajah NasTr "seems to have been the first to notice that if one circle rolls around inside the circumference of another, the second circle having twice the radius of the first, then any point on the periphery of the first circle describes a diameter of the second. This ruling device can also be regarded as a linkage of two equal and constant length vectors rotating at constant speed (one twice as fast as the other), and hence has been called a Tiisi-Couple" (ibid.). The astronomical studies carried out in Marāghah institutionalized Khwajah NasTr's

scientific achievements beyond the immediate vicinity. Quṭb al-DTn Shīrazī, Khwajah NasTr's student/associate in Marāghah, "long after he had left Marāghah … produced [a planetary] configuration [which] satisfies all the conditions demanded by Ptolemy for the orbit of Mercury, and as such probably marks the apex of the techniques developed by the Marāghah School" (ibid.).

Khwajah NasTr's masterpiece, the Zij-i ilkhdm, originally written in Persian, was translated into Arabic, a phenomenal event in and of itself, considerably modifying the primacy of Arabic as the scientific language of the medieval Muslim world. The scientific research carried out in Marāghah under Khwajah NasTr was also exported, translated and copied by scholars in the Byzantine Empire, China and India (Kennedy (1968): 678). It had great significance not only for later scientific thought but for philosophy as well.

The General Condition of Philosophy

Beyond specific advancements in various fields of the "exact sciences", an unanticipated consequence of the Mongol invasion in the seventh/ thirteenth century was a more advantageous position for philosophical inquiry unhindered by theological dogmatism. The decline of the central political authority equally weakened the position of the juridical establishment and, in turn, gave a freer domain to philosophical investigation. But the innate hostility of the mystical discourse to the rationalistic dimension of

philosophy continued relentlessly. Sayf al-DTn Muhammad FarghanT, the seventh/thirteenth—eighth/fourteenth-century Sufi poet, captured the essence of his generation's anti-philosophical sentiments:

O thou the nightingale in the garden of reason! Sweet-talking parrot of reason!

Upon thee the reign of reason!

In thy hands the reign of reason!

The barber of thy logic hath Admired the women of reason….

Love! the delicate face of the law Scratch thee not with the nails of reason.

Thou thinkst that of truth there is A marrow to the bone of reason.

But upon the Table of Wisdom is So tasteless the bread of reason….

Upon the sacred realm thou shall not Reach from the ladder of reason.

There the strong rope of faith, why Are thee tied to the thread of reason?

Describe the Muhammadan speech!

How long would you describe the reason?

Walk on the highway of Muhammad's path Not on the bandits of reason….

Make thy heart's ear deaf to

The language of Ibn Sīnās reason….

(Ṣafā (1959–85), 3: 1.233–5)

The condemnation of philosophy in this period was not limited to the Sufis. Even Ibn Khaldun considered engagement in philosophical matters a waste of time, particularly because "[T]he harm they can do to religion is great" (Ibn Khaldun (1958) 3: 246). All these oppositions to philosophical inquiries are still to be understood in light of the fact that Islamic philosophy was irrevocably connected to the metaphysical doctrines of the faith and their logical validities were never seriously questioned. The catalytic effect of philosophy on both religious dogmatics and Sufism was such that, even when under fire from its historical opponents, philosophy had still triumphed in establishing the level, nature and organization of intellectual discourse. The systematization of juridical, theological and even mystical doctrines in the seventh/thirteenth century was influenced considerably by their inevitable proximity to the philosophical discourse. The systemization of the principles of jurisprudence by Qadl al-Baydawi (d. 685/1286) and 'Allamah al-Hilli (648/1250—726/ 1325), the codification of Shl'l law by Muhaqqiq al-Hilli (602/1205— 676/1277) and the consolidation of Sufi doctrines by Muhyl aI-Dīn ibn 'Arabl (d. 638/1240) all owed the underlying force of their discourse to the long tradition of philosophical problematics with which they relentlessly took issue.

Perhaps the most significant feature of philosophy in the seventh/ thirteenth century is the consolidation of the Ibn Slnan philosophy through Khwājah Naṣīr's extremely influential commentary. He resuscitated and re-systematized Ibn Slnan philosophy, as he did any number of other sub-disciplines, in an effective and enduring discourse that perpetuated the ideas of the master of Islamic Peripatetic philosophy for generations to come. The circulation of philosophical texts was limited to a close hermeneutic circle of trusted affiliates. Unless Sadr aI-Dīn Qunawl had sent his book to Khwājah Naṣīr, the distinguished philosopher/vizier would not have had a personal copy of it (al-Ṭūsī (i966): 166). Or Khwājah Naṣīr himself wrote his ethical treatise Agbdz wa tinjiim following the personal appeal of one of his close students/followers (al-Ṭūsī (1987): 1).

Khwājah Naṣīr's Philosophy

It was under such circumstances that Khwājah Naṣīr produced his influential works on philosophy. He was the most distinguished representative of Peripatetic philosophy following the Mongol invasion while being at the same time well acquainted with ishrdqi doctrines. His principal achievement was the consolidation of Ibn Sinan philosophy against considerable hostility, launched chiefly by such mystically oriented poets as Sayf al-Faraqani, who, in referring to Ibn Sīnās al-Ishārāt wa'Ttanbihat, believed that

The good tidings of the Righteous did not reach

The person who followed Ibn Sīnā's Ishārāt.

Sharh Al-Ishārāt

Perhaps the most significant philosophical text of Khwājah Naṣīr in defence of the Ibn Sinan Peripatetic tradition is his commentary on al- hhiiriit wal-tanbīhdt, one of the last works, if not the last (Malikshàhī in Ibn Slna (1984): 7, 21; Mahmūd (1985): 382; Saliba (1986): 215), of Ibn Sina. The text is a concise treatise on philosophy, but perhaps the most remarkable aspect of al-Ishārāt is its last three chapters, in which "the Master of Peripatetic Philosophy" discusses aspects of Islamic mysticism. Imam Fakhr al-Rāzī (d. 606/ 1209), who wrote one of the most critical commentaries on al-Ishārāt, could not help but praise this section as the best systematization of Sufism ever composed (Malikshàhī in Ibn Sīnā (1984): 7).

After a preliminary section on logic, al-Isharat wai-tanbihat is divided into three sections on physics, metaphysics and mysticism. The first section consists of three chapters on the physical world and the epistemological possibilities of understanding it. The second section consists of four chapters on the metaphysics of being. The final, third, section, consists of three chapters on "Bliss and Happiness", "The Stations of the Mystics" and finally "The Secrets of the Divine Manifestations", which is an explanation of extraordinary events such as abstinence from food by the mystics, etc.

Ibn Sīnās al-Ishārāt wal-lanbihdt is an exceptionally rich philosophical text which he wrote later in his life; and it

represents his philosophical statements at their maturest stage. Although it initially follows the standard Peripatetic divisions of his own works into logic, physics and metaphysics, it concludes with an excursion into an "Illuminationist" discourse in which mystical and other "non-rational" phenomena are discussed (Fakhry (1983): 160). The appeal of this seminal text to Islamic philosophers ought to be seen precisely in its attempt to link principles of Peripatetic philosophy, with their firm foundations in Aristotelian logic, through an adaptation of Neoplatonic doctrines, to reflections on intuitive knowledge that permit the possibility of both a revelatory language and a prophetic intermediary – the two chief requirements of philosophical engagements in an Islamic context. Ibn Sīnā arrives at the possibility of intuitive knowledge as a form superior, or at least complementary, to the discursive. The agency of intuitive knowledge is the active intellect, to whose power the lower faculties of memory, imagination and conception yield. Through the agency of active intellect, the soul surpasses the realm of generation and decay, touches the source of illumination or ishrdq, and reaches the full recognition of the First Principle. "The active intellect as an emanation from this first principle serves in this process simply as a subordinate link in the chain of being, linking man to his Maker and God" (Fakhry: 162).

As the progression of chapters and sections in al-Ishārāt wa l-tanlnhdt indicates, Ibn Sīnā advances from the world of the visible to that of the invisible in an attempt to reach for a universal understanding of being. The concluding chapters on mysticism are to be seen as an attempt by the master Peripatetic philosopher to incorporate a form of knowledge generated and sustained as legitimate by generations of Muslim mystics. By the fifth/eleventh century, no serious

Muslim philosopher could have reached for a universal statement on being, and the understanding of it, without incorporating the theoretical dimensions of mysticism as a bona fide mode of cognition and perception.

The progression of sections from physics to metaphysics or vice versa is a critical ontological issue in Ibn Sinan texts. Whereas in al-Ishārāt
wa l-tanbihat Ibn Slna first discusses physics and then metaphysics, in the Ddnish-ndmah-yi 'ald'i he reverses the order and first introduces metaphysics and then discusses physics. In his introduction to the section on logic of the Ddnish-ndmah, he asserts that "I have thus decided that once the section of logic is concluded, I shall proceed to begin with the First Science ('ilm-i barin = metaphysics] and gradually reach for the lower (secondary) sciences ('ilmhd-yi ziriri), contrary to what is habitual and customary" (Ibn Slna (1974a): 4). Since, in both physics and metaphysics, Ibn Slna s primary concerns are both epistemological and ontological, the progression from metaphysics to physics would postulate the primacy of Being as such over specific cases of being, while the progression from physics to metaphysics suggests the specificity of physical beings as case studies of the metaphysical Being, which is the highest and most irreducible condition to be understood. As Khwājah Naṣīr would later indicate in his commentary on Ibn Slna's al-Ishardt wa'l-tanbihdt, while the understanding of physical beings is achieved through our sense perceptions (aTmahsusdi), the understanding of the metaphysical Being is attained through acts of intellection (, al-maqillat) (see Malikshahl in Ibn Slna: 22).

As is quite evident from Ibn Slna's concluding remarks in al-Ishārāt wa l-tanbihat, he had intended this text to be read by a philosophical elite. "O Brother", Ibn Sīnā states,

in this al-Ishārat, I have prepared for you the most noble Truth…. Thus protect it from the ignorant people, and the vulgar, and those who have not been given an intelligent disposition, and the cowardly who side with the populace, or those unbelievers who pretend to be philosophers…. But if you find a righteous and good-natured person, with moral rectitude, cautious in what temptation propels [us] to [think or do], observant of the Truth with absolute contentment and veracity, then give him what he asks from this book in gradation, piece by piece, using your discretion - so that every preceding piece encourages him to take what is to come next. Then swear him by God and by [his] faith not to transgress and follow your commitment and be like you [in transmitting this text to others]. God will judge between you and me if you disseminate or corrupt this knowledge. And God is Sufficient in delegating Judgment.

(Ibn Slna ('1984): 492)

Despite Ibn Sīnās warnings and caution, al-Ishārāt wa'l-tanbihdt became an exceedingly successful text and many commentaries were written on it. But the two most famous and influential commentaries were written in succession by Imam Fakhr al-Dln Muhammad ibn 'Umar al-Rāzī (d. 606/1209) and Khwājah Naṣīr.

Imam Fakhr al-Dln al-RazI, an Ash'arite theologian, had written his critical commentary on Ibn Slna's al-Ishārāt wa'l-tanbihdt towards the end of the sixth/twelfth century. In

644/1246 Khwājah Naṣīr completed his commentary on the treatise in which he answered, among other things, all the major objections raised by Imam Fakhr, calling his treatise a "diatribe not a commentary" (Fakhry (1983): 310). There thus developed a significant hermeneutic nexus between Ibn Slna's al-Ishārāt wa'l-tanbihdt and the two successive commentaries of Imam Fakhr and Khwājah Naṣīr that for generations preoccupied Islamic philosophers. A century after Khwājah Naṣīr, his principal student, ʿAllamah Quṭb al-Dln al-Shīrazī (d. 710/1310), encouraged Quṭb al-Dln al-Rāzī (d. 766/1364) to write al-rnuhdkimdt bayn sharh al-ishardt, completed in 755/1373, in which the judgments of the two commentators were composed, contrasted and evaluated. Later on, other commentators in turn reflected on al-Razi's own judgment (Ṣafā (1959—85), 3: 1.253–4). More contemporary philosophers of Khwājah Naṣīr's era were equally encouraged and influenced by his commentary on Ibn Slna and wrote their own exegeses on al-Ishdrat wa'l-tanbihdt. Among these are the commentaries of Burhan al-Dln Muhammad Nasafl, Saraj al-Dln Urmawl, and Ibn Kammunah.

It has been said of Khwājah Naṣīr's commentary on Ibn Slna that it is

a remarkable achievement in precision, veracity and resolution of difficult passages. [Khwājah Naṣīr] was particularly [remarkable] in the beauty of his diction, and this is something to which [his] predecessors did not pay that much attention. They have primarily paid attention to the content. Yet the Khwajah adopted a particular dictum in writing that would make comprehension of the content easy.

There is no trace of unnecessary concepts or difficult words in his diction.

(Ṣafā (1959–85), 3: 1.254)

In Sharḥ al-ishārāt, Khwājah Naṣīr's principal concern is to elucidate Ibn Slna's philosophical positions and to defend them against Imam Fakhr al-Razl's criticisms. Occasionally he does take issue with Ibn Slna and prefers the position of Suhrawardl or Abu'l-Barakat al-Baghdadl. More generally, some ten points of divergence have been identified (Mudarris Raḍawī (1955): 185—95) between Ibn Slna and Khwājah Naṣīr: they concern the nature of God's knowledge, the number of principal spheres, the reality of place, the createdness and preeternity of the physical world, the independent existence of the intellect, acquisitive and theoretical knowledge, the nature of the body, the possibility of repentance, the nature of divine punishment and finally the nature of faith.

Fakhr al-Dln al-Razi's assault against Ibn Sīnās al-Isharat wa'l- tanbihdt was launched from an essentially Ash'arite theological position. Al-Rāzī maintains that the doctrinal principles of the faith can be "proved" theologically without any substantial need for philosophy. While Khwājah Naṣīr praises Fakhr al-Dln al-Razi's rhetorical act of disputation, he believes that al-Rāzī greatly exaggerates his criticism, "and the limit of moderation has been transgressed in the criticism of his [Ibn Slna's] principles. Thus, despite all his endeavours, [Fakhr aI-Dīn al-Razi] has done nothing but slander, and that is why some shrewd observers have called his 'commentary' [sharh] a 'diatribe' [jarh " (as quoted by Malikshahl in Ibn Slna (1984): 30).

Khwājah Naṣīr's commentary on al-Ishārāt wa'l-tanbihdt commences with lofty praise for the significance of theoretical philosophy. The significance of such early philosophers as Ibn Sīnā in having established the foundations of philosophical discourse is matched by that of the later philosophers in explicating and summarizing their original ideas for others (al-Ṭūsī (1983), 1: 2). Ibn Slna's al-Ishdrat wa'l-tanbihdt is, as its title ("Allusions and Indications") implies, particularly condensed and concise, much in need of explanatory commentary. It includes "allusions to extremely important issues, filled with references to crucial questions, full of jewels like bezels, words most of which are canonical. It contains miraculous statements in concise phrases, solid assertions in exciting words, to understand their far-reaching meanings great efforts have had to be made, and yet high hopes have fallen short of grasping its fullest depths" (as quoted by Malikshahl in Ibn Sīnā (1984): 31).

Khwājah Naṣīr's commentary on Ibn Slna's al-Ishārāt wa'l-tanbihdt, which he wrote at the insistence of the Ismaili prince, Muhtasham Shahab al-Dln Abu'l-Fath al-Mansur (Malikshahl in Ibn Slna (1984): 32), was intended primarily as an explanatory exegesis on Peripatetic philosophy, rather than an exposition of his own ideas on the subject. He is primarily interested in saving the Ibn Slnan text from Imam Fakhr al-Razi's attack (Mudarris RadawT (1975): 433). He has intervened only "two or three times" (ibid.) with his own ideas. The sources of his commentary, as he indicates in his own introduction, are Imam Fakhr al-Razi's commentary, as well as a number of other (written and oral) exegetical works on Ibn Slna's text. Khwājah Naṣīr deliberately commits himself not to criticize Ibn Sīnā in matters he finds objectionable but to stick relentlessly to an explanatory

discourse, "because I believe that 'commentary' [al-taqrir is different from 'refutation' [al- radd and 'exegesis' [al-tafsir] separate from a critique [al-naqd " (al-Ṭūsī (1983), 1: 2).

As is evident from the conclusion of his commentary on al-Ishdrat wa'l-tanbihdt, Khwājah Naṣīr wrote this explanatory text in defence of Ibn Slna's philosophical discourse under severe personal pressure. His
residence with the Ismā'īlī princes had apparently become intolerable. "I wrote most of this book, " Khwājah Naṣīr writes at the end of his commentary,

in a difficult condition more difficult than which is not possible …, in a time every portion of which was an occasion for sorrow and unbearable difficulty, remorse and great sadness. Every moment I dwelled in a hellish fire … no time passed without my eyes in tears, my condition distressed. I did not have a moment without my sorrows increased, my hardship and sadness intensified. Indeed, as the poet says in Persian:

As far as I can see around me,

Calamity is a ring and I its bezel….

God Almighty! By your chosen Prophet and his successor [All] al-Murtada, rescue me from the hardship ol the onslaught of calamity and the intensity of the waves of hardship! Save me from that in which is my calamity! God, there is only Thou and Thou art the most compassionate of all!"

(al-Ṭūsī (1983), 2: 145)

Khwājah Naṣīr's commentary on al-Ishdrat wa Ttanblhdt was itself the subject of many subsequent commentaries by Allamah al-Hilll (d. 726/1325), Quṭb al-Dln Muhammad al-Rāzī (d. 766/1364), Zahir al-Dln Husayn al-Hamadanl (d. 1066/1655), and Aqa Husayn Khwansarl (d. 1099/1687), among others (Mudarris Raḍawī (1975): 434—5).

A "Visionary Recital"

A representative passage in Khwājah Naṣīr's Sharḥ al-ishārāt is his discussion of an Ibn Slnan "visionary recital" is called Saldmdn and Absdl (al-Tusl (1983), 2: 101—4). "Visionary Recitals" is a generic title that Henry Corbin has given to a general symbolic literature in Persian and Arabic that includes Ibn Sīnā'ss Ilayy ibn Yaqzdn, The Bird and Saldmdn and Absdl (Corbin 1980). It is with the last recital that the name of Khwājah Naṣīr is also associated. There are two treatises with the title of Saldmdn and Absdl in Islamic symbolic literature: one is a translation from a Greek original by Hunayn ibn Ishaq (d. 260/873); and the other is by Ibn Slna. The Ibn Sinan version we have only through its abridgement and commentary by Khwājah Naṣīr. Some twenty years after he finished his commentary on Ibn Sīnā'ss Ishārāt (al-Ṭūsī (1983), 2: 102; Corbin (1980): 205), Khwājah Naṣīr accidentally found this treatise of Ibn Slna's. He included a summary and a commentary of this treatise in his commentary on Ibn Slna's Ishārāt (al-Ṭūsī (1983), 2: 101—4). That the recital is actually Ibn Slna's is evident by his own reference in the Ishārāt (Ibn Slna (1981): 172) and by Khwājah Naṣīr's attribution of it (al-Ṭūsī (1983), 2: 101). Whereas, in an

earlier commentary, Fakhr al-Dln Rāzī took Salaman for Adam and Absal for Paradise (ibid.: 101–2), Khwājah Naṣīr modified this view and took Salaman for the mystical seeker, or tdlib, and Absal for the mystical object of desire, or matlub. Thus both medieval and modern (Corbin (1980): 208; Purnamdarian (1985): 170, 310, 311, 349, 361) commentators of Salaman and Absal have taken it as a mystical commentary particularly useful for deciphering the latter part of Ibn Slna's al-Ishdrat, where he discusses "the stations of the gnostics".

In Khwājah Naṣīr's broad outline, Salaman and Absal are two brothers. Salaman is the king and Absal his handsome, erudite and devoted brother. Salaman's wife is madly in love with Absal. When all her designs to have Absal fail, she has her servants poison him. Absal dies, and Salaman punishes his wife and her servants by forcing them to drink from the same poison. Even in this broad outline, there are powerful elements of a brilliant drama in the story of Salaman and Absal. That it has been relentlessly subjected to vigorous mystical readings, most recently and comprehensively by Henry Corbin (1980: 226^41) and Purnamdarian (1985: 300^7), does not exhaust the story of its direct and powerful dramatic effects. Khwājah Naṣīr's brisk identification of Salaman with "the rational soul" or "the speaking soul", Absal with "the theoretical intellect" and Salaman's wife with "bodily power which induces man to lust and anger", etc. are all artificial, without any inner-textual anchorage, and as such remain at a perfunctory and conventional level. There is no innate or integral reason to the story to force it to be thus decoded. As it stands in its direct, passionate, and relentlessly physical narrative, Salaman and Absal is in no need of mystical interpretation. Corbin's equally perfunctory codification of the story in mystical terms fails to be in any

significant way convincing or insightful for those not attracted to the symbolic significance of the text. Both Khwājah Naṣīr's and Corbin's mystical readings demand a long leap of faith from the reader which is by no stretch of the imagination evident or warranted in the external meaning of the text itself. As it stands, Khwājah Naṣīr's rendition of Ibn Sīnā'ss Salaman and Absal operates at a particularly powerful level of physical narrative. Salaman's gullible simplicity in letting his aggressive and mischievous wife connive to have her brother-in-law is particularly pronounced next to the sincere and innocent nobility of Absal. Despite all temptations, Absal remains loyal to his brother, resists all the advances of his sister-in-law, and ultimately pays with his life. But perhaps the strongest and most powerful character in this story is Salaman's wife who, unfortunately, lacks a name. Even so, she abounds in character, will, determination and wit. The two brothers are inveterate weaklings

compared to her. She is determined, unfaltering, wilful, aggressive and conniving in the most positive and life-affirming sense of the terms. The ménage 'a trois thus created, excluding Salàmàn's wife's sister (who also does not have a name), sustains a powerful, passionate and relentlessly physical sense of reality with its own brilliance and vigour irrespective of whatever mystical meaning is given to it.

Other Philosophical Texts

Khwājah Naṣīr's philosophical texts - aside from Sharh al-ishàràt— include Aqsdm al-hikmah, Baqa al-nafs, Jabr wa ikhtiydr, Rabt al-bddith bi'l- qadim, Rawdah al-qulub, Akhlāq-i muhtmhami, Akhlāq-i ndsiri, Sharh-i ithbat-i 'aql,

al-Éal wal-maliildt, al-Ilm al-iktisdbi, Kayfiyydt al-sudiir al-mawjiiddt and his correspondence with Najm al-Dln Dabiran (d.' 675/1276). '

Logic

Perhaps Khwājah Naṣīr's most significant contribution to seventh/thir- teenth-century intellectual history is his writings on logic. His major work in logic is Asds al-iqtibds, which he finished in 642/1244 (Mudarris Raḍawī: 240). Asds al-iqtibds (al-Ṭūsī 1947) contains nine chapters: "Isagoge", "The Ten Categories", "Hermeneutics", "Prior Analytics: Deduction", "Posterior Analytics: Proof", "Dialectics", "Sophistics", "Rhetorics" and "Poetics". The book was originally written in Persian; and a contemporary of Khwājah Naṣīr, a certain Rukn al-Dln Muhammad ibn All al-Fàrsi al-Astarabadl, translated it into Arabic (the same person also translated Khwājah Naṣīr's Awsdf aTashrdf from Persian to Arabic). Khwājah Naṣīr has a number of other shorter and less sophisticated treatises on logic. Among them is Tajrid al-manti, q (al-Ṭūsī 1988), which he wrote in Arabic (Mudarris Raḍawī (1955): 241). Allamah Hilll wrote a commentary on this text.

On the significance of Asds al-iqtibds it has been suggested that "after the [section on] logic of Ibn Slna's al-Shifd', this precious and unique book is the best and most comprehensive text composed in logic. Perhaps since the beginning of the translation and transference of rational sciences from Greek, no book has been composed in Persian with such detail, comprehensivity, and precision" (Mudarris Raḍawī in al-Ṭūsī

(1947): 12. It has also been suggested that "Extrinsic considerations alone point to the significance and the eminent position of this text in the corpus of logic in the Peripatetic tradition of Islamic philosophy. But its deeper significance lies in the methodology to which Ṭūsī resorts in explaining 'substance' and its unusual display of his analytical ability, which enabled him to avoid difficulties inherent in some metaphysical approaches to this concept" (Morewedge (1973): 159).

In the classical Aristotelian/Ibn Sinan tradition, Khwājah Naṣīr's Asds al-iqtibds begins with the Porphyrean "Introduction" and proceeds to present and discuss the eight Aristotelian sections on logic. But, as has been extensively demonstrated (Morewedge (1975): 165—77), Khwājah Naṣīr's work on logic becomes not just a comprehensive treatise on the subject but, more important, an analytical extension of the central problematic of "substance" in Islamic ontology.

Ontology

Khwājah Naṣīr's ontology is in the classical Ibn Sinan tradition. "Being" (wujud) is so universal that it is in no need of proof (al-Ṭūsī (1977): 389; al-Ṭūsī (1984a): 182—3). Every "being" is either "necessary" (wajib) or "contingent" (mumkin). If it is "necessary", it cannot not be. That which is "necessary" that it be is "the Necessary Being" (wajib al-wujud). Ii it is a "contingent being", then it is by virtue of something else that it comes into being; and that "something else", in turn, is either "the Necessary Being" or itself another

"contingent being". Khwājah Naṣīr's theology thus emerges from his ontology as does Ibn Sīnā'ss: no earthly beings can be "the Necessary Being", because they are either "accidents" ('arad) or "substances" (jawhar). "Accidents", by nature, are contingent upon something else, a substance; and "substances" are either "corporeal" (jism), and thus composite and corruptible, or "free from matter" or "abstract" (mujarrad); and whoever believes in non-material things intellectually and spiritually has no difficulty believing in such a non-material being as "the Necessary Being" (al-Ṭūsī (1977b): 380–90).

In another short essay, Khwājah Naṣīr discussed the problem of "being and non-being" (al-Ṭūsī (1957): 20—4). Building on a long tradition (see Danishpazhuh's Introduction to al-Ṭūsī (1957): 11—19), he summarizes the two opposing positions of those who denied the existence of "non-being" (the so-called ndfiydn) and those who believed in the existence of "non-being" (the so-called muthbitdn):

You should know that men of knowledge have disagreed on whether the non-being ma'dum is a thing [shay'] or not. By ma'dimi [non-being] they mean the possible-being [jd'iz al-wujud. The ndfiydn have maintained that non-being is not a thing. They have not distinguished between the possible-being [jd'iz al-iuuju/(and the impossible-being [mustahil al-wujdd. They consider them both non-being. They have also disagreed
in other respects: The muthbitdn believe in an attribute which is neither being [mawjud] nor non-being ma'durn. They call that [attribute] disposition [bdlat]. But the ndfiyan do not believe in an intermediary [state] between being and non-being. They have also disagreed [on the following issue]:

The muthbitdn consider the non-being, in its state of non-beingness, qualified by an attribute …, the muthbitdn consider being a common feature among all existent-beings maujudat. They also distinguish between ascertainment [thubut] and being [wujiul], but not between being and non-being. They do not, however, distinguish between prohibition [nafy] and ascertainment [ithbdif]. The ndflydn, on the other hand, consider the being of everything its essence [dhdt]. They do not distinguish between ascertainment and being. Thus the muthbitdn consider all the essences - substances and accidents – present in pre-eternity, qualified with the attributes of genes, i.e., substance with substantiality, black with blackness, and yet not in-being mawjud. [The muthbitdn consider that] being is a disposition [hdlat], i.e., it is neither being nor non-being. Thus the Actor, Great and Almighty that He is, qualified the essences with being, and that is the meaning of bringing-into-existence [ihddth and bringing-into-being ijdd. As for the ndflydn, there was nothing permanent in pre-eternity except God. He created all the essences and attributes, and that the meaning of bringing-substance-into-existence [ihddth-i jawhar is to bring substance into existence after it was not.

(al-Ṭūsī (1957): 20)

Khwājah Naṣīr himself does not appear to favour one position over another. After a lengthy discussion of the various positions of those who believe that a non-being is a thing (muthbitdn) and those who believe it is not (ndflydn), he concludes that "when intelligent people think about this, they must accept what their mind accepts, and of course should not simply follow others" (al-Ṭūsī (1957): 24).

Theology

Khwājah Naṣīr is reported to have believed in the necessity of the rational proof for the existence of God for all believers until he met a simple peasant. "Is there one or two gods?" Khwājah Naṣīr is believed to have asked the peasant (Tunikābunī (1985): 375). "Just one", the peasant answers. "What would you do if someone were to tell you that there are two gods?" Khwājah Naṣīr asks. "I will split his head with this very shovel in my hand", the peasant responds. As with all other popular anecdotes
about Khwājah Naṣīr, these stories underline the legendary proportions that the philosopher's tireless rational attitude has assumed. His most important text on theology is Tajrid al-'aqaid, also known as Taj rid al- i'tiqad (Mudarris Raḍawī (1975): 422—33; Peters (1968): 198). He has a number of other shorter treatises on theology too (e.g., al-Ṭūsī (1991a)), including a concise treatise on God's oneness, Ithbat wahdat Allāh jalla jaldlahu. The First Origin (al-Mabda' al-aunval) is that which nothing has preceded and to which there is no origin. That First Origin cannot be more than one because everything that is not one is many, and everything that is many consists of individual units, and every one of those units precedes that composite being and thus is an origin to it. Thus the First Origin is One and not many. The First Origin which lacks an origin cannot be a contingent being (mumkin al-wujūd) because every contingent being has an origin. Thus, from an extension of Khwājah Naṣīr's ontology to his theology, it is necessary for the First Origin to be a "Necessary Being" (wajib al-wujud). The Necessary Being cannot consist of many things. Otherwise it would need

constituent units and would have been in need of others. Therefore, it would not have been the Necessary Being. When things are existent, then it is necessary for them to be in existence. Had they not been in existence, then everything would have always been in a state of contingency, in need of an origin. In this order of causation, in order to avoid a vicious circle, it is necessary to have one reality, which is the cause to all effects, coming before them all. That is the First Origin which has no origin to it. The issuance (.sudur) of all existent beings is from that Origin. Finally, Khwājah Naṣīr concludes that this is what we intended to state in proving the "True One [al-wdhid al-haqiqi] who is the First Origin to all existent beings, exalted is His Being and sacred His Essence and Attributes" (al-Ṭūsī (1984a): 183).

But no other text of Khwājah Naṣīr has been as influential as Tajrid aTi'tiqad in Shl'i theology. In it he summarized the principles of Shi'i theology in six concise treatises and permanently consolidated the level of discourse in this branch of Shi'i canonical learning. The first treatise of this book establishes the general principles governing Shī'ī theology, the second treatise is on substances (jawahir) and accidents ('arad), the third on proving the Creator and His Attributes, the fourth on Prophethood, the fifth on Imamate, and the sixth on resurrection. Tajrid al-i'tiqdd became the canonical text of Shi'I theology for many generations; and considerable number of commentaries were written on it (Mudarris Raḍawī (1975): 422—33). The commentaries of Shams al-Dln Muhammad Isfarayini BayhaqI, a contemporary of Khwājah Naṣīr, 'Allamah Hill! (d. 726/1325), Shams al-Iṣfahānl (d. 746/1345) and 'Ala al-Dln Qushji (d. 879/1474) are among the most important on Khwājah Naṣīr's text. Mir Sayyid Sharif al-Jurjani's (d. 816/1413) commentary

was so influential that it became a textbook of Shl'l theology. But perhaps the most influential commentary has been Allāmah al-FIillī's Kashf al-murad fī shark tajrid al-i'tiqad (al-Ṭūsī (1977b) or (1988)).

Khwājah Naṣīr has a number of other theological treatises attributed to him. Al-1'tiijādāt was written with a larger audience in mind than that intended in Tajrid al-i'tiqad. The two treatises of Ithhdt-i wiijib and al-Fusūl al-nāsiriyyah were written in Persian for the benefit of those who could not read his Arabic texts.

Ttiqddiyyah, a short treatise by Khwājah Naṣīr on the principal dogmas of Shī'ī belief, is a concise summary of what the Shī'ī philosopher thought the believers had to hold indubitable. A Slifl believer had to uphold as a minimum that there is no divinity but Allāh and that Muhammad is His messenger. Upon testifying to the truthfulness of the messenger, the believer had to accept the Attributes of God Almighty and believe in the Last Day. Belief in the infallible Imam is equally mandatory for the Shfl believer. All these principles, Khwājah Naṣīr insists, are included in the Qur'an and thus are in no need of proof. Belief in the Day of Judgment necessitates a simultaneous belief in Paradise and Hell and in accountability for righteous and evil acts committed in this world. God's Attributes, which ought to be acknowledged, are that He is Alive, Omniscient, Omnipotent and Speaking. There is nothing like Him. He hears and sees. It is not necessary for a believer to ascertain the pre-eternality or createdness-in-time (qidam or hudūth) of God's Attributes. If he or she dies without having reached a conclusion in this matter, the believer dies the death of a righteous one, in so far as in his or her heart there is certainty by virtue of sheer faith.

Total belief in the religious law (al-shar) is equally necessary, without any question of its truth or method. However, if doubt and uncertainty should overcome a believer, such reasoning as may alleviate them, like that provided by theologians, can be sought. The religious authorities, however, have prohibited doctrinal debates among the masses, just as young children are prohibited from swimming in the Tigris river. Yet those who have mastered the art of swimming can engage in such exercises. The latter group, however, should not get carried away with its assumptions about its knowledge and intelligence. What matters is carrying out God's command (al-Ṭūsī (1984b): 185).

The Significance of Khwājah Naṣīr's Writings on Ethics

Beyond his works on logic, ontology and theology, the most influential genre of Khwajah NasTr's writings is his texts on ethics. The significance of Khwājah Naṣīr's ethical writings can hardly be exaggerated. The
tradition of writing on ethics, as an independent philosophical category, includes some of the most prominent earlier Muslim philosophers, such as al-Farabl and Ibn Miskawayh. This genre of philosophical discourse suggested, ipso facto, a mode of ethical reflection and guidance rather independent, however derivative, of Islamic law, or Shari'ah. Both the clerical establishment and the political order detected in this ethical discourse a rival source of (de)legitimation. For obvious reasons, the clerical establishment considered this philosophically based ethical discourse as a rival to the

Qur'anically based Shan'ah. The political establishment, however, looked at the ethical writings as both a source of guidance and aspiration for legitimate rulership and a source of potential moral (de)legit- imation of their authority. The popularity of writings on ethics in general and Khwājah Naṣīr's writings in particular has thus been compared to that of music and musical writings that, despite unfavourable social circumstances, have been widespread in Islamic intellectual history (Danishpazhuh in al-Ṭūsī (1982): 27).

Khwājah Naṣīr's ethical writings are based directly on two non- Islamic sources: Greek and pre-Islamic Persian (Danishpazhuh in al-Ṭūsī (1982): 27—38). This is not to suggest that the Qur anic and Ḥadith sources are not at the heart of Khwājah Naṣīr's ethical discourse. But in devising and narrating a distinct ethical imperative, both Khwājah Naṣīr and his sources (including particularly Ibn Miskawayh, from whom he freely borrowed) had Greek and Persian sources at their disposal. Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics and the Persian Andarz-ndmah literature (especially such sources as Pand-nama-yi ardashir and Ndma-yi tansar) are cited (ibid.) as having had a dominant role in defining the terms of philosophical ethics during this period.

Khwājah Naṣīr was instrumental in devising a distinctly philosophical ethics from these pre- and non-Islamic sources that incorporated the Quranic and Ḥadith sources into a synthetic discourse of independent authority. In two, intimately related, significant ways this ethical discourse was threatening to the dominant nomocentricity of the juridical discourse and its political bases in the caliphal or sultanate authority. Firstly, it ipso facto constituted an independent discourse of moral civility on the foundations of which any

human community could live an ethical and civilized life independent of the juridical authority. Secondly, it provided a non-juridical (if not quintessentially "secular") criterion of moral and political legitimacy for the sultanate authority. In fact, Khwājah Naṣīr's championship of this independent ethical discourse can be viewed as a philosophical/vizierate alternative that the Persian administrative authorities had devised to balance and counter the exclusive claim of the clerical establishment as the bestower of legitimate rulership to the sultanate. The ethical discourse of both Akhlāq-i muḥtashamī and Akhlāq- i ndsiri, two significant texts of Khwājah Naṣīr on ethics, indeed, have a
greater claim to universality and authority than the juridical discourse. Where the former incorporates Qur'anic and Ḥadith sources into both Greek and Persian – and even Indian – legacies of ethics, the latter has an exclusive limitation to Islamic material. By incorporating these sources into the ethical discourse, the genre of philosophical ethics systematized by Khwājah Naṣīr guarded itself against all dogmatic accusations of non- or anti-Islamicity. But incorporating these sacred sources into the Greek, Persian and Indian materials had a much wider claim on universality and authority.

Amhlaq-I Muhtashami

The origins of Khwājah Naṣīr's writings on ethics have been identified (Danishpazhuh in al-Ṭūsī (1982): 3–9) in both Greek and Islamic sources. Aristotle's Nichomachean Ethics and al-Farabi's al-Madinah al-fddilah are among the immediately recognizable sources. Pre-Islamic Persian

sources have also been detected. Khwājah Naṣīr's translation of Ibn al-Muqaffa's al-Adab al-wajiz, in particular, is singled out as a direct source of access to Zoroastrian ideas (ibid.: 4). Ibn Miskawayh al-Razi's Tahdhib al-Akhlāq, however, is the principal work on ethics from which Khwājah Naṣīr borrowed directly. There are also frequent traces of Aristotle in Akhlāq-i ndsiri (ibid.: 5).

Akhlāq-i muḥtashamī is so named because Khwājah Naṣīr wrote it for Nasir al-Dln 'Abd al-Rahim Abi Mansur (d. 655/ 1257), the ruler (muhtasham) of Quhistan. Nasir aI-Dīn 'Abd al-Rahim had originally intended to write this book himself Pie is reported to have been a particularly erudite and intelligent Ismaill leader. In fact, he drew the outline of this text and set its principal division of chapters and the progression of each section, beginning with Qur'anic passages and concluding with those of ancient sages and philosophers. But he was never actually able to finish this project because of his administrative responsibilities. He subsequently instructed Khwājah Naṣīr to take whatever he had done and complete it with other references. The Isma ill leader is even reported to have dictated some additional passages to Khwājah Naṣīr to be included in the final text. He also asked to see the final draft that Khwājah Naṣīr would produce before it was to be fully transcribed and "published" (Danishpazhuh in al-Ṭūsī (1982): 14).

Whatever Nasir aI-Dīn Abd al-Rahman's contribution, the present text of Akhlāq-i muḥtashamī is Khwājah Naṣīr's doing. The text is divided into forty chapters, each of which consists of a number of Qur'anic verses, followed by statements of the Prophet Muhammad and the Shi'i Imams. The Nahj al-baldghah of the first Shl'i Imam, 'All, and the

fourth Shi'i Imam, Imam Zayn al-'Abidin's al-Sahifat al-sajjddiyyah, are identified as
primary sources of Khwājah Naṣīr's text (Danishpazhuh in al-Ṭūsī (1982): 14—15). Khwājah Naṣīr then concludes each chapter with a number of statements attributed to various (Greek) philosophers.

Khwājah Naṣīr's purpose in writing Akhlāq-i muḥtashamī appears to have been to provide a concise vade-mecum of ethical principles that every righteous person should follow.

Although Qur'anic verses and the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad and the Shfi Imams abound in this book, the fact still remains that it constitutes an ethical discourse independent and distinct from the juridical discourse of the legal theorists (fuqahd') also based on the Qur'an and Ḥadith. Both the Qur'anic and non-Qur'anic passages are translated into beautiful and simple Persian, thus extending the public domain of Akhlāq-i muḥtashamī beyond the limited intellectual elite who could read Arabic.

The content of Akhlāq-i muḥtashamī consists of a primary chapter on religion (aI-Dīn) and the necessity of a knowledge of God (al-Ṭūsī : 6—15). What follows from that is a designation of prophetic authority, which also necessitates an Imami succession to it (ibid.: 16–25). Most of the other chapters are devised around any number of polar opposites in ethical behaviour, such as love and hate, knowledge and practice, good and evil acts, poverty and wealth, etc.

Akhlāq-i muḥtashamī is a thorough and complete manual of ethical behaviour delivered in a self-assured discourse of aphorism. The principal basis of this ethic is knowledge

(ma'rifah) – knowledge of God, knowledge of the Prophet and knowledge of his successors as Imams. This knowledge is the chief prerogative of humanity upon which all possibilities of ethical behaviour are contingent. Love and hate are two principal emotions on which Khwājah Naṣīr divides all possibilities of human affiliation: the love of good and the hatred of evil. One must rely on the love of those who are good and express hate against evil-doers. From that love derives the necessity of unity (ittihad) and unanimity (ittifdq) and the baseness of arrogance and hypocrisy (al-kibr wa'l-nifdq).

Once people know their God, love their friends, hate their enemies, and hold fast to the community, then they are ready to fight (al-jihad) in the path of God, the ultimate direction of all humanity. There are two (opposite) complementary dimensions to people's characters in that direction: knowledge and deeds. These two must reflect each other. Nobility of knowledge leads to virtuous deeds. Absolute obedience to God is the chief guardian of virtuous behaviour (al-a'mdl al-sdlihah). Prayers and alms in the path of God have this- and other-worldly rewards. Fear of God and His wrath and asceticism are two simultaneous virtues that one must cultivate. One must be patient in hardship and grateful for what one has. Reliance on God is the best that the virtuous individual can do in daily activities. Only thus will we incline towards doing
good and abstain from doing evil. Tyranny and injustice are the basest vices from which the individual, Khwājah Naṣīr insists with an eye on the political powers that be, must refrain. He also devotes a chapter to the denunciation of the world and all its material gains. A virtuous person always strives for the world to come, not the one at hand, transitory

as it is. Accumulation of wealth is evil, unnecessary and futile. Greed and avarice must be avoided by all means. Poverty is superior to wealth. Truth is better than a lie; trustworthiness better than unreliability. Silence is better than speech. Too much idle talk is hazardous. To have a kind disposition, to be patient, forgiving and in control of one's anger are among the highest virtues. One should not be envious and hostile. Humility is a supreme virtue and arrogance a vice. Magnanimity, generosity and forgiveness are to be preferred over niggardliness, stinginess and baseness. Steadfastness and bravery are virtues to be cultivated against whimsical waywardness and cowardice. Khwājah Naṣīr advises the individual to control his or her desires and be in control of his or her dignity. Truthfulness must be cultivated through companionship with good friends and the wise. Conversely, one must abstain from frequenting the ignorant and the evil-doers. These are among an avalanche of ethical advice that Khwājah Naṣīr pours over his readers.

Ethics for Children

Among Khwājah Naṣīr's writings on ethics is also a translation of Ibn Muqaffa''s al-Adab al-wajiz ii l-walad al-saghir ("A Short Manual of Ethical Behaviour for the Small Child"). This treatise begins with a typical admonition that Ibn Muqaffa' addresses to his own son with respect to the necessity of obedience to God (al-Ṭūsī (1982): 502). Patience in calamity is the first piece of advice. It is crucial that young people should attend to knowledge from the earliest times. They should frequent the wise, but never enter into an

argument with them. They should not be concerned with material gains, but instead seek salvation in the world to come. They must be quickly attentive to their duties and at all costs avoid telling lies. Silence is a virtue that Ibn Muqaffa''s son must cultivate. Too much idle talk is not good. Patience is good. Ibn Muqaffa'' quotes Socrates, who said that sadness (al-huzn) suffocates the mind and does not let it function well. Young people should also learn not to reveal all their knowledge and capabilities at once. They should not be supplicative before kings. They must be steadfast in friendships; but should friends turn against them, they must refrain from further contact. Confidentiality is the key to success. To achieve success they must never be fearful of undertaking grave responsibilities. They should never be envious. If they achieve high office and status, they should avoid arrogance and pride. They should

not imagine that doing evil is easier than doing good. One does those things with ease that one does most frequently. Before asking or answering a question, they should think thoroughly in advance not to cause embarrassment for themselves. They should always be cognizant of the opinion of the majority and not do anything blatantly against it. They should never compete against anyone who is superior in will, strength or wealth, such as a king. They should be friendly with their superiors in knowledge and status, reverential with equals, and never associate with inferiors. If they should happen to find themselves in a city where they do not know the people, they should first wait and observe and see who is superior to all others in behaviour and manner. Then they must affiliate themselves only with that individual. If they are about to do something good, they should do it immediately. They should never listen to people who talk behind other

people's backs. Ibn Muqaffa''s last advice to his son, as translated by Khwājah Naṣīr, is this:

O! Know that whoever is weakened, the unrighteous point their fingers of accusation against him, and his friends are made suspicious of him. His sins and wrong-doings shall not be kept secret, because the weak person is always subject to accusation and suspicion. People call his courage stupidity, his generosity corruption and lack of wisdom, his patience weakness, his steadfastness stubbornness, his eloquence gibberish, his silence dumbness.

(al-Ṭūsī (1982a): 557)

Akhlāq-I nāṣirī

Khwājah Naṣīr's greatest work on ethics, perhaps the most influential in the entire genre (Humai (1956): 17), is Akhlāq-i ndsirt. He wrote the first draft of this treatise while still in the service of the Ismāʾīll warlord Nāsir al-Dln. When the Ismfnlls were defeated by the Mongols and Khwājah Naṣīr transferred his loyalty to his new patron, Hūlàgū, he revised his Akhlāq-i ndsirī, changed its introduction and conclusion and eliminated all his laudatory clauses about the Ismàʾīlls and Ismāʾīlīsm. This has resulted in some harsh criticism by some scholars (Rypka (1968): 313—14). Others, however, have defended Khwājah Naṣīr on the grounds of the existing political circumstances (see Buzurg ʿAlawl's Introduction to al-Ṭūsī (1977a): i—viii; see also Humai (1956): 17). The details of these discrepancies in the introductory and concluding materials, however, have been meticulously

identified by Mujtabā Mlnuwi and 'All Rida Haydari, the editors of the definitive critical edition of Akhlāq-i nāṣirī (al-Ṭūsī (1977a): 7—9; compare with Humai: 22–5).

Akhlāq-i nāṣirī consists of an introduction, three treatises and a conclusion. The introduction is a general statement on divisions of philosophy. The first treatise, on ethics, is divided into two sections: principles (mabadi) and objectives (maqdsid). The second treatise covers domestic politics. And the third treatise addresses "national" (or "city") politics. One may even call this section Khwājah Naṣīr's "sociology". The conclusion is a series of "advice" (wasdya) attributed to Plato.

Khwājah Naṣīr's introduction to Akhlāq-i nāṣirī is a standard discussion of the divisions of philosophy Islamic philosophers had originally adopted from Aristotle. Hikmat, or philosophy, "is to know things as they are and to do things as one must" (al-Ṭūsī (1977a): 37). The purpose of philosophy is to help the person achieve the highest human ideals. Thus, philosophy is divided into two parts: "knowledge" and "action". "Knowledge" consists of the ability to "conceive" (tasawwur) things as they are and then "assent" (tasdiq) as to their principles. "Action" is the practice of movements and mastery of arts so that which is potential is made actual. Khwājah Naṣīr subjects the mastery of both theoretical ('i/mi) and practical ('amali) knowledge to man's physical abilities. Whoever achieves perfection in knowledge and deed achieves a noble character.

The Subject of Ethics in the Division of Philosophy

Because the object of philosophy consists of the knowledge of everything that exists, it is divided into two categories based on the nature of things as they are. Existent things are of two kinds: first, those whose existence is independent of our actions and, second, those whose existence is dependent on our actions. "Theoretical philosophy" (hikmat-i nazari) has the first category of existent beings as its object, and "practical philosophy" (hikmat-i 1amali) has the second categoiy of existent beings as its object.

Theoretical philosophy, in turn, is divided into two categories: first, the knowledge of that whose existence – and the conception thereof - is not commingled with matter and, second, the knowledge of that whose existence is contingent upon matter. The latter category is divided further into yet two more parts: first, the knowledge of that whose contingency upon matter is not essential for its conception and, second, the knowledge of that whose contingency upon matter is essential to it. Consequently, theoretical philosophy is divided into three categories: "metaphysics" ('i/m-i ma ba'd al-tabi'ah), "mathematics" ('ilm-i riddi) and "natural sciences" ('ilm-i tabi'i). Each of these categories is divided, in turn, into a number of "major" (usul) and "minor" (furu) sections (al-Ṭūsī (1977a): 38).

The first category of theoretical philosophy, metaphysics, consists of, firstly, the knowledge of God Almighty and of those who, by virtue of being near His Presence, have caused

other things to be, such as "the intellects" ('uqul), "the souls" (nufils) and the principles governing their actions, which knowledge is called "theology" ('itm-i ildhi), and, secondly, the knowledge of general principles governing existent beings as they are, such as unity (wahdat), multiplicity (kithrat), necessity (wujub), possibility (imkdn), createdness (ḥudūth), pre-eternity (qidam), etc., which knowledge is called "The First Philosophy" (falsafah-i ida). Metaphysics, in turn, is divided into any number of minor subdivisions, such as the knowledge of prophethood (nubuwwat), of the Divine Law (Shartah), of the Day of Judgment (ma'ad), and other matters related to them (al-Ṭūsī (1977a): 38–9).

While mathematics is divided into four parts – geometry, arithmetic, astronomy and music – the natural sciences are divided into eight: knowledge of time, space, motion, immobility, infinity and finitude; knowledge of simple and compound objects; knowledge of the principal elements and their transformabilities; knowledge of the earth and the climate, such as thunder, rain, snow, earthquake, etc.; mineralogy; botany; biology; and psychology. Among the minor subdivisions of the natural sciences are medicine, astronomy (which Khwājah Naṣīr here categorizes differently than in his former categorization under mathematics) and the science of agriculture.

Khwājah Naṣīr gives "logic" (rnantiq) a separate and independent category under the general rubric of theoretical philosophy. He credits Aristotle with having systematized this category of knowledge. Logic "is to know how to know things, the way to overcome the unknown" (al- Ṭūsī (1977a): 40). Logic is an instrument for acquiring other forms of knowledge.

Khwājah Naṣīr defines practical philosophy as "the knowledge of instruments of the voluntary actions [harakdt-i midi j and creative deeds [amdl-i sinai of humankind, as they pertain to their this- worldly and other-worldly affairs, necessary for their achieving that state of perfection towards which they move" (al-Ṭūsī (1977a): 40). Practical philosophy consists of two subjects: first, things that concern human beings as individuals and, second, things that concern human beings as members of the society. Khwājah Naṣīr further divides his "sociology" into two branches: first, the knowledge of matters that are common to a people living in a common household and, second, the knowledge of matters that are common to a people living in "a city, a province, a land, even a kingdom" (ibid.). Thus he divides practical philosophy into "ethics" (tahdhib-i Akhlāq), "domestic politics" (tadbir-i manzil), and "national politics" or "sociology" (siyasat-i mudun).

Khwājah Naṣīr divides the origins of good deeds and the virtues of humankind that are necessary for the betterment of their conditions into two major categories. These virtues are either "natural" in their origin or else "conventional". The natural virtues do not change over time, while the conventional ones do. If the origins of conventional virtues lie in the communal consensus of a people, they are called "customs and habits" (iàdāb iva rusūm). But if they are rooted in the judgment of a great individual (such as the Prophet or an Imam), they are called "Divine Laws" (.nawāmīs-i ilāhī).

These "Divine Laws" concern either every individual in his or her individuality, as in acts of ritual obedience and rules thereof, or members of a household as a collectivity, as in marriage and other transactions, or members of cities and

provinces, as in rules of punishments and retributions. "Jurisprudence" ('ilm-i fiqh) is the name Khwājah Naṣīr gives this latter category. He also suggests that the philosopher's attention to such acts that are conventional and thus subject to periodic change is rather minimal. Because, by nature, philosophers are concerned with things permanent and least subject to change, they want to discover the permanent and valid rules governing existence.

Khwājah Naṣīr's segment on ethics is divided into two sections: "principles" and "objectives". The first section is divided into seven chapters. The subject of ethics is the "human soul" (nafs-i insānī) because it is the origin of good and evil acts. "The human soul is an abstract substance [jawhar-i basīt] from the essence of which issues the conception of intelligibles" (al-Ṭūsī (1977a): 48). In the second chapter of this section, Khwajah Nasīr provides an elaborate argument to prove the existence of the soul, its substantiality (jawhariyyat), its simplicity (bisàtat), its not being a body (jism) or physical (jismānī), that it conceives in its essence and acts through its instruments, and finally that it cannot be felt through any one of the sense perceptions (ibid.-. 48—9). The human soul, which is also called "the rational soul" (nafs-i nātiqah), survives the death of the body. The body is, in fact, an instrument (àlat) to the soul and "not as some have conceived it as its location or space" (ibid.: 56).

The soul is divided into three kinds: vegetal, animal and human, each of which has its respective powers. Only the human soul has "rational power" (quwwat-i nātiqah). Humans are the most noble of all creatures, the highest stage of the soul ascending from the vegetal and animal to the human. Prophets and saints are the noblest of humans (al-Ṭūsī

(1977a): 63). The human being is potentially capable of both perfection and baseness. This human perfection is of two kinds, either in the direction of knowledge or in the direction of action. The ultimate end of knowledge is serenity and certitude in "the world of Oneness [of God]" (ibid.: 69). The ultimate end of action is to achieve harmony and equilibrium in one's individual and communal affairs; perfection in knowledge
and in action are dialectically related and interdependent on each other. Upon mastering these two sides, man becomes the true vicegerent of God on earth. Khwājah Naṣīr launches a pervasive attack against those who consider the purpose of life to be the enjoyment of material things, the functions of speaking and intellect to facilitate such physical enjoyments. They have subjected the noble soul, Khwājah Naṣīr charges (ibid, -. 71), to ephemeral lust.

From yet another perspective, the soul is divided into three kinds: the "bestial soul" (nafs-i bahīmī), which is the lowest; the "savage soul" (nafs-i sabu'i), which is the intermediary state; and the "angelic soul" (nafs-i malaki), which is the noblest. These three "souls" are simultaneously present in the human being. Khwājah Naṣīr refers to the correspondence of these three "souls" to three Qur'anic terms. Nafs-i bahīmī is the same as nafs-i ammārah, or the "carnal soul"; nafs-i sabuī is the same as nafs-i lawwāmah, or the "admonishing soul"; and nafs-i malakī is the same as nafs-i mutma'innah, or the "virtuous soul". Khwajah Naṣīr summarizes the functions of these souls as follows:

"the carnal soul" commands and insists on the fulfilment of desires; "the admonishing soul", after having concealed that which is inevitable in [human] shortcomings, renders, through

reproach and admonition, that action blameworthy in the eyes of wisdom; and as for "the virtuous soul ", it does not yield except to beautiful deeds and virtuous actions.

(al-Ṭūsī (1977a): 77)

Khwājah Naṣīr devotes the seventh and last chapter of this section to a definition of the "good" (khayr) and "happiness" (sa'ādat) as the ultimate objectives of the human soul. After a reference to both Aristotle and Ibn Sīnà, he proceeds to distinguish between khayr, which is common among – and to – all people, and sa'ddat, whose definition and conception differ from one individual to another. He cites Porphyry of Tyre (c. A.D. 300) (quoting from Aristotle) extensively in definition and divisions of "good". He also refers to Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle in their understanding of "happiness" (al-Ṭūsī (1977a): 83). The "good" is divided into four categories: noble, praiseworthy, potentially good, beneficial on the way to being good. "Happiness" is also of four kinds: wisdom, courage, piety and justice (ibid.-. 82—4). Khwajah Nasīr reports and discusses other divisions of "happiness" offered by the Stoics and others.

In the second section of this treatise on ethics, Khwajah Nasīr discusses the "objectives" (maqàsid) of this branch of philosophy. He believes that an individual's "disposition" (khulq) is alterable, that man can, through education, change (al-Ṭūsī (1977a): 101). But the act of changing one's ethical disposition is an art (sinaai), and in that a most noble art. There are essentially three kinds of virtues that humanity can achieve, each corresponding to one of a person's three souls. From the rational soul knowledge and philosophy are

attained; from the savage soul patience and courage are achieved; and from the bestial soul piety and magnanimity are obtained. For each one of these souls to achieve its respective virtue, it must first attain a state of equilibrium under the general authority of the rational soul. "Justice", the fourth virtue, will be achieved when these three virtues are attained and properly integrated. There are various "species" (anwa) to these four "kinds" (ajnds) of virtue that Khwājah Naṣīr enumerates in detail. There are also four corresponding vices. In opposition to "wisdom" is "ignorance" (jabI), in opposition to "courage" is "cowardice" (jaban), in opposition to "piety" is "mischief" and in opposition to "justice" is "tyranny". Khwājah Naṣīr proceeds to give a detailed account of these vices. He also provides a full discussion of certain pseudo-virtues, such as the supposition of having knowledge while in reality lacking it (ibid.-. 122–30).

Among all virtues attainable by humans, "justice" is the most noble. From music to ethics, "balance" (musdwdt) is the most essential virtue. "The just person is the person who gives proportion and equilibrium to things which are neither proportionate nor in equilibrium" (al-Ṭūsī (1977a): 133). Khwājah Naṣīr's full discussion of "justice" includes references to other philosophers such as Ibn Sīnā, Aristotle and Plato. Equally authoritative references are made to the Qur'an and the prophetic traditions throughout the text. Khwājah Naṣīr concludes his discussion of justice with a tangential reference to mahabbat ("loving kindness"). People are in need of justice to govern their transactions only when mahabbat is absent. Khwājah Naṣīr postpones his discussion of mahabbat until his section on politics. But here he asserts that should mahabbat be present among a people, they would treat each other with love and affection, and justice would

naturally ensue. Khwajah NasTr's conception of mahabbat, which literally means "love", or "loving kindness", is very close to Ibn Khaldun's conception of 'asabiyyah, which has been translated as "group feeling" (Ibn Khaldun (1958), 1: 264ff.). Both mahabbat and 'asabiyyah are very close to what the French sociologist Emile Durkheim (1858–1917) has termed "conscience collective" (Durkheim (1933): 79). Thus, I think we would be closer to Khwājah Naṣīr's conception of mahabbat, as a necessary sentiment for the creation of social solidarity, if we translate it as "collective sentiment".

Khwājah Naṣīr provides a full course of instructions as to how virtues such as knowledge, courage, piety and justice are to be attained. One can attain virtues through two channels of possibilities – one natural and the other acquisitive. Attainment of ethical virtues, however, is not natural to man; it is acquisitive. The ultimate state of happiness thus attained by a human being is of three kinds: spiritual (nafsdnl), physical (badani), and civil or collective (madam). Spiritual happiness is contingent upon
the attainment of a thorough knowledge of ethics, logic, mathematics, natural sciences and ultimately metaphysics. Khwājah Naṣīr insists on this order (al-Ṭūsī (1977a): 154). Physical happiness consists of the acquisition of that knowledge which is beneficial to the well-being of the body, such as medicine and astronomy. Finally, civic or collective happiness constitutes such knowledge that is beneficial to the citizens of a nation (millat), to the government (dawlat), to economics (umur-i ma 'ash) and to society (kalam), prophetic traditions (akhbdr), and Qur'anic commentary (lanztl wa ta'wil), as well as literature (adab), rhetoric (balaqhat) and grammar (nahiv), etc.

Once the human soul is thus characterized by virtue, it is incumbent upon the owner of that soul to safeguard its achievements. Khwājah Naṣīr offers a detailed account of how these virtues are to be sustained and preserved. Parallel to this preservation of virtues in the soul is the curing of spiritual diseases that occur through afflictions with certain vices. For example, the cure for "compound ignorance" (jahl-i murakkab) is the study of mathematics. Thus, Khwājah Naṣīr prescribes a series of cures for a host of vices, such as anger, envy, vanity, stubbornness, frivolity, enmity, fear of death, extremism in lust, idleness and sadness.

Awṣāf al-Ashrāf

According to Khwājah Naṣīr himself, in the introduction to Awṣāf al-ashrāf (al-Ṭūsī (1966): 28), he had written two treatises on ethics: Akhlāq-i nāṣirī and Awṣāf al-ashrāf Thus, despite the mystical (Sufi) nature of this latter treatise, it ought to be considered under his ethical writings. In the same introduction he asserts that he wrote Akhlāq-i ndsiri "on virtuous ethics and righteous politics according to philosophers" and that he now writes Awṣāf al-ashrāf "on the manners of the spiritual brothers and the methods of the people of the vision according to the principle of those who traverse upon the spiritual path and who seek Truth" (ibid.).

Awsdf al-ashraf is divided into six chapters (bdb), each, with the exception of the last, divided in turn into six sections (fasl). Each chapter corresponds to one stage in the spiritual path of the purification of the soul, each of which is attainable only upon the achievement of its preceding stage. While the attainment of one stage is a goal and a virtue for the

individual located at the preceding stage, it becomes a vice and a hurdle when the individual has achieved that stage. The six chapters of Awṣāf al-ashrāf corresponding to the six stages of spiritual passage towards the nobility of character, are: the commencement of movement, the eradication of hurdles and barriers, the movement through which the spiritual novitiate leaves the point of departure and reaches the destination, conditions experienced by the spiritual novitiate while traversing from the point of departure to the destination, conditions that occur after the sojourner reaches the destination, and the final stage of this spiritual movement, the condition of the individual's non-existence, the cutting of the path, which is now called "annihilation in Oneness" (al-Ṭūsī (1966): 32—4).

In the first stage, for the spiritual movement to start, the traveller should have faith (irndn), steadfastness (thubdt), intention (niyyat), truthfulness (sidq), reliance on God (indbat) and, finally, purification of all thoughts, utterances and deeds. Once this stage is achieved, certain hurdles and barriers are to be eliminated in the next stage. To achieve this, six acts are necessary: repentance (tawbah), asceticism (zuhd), poverty (faqr), hardship (riyddai), introspection (muhdsibat wa murdqibat) and abstinence from sin out of the fear of God (taqwd). Once the spiritual quest thus commences, there are six additional conditions the novitiate should master in the next stage: solitude (khalwat), thinking (tafakkur), fear (khauf), hope (rijd'), patience (sabr) and gratitude (shukr). Upon the successful completion of these stages, the traveller will have to persist in six other virtues before reaching his or her destination: will (irddat), ecstasy (shawq), love (mahabbat), gnosis (ma'rifat), conviction (yaqīn) and serenity (sukūn). Once spiritual seekers complete

their quest, but before they are ultimately unified in oneness, they must persist through yet another set of six penultimate virtues: reliance on God (tawakkul), contentment (ridd'), surrender (taslīm), monotheism (tawhid), unity (ittihdd) and oneness (wahdat).

In the sixth and final stage of this spiritual quest, the seeker has now completed and assimilated all the preceding stages and is finally and totally annihilated (fand') in God. In that stage of unity "there will not be a seeker, or a seeking, neither a quest nor a destination, neither a demand nor an applicant, nor a supplication. Everything is annihilated, except His Countenance" (al-Ṭūsī (1966): 162).

Aghaz Wa Anjam

Although it has been suggested by a recent commentator that Khwājah Naṣīr's treatise on "The Beginning and Return" should be considered under the category of psychology (Hasanzàdah Amull in al-Ṭūsī (1987): 80—1), both the intentions and implications of Aghdz wa anjdm are more directly of an ethical nature. Khwajah Nasīr wrote this treatise in response to one of his student followers who had asked him to write "a reminder of that which the passengers of the final path [rdh-i dkhirat have witnessed on the end of the act of creation, similar to that which is written in the Book and expressed by prophets and saints, peace be upon them" (ibid.: 1).

The Final Path, or the Path of Return, is perfectly clear; the guides are known; and the signposts are all self-explanatory.

Yet people are disinclined to follow that path because it is the same path from which they

have come. They have once before seen and heard all that they now see and hear. The cause of their disinclination, however, is their self- forgetfulness, their not remembering this previous familiarity. One perseveres in this self-forgetfulness because one does not open the ear and the eye with which one once heard and saw. One's persistence in self- forgetfulness rests on three forces: the natural distractions (shawa'ib-i tab Vat), such as lust and anger; evil habits (wasdwis-i 'adat), such as the preoccupations of the carnal soul, and the distractions of superfluous acts; and distorted spirits (nawdmis-i amthalah), such as following demons who appear in the shape of man, or imitating ignorant men who look like the learned. The result of this mundane persistence in self- forgetfulness of origin is punishment in the world to come. And what punishment is harder, Khwājah Naṣīr asks, than being near God and yet unaware and forgetful of Him? (al-Ṭūsī (1987): 6).

Man thus dwells between the Night of the Sacred Power (shab-i qadr) and the Day of Final Resurrection (ruz-i qiydmat). In this life there are two kinds of death: one voluntary, the other natural. "Whoever dies a voluntary death will be resurrected in everlasting life" (al-Ṭūsī (1987): 16). Time and space are like a nurse and a cradle, or a father and a mother, raising their offspring from the infantile state of birth until the occasion of the Return. But time is also the source of change, space the location of multiplicity, both causes of concealment of certain things from others. On the Day of Judgment, upon the removal of time and space, all concealments shall disappear and reality will shine through.

In this world people are divided into three categories. First, sdbiqdn, or those who are steadfast; they are the people of unity. Second, ahl-i yamln, or people of the right; they are the good people. And third, ahl-i shimdl, or people of the left; they are the evil people. All three groups shall pass through Hell, only the bad shall remain, and the good and the sdbiqdn shall depart for Paradise. They shall pass through sirdt, with the slightest disorientations leading to a descent into Hell and righteous determination guiding safely to Paradise (al-Ṭūsī (1987): 33). The good and evil acts in this world will be properly rewarded and then awarded or praised on the Day of Judgment. On that day the good and evil acts will be properly measured and weighed. Khwājah Naṣīr proceeds to give a full description of the apocalyptic events at the end of time, assigning the good- and evil-doers to Heaven and Hell, respectively, identifying the guards of Flell and the rivers of Paradise; and incorporating all the appropriate Qur'anic references and indices. Governing all these apocalyptic events are God's rewards – due to Flis Beneficence – and punishment – out of His Justice (ibid.-. 71).

Centrality of the Ethical Discourse

Whether delivered in the philosophical, Isma'lli or the mystical tradition, Khwājah Naṣīr's texts on ethics constitute a major segment of his writings and ought to be considered as a unique body of discourse. Some of the salient features of this discourse are as follows. Above and beyond the nomocentricity of the religious dogma, and their institutional

custodians as the clerical class of the 'ulama, there is a sustained possibility of attaining nobility of character and of social peace and harmony. Ethics, or Akhlāq, is the operative discourse of authority through which the nobility of character and collective harmony in society may be achieved. That discourse incorporates and is to a great extent derived from the canonical texts of Islam – the Qur'an and the Hadīth. Although the ethical discourse of Akhlāq considerably appropriates the authoritative voice and sanctity of the Qur'an and the Hadīth, it also reaches out for the pre- (and non-)Islamic authority of the ancient Indians, Persians and especially the Greeks. The result is a synthetic discourse of moral imperatives that calls its followers to a universe of ethical discourse not limited or exclusive to members of a particular religion. Although the application of the term "secular" to this ethical discourse would not be totally accurate, it is important to locate its operative force and legitimacy outside the nomocentric exclusivity of the Islamic Shariah. The ethical discourse that Khwājah Naṣīr institutionalizes in his Akhlāq is not identical to the Islamic Shari 'ah. It is a discourse sui generis and in full control of a universe of moral imagination in which any individual, Muslim or not, can attain nobility of character and social civility. By incorporating the philosophical, mystical and (non-Islamic) Greek, Indian and Persian sources and traditions into a syncretic discourse of moral authority, Khwājah Naṣīr, as a philosopher/vizier, effectively bars the ulama' proper, the institutional custodians of the sacred law, from entrance into the universe of his moral imagination. The result is the effective construction of a legitimate discourse of moral and political authority in juxtaposition against the exclusively Qur anic- and Hadīth-based discourse of the 'ulamā'. The independent and effective construction of this

ethical (moral/political or knowledge/power) discourse is instrumental in Khwājah Naṣīr's representing the archetypal figure of the philosopher/ vizier. Indeed, the discourse of Akhlāq and the character-type of the philosopher/vizier are interdependent on each other. Akhlāq is the discourse of the philosopher/vizier wherein he grounds the rational basis of his knowledge/power. As the Sharī'ah is the discourse of the religious doctors, the 'ulama, Akhlāq is the discourse, the self-legitimating narrative, of the philosopher/vizier.

Politics

Central to Khwājah Naṣīr's ethics is his discussion of politics. He divides his section on "politics" in Akhlāq-i nāṣirī into two parts: the first segment addresses domestic issues, or a communal order on a small scale, dar tadbir-i mandzil ("On How to Run a Household"); and the second segment covers "national" issues, or a communal order on a larger scale, dar siyasat-i mudun ("On the Politics of Cities").

The treatise on domestic issues, which is based on Ibn Sīnā'ss rendition of Aristotle's Oeconomica (Danishpazhuh in al-Ṭūsī (1982): 6), is divided into five chapters and consists of issues that should be studied under "economics". Khwājah Naṣīr begins this treatise with a preliminary discussion of the necessity of the household in human survival. The natural needs for survival and procreation have given rise to this necessity. The household constitutes five constituent elements: the father, the mother, the children, servants and sustenance (al-Ṭūsī (1977a): 206). The head of the household is in charge of its politics, its communal well-being. Khwājah

Naṣīr is emphatic to point out that by manzil he does not simply mean a house, "but a special kind of arrangement [ta lif that becomes operative between a husband and a wife, a parent and a child, a master and a servant, a proprietor and a property. [It does not matter] whether their house is made of wood and stone, tent and pole, the shadow of a tree, or the corner of a cave" (ibid.-. 207). Domestic wisdom (hikmat- i manzili) comprises supervision over this small community, with the best interests of the whole in mind. Khwājah Naṣīr gives a full description of what constitutes a good house: it has to be wide, spacious and protected against all natural and unnatural accidents and calamities such as fire, flood and robbery. He also insists on the significance of having good and appropriate neighbours. In the second chapter of this treatise, Khwājah Naṣīr provides a full course of advice on financial planning and advancement in a career. The third chapter addresses the function of the wife, which is "to safeguard the wealth and sustain procreation, and not to fulfil lust or anything of that sort" (ibid.: 215). Khwājah Naṣīr has a rather liberal view of women in a household. "A good wife is the partner of man in [their] wealth, his partner in lordship and management of the household, his representative when he is absent" (ibid.). He also advises against polygamy (ibid.-. 218). Of course, his "liberality" should not be overestimated. He believes that man must establish fear and awe in his wife, conceal her from all strangers and never let her be encouraged to follow her whimsical desires. But his tone throughout this chapter is to guide both husband and wife towards mutually respectable and responsible behaviour.

Khwājah Naṣīr devotes a full chapter to the education and upbringing of children, from giving them good and beautiful names to

attending to their traditional and religious training. He makes an exception, however, in the education of young girls. They should not be taught how to read and write; instead, they ought to be "taught such acts which are praiseworthy for women" (al-Ṭūsī (1977a): 230). He proceeds to give specific instructions in such matters of juvenile education as how to speak, how to eat and even how to drink wine.

Some thirty years after the original composition of Akhlāq-i nasirt, Khwājah Naṣīr adds a chapter on "paying due respect to parents" at the conclusion of the section on domestic matters (al-Ṭūsī (1977a): 236—7). After expressing obedience to God, there is no act of piety more virtuous than respecting one's parents. The love of parents for their children is natural, while the love of children for their parents is intentional and acquisitive. Children should learn to love their parents differently than the parents their children. Love for one's father should be expressed in (the superior, more spiritual form of) respect, obedience and prayer; while love for one's mother should be expressed through (more material means, such as) providing for her financial and physical comfort. Contrary to these praiseworthy virtues, there are vices – such as rudeness, stinginess and argumentativeness – that children should avoid committing against their parents.

The last chapter of this treatise on politics discusses on a minor scale the treatment of servants and slaves. They are like extensions of one's hands and arms, ears and eyes. They perform certain menial acts and leave time for their master to attend to more important things. They ought to be treated kindly and affectionately. Khwājah Naṣīr divides servants into three categories: those who are innately free in their disposition, those who are innately servile in their

dispositions and those who are obedient because of need. The first category should be cared for as if they were the master's own children, encouraged to do good; the second category should be used like animals; and the third should be employed for whatever particular purpose necessary.

Khwājah Naṣīr's final statement in this treatise is a stereotypical construction of major character traits in various peoples. Arabs are articulate, eloquent and intelligent and yet treacherous and lustful. Persians are distinguished by their intelligence, politics, cleanliness and shrewdness, and yet they are known to be deceitful and greedy. Romans are loyal, trustworthy, affectionate and capable and yet niggardly and wicked. Indians are superior in their powers of intuition, sensibility and imagination, and yet they are equally known to be conceited, vicious, deceitful and fallacious. The Turks are courageous, impeccable in their services, and most beautiful in their appearance and yet treacherous, cruel and impertinent (al-Ṭūsī (1977): 244).

The section on "The Politics of Cities" is divided into eight chapters. In the first chapter, Khwājah Naṣīr provides an argument as to why human society is in need of civilization (tamaddun). Human beings need
mutual co-operation in order to safeguard their individual and collective survival (al-Ṭūsī (1977): 250). In the second chapter, he discusses the centrality of mahabbat, or "group sentiments", as the crucial factor in bringing a human collectivity together. There are both natural and acquisitive forms of "group sensibilities" (ibid260), both instrumental in any mode of collective affinity – from family to society. The third chapter is devoted to a discussion of the two kinds of human society: utopia (madīna- yi fadilah) and the anti-utopia

(madīna-yi gbayr-i fadilah) (ibid.: 280). Utopia is but one, "because truth is immune to multiplicity" (ibid.). But there are three kinds of anti-utopias: first, "the City of the Ignorants" (madīna-yi jāhilah), whose people lack the power of reason (or speech = nutq)-, second, "the City of the Corrupt", (madīnah-yi fdsiqah), whose people have subjected their reason to their other senses; and third, "the City of the Misguided" (madīna-yi ddllah), whose people, out of a weak traditional disposition, have wrongly imagined a law to be virtuous and then built their city on its basis (ibid). These forms of anti-utopias are, in turn, divided into other forms of evil cities, ad infinitum, "because non-truth and evil has no finitude" (ibid.). As for the utopia itself, Khwājah Naṣīr makes the following observation: "In the Utopia [lit. 'the City of the Virtuous'] too, anti-Utopian cities shall emerge … and they are called stages. The purpose of these cities is the recognition of Utopia so that other cities shall strive to attain it" (ibid.). The fourth chapter of this section is a full discussion of the question of political power proper, "the administration of kingdom and the royal manners" (ibid.-. 300). There are two dimensions to supreme political authority: a "politics of virtue" (siydsat-i fadilah) and a "politics of imperfection" (siydsat-i ndqisah). The politics of virtue is necessary to guide the followers to bliss and salvation; the politics of imperfection is required to punish and curtail human fallacies and shortcomings. The fifth chapter enumerates the principles and guidelines to be observed by those who associate with the kings (ibid.: 314). This chapter consists of certain practical rules to be followed by courtiers and administrators if they do not wish to be subject to the kings' wrath. The sixth chapter is devoted to friendship (ibid.-. 321). Khwājah Naṣīr's purpose here is to emphasize the social and political significance of having a

limited but closely knit circle of friends and acquaintances. The seventh chapter is a full treatise on the principles that should govern one's relations with members of various social classes and groups, which Khwājah Naṣīr identifies as friends, foes, those who are neither friends nor foes, the virtuous men of learning and the underlings (ibid.-. 334—41). The eighth chapter, which is also the conclusion of the book, consists of a series of short aphorisms that Khwājah Naṣīr attributes to Plato (ibid.-. 341—4). "Do not test the learned in the abundance of their learning, but judge them by how they avoid evil and corruption!" (ibid.-. 341).

Hermeneutics

To understand further Khwājah Naṣīr's method of ethical extrapolations from the canonical and non-canonical sources of his time and culture, we should briefly note his hermeneutics. In both Awṣāf al-ashrāf and Aghdz iva anjdm, Khwājah Naṣīr follows a standard Ismá'íll line of hermeneutics (Dánishpazhūh in al-Ṭūsī (1956): 82). In another, shorter treatise (al-Tūsí (1956): 38—88), he further elaborates a typical IsmallT theory of a hidden constellation of meaning and signification. Here he postulates the existence of two worlds, one of "senses" (mahsūs), which corresponds to the second, that is, the world of "perceptions" (ma'qul, lit. = based on "intellect"). The relationship of perceptions to senses is like that of life to body. The world of perceptions is called the spiritual world, the world of senses the corporeal world. For every sensible object in this world, there is a perceptive correspondence in the other; for every individual in this world, there is a soul (rūh) in the other; and for every

apparent reality here, there is a hidden meaning in the other (al-Tūsí (1956): 83). The sources of perception in the upper world are the sources (masdar) of all possibilities of sensibility here in the lower world. That which we feel in this lower world is a mere manifestation (miizhiir) of that corresponding source of intellection in the upper world. There can be nothing in that spiritual world without a corresponding manifestation here in the physical world; and, conversely, there is nothing in the physical world which does not represent a spiritual reality.

Having established a perfect ontological/epistemological correspondence (because here being and meaning are identical) between things manifest and evident in this world and things intelligent and hidden in the other, Khwājah Naṣīr extends the preparatory argument into a standard Isma'ill rationale for the necessity of an Imam. Had it not been for the word of God as the supreme hidden Truth, there would be no manifested world. There must, by necessity, be a link, a correspondence, between the Word of God and the Manifested World. That link, too, must be of the same nature and composition as the manifested world. "Like other individuals subject to sense-perceptions, he has to be born, raised, and become old, one succeeding the other" (al-Tūsí (1956): 84). Without this intermediary force, of the same nature as the physical world itself, there will be no sustaining link between the commanding word of God and the physical world.

Historiography

There is a supplement to al-Juwaym's famous history of the Mongols, Tdrikh-i jahdngushd, whose authorship has been attributed to Khwajah

Naslr (al-Juwayni (1937), 3: 279—92). This short narrative, in effect, is a concise account of Khwājah Naṣīr's own observations as a participant in the events immediately surrounding the conquest of Baghdad. His historical narrative is concise, precise and devoid of any unnecessary hyperbole. He pays equal attention to diplomatic and military manoeuvres that took place between the Shawwal of 655/ October—November 1257 and Safar 656/February—March 1258. He gives a full and detailed account of the siege of Baghdad, including the description of a wall which was erected around the capital and then a ditch which was dug between the erected wall and the city. Catapults were then set in specific strategic locations and the city thus forced to capitulate. Khwājah Naṣīr also gives a full description of Hūlāgūs strategic plannings, the central front and the left and right flank of the army. Six days of fierce fighting between the 'Abb as id caliph and the Mongol warlord are reported by Khwājah Naṣīr, beginning on Tuesday 22 Muharram 656/29 January 1258. In the middle of the fierce fighting, he notes, Hūlāgū orders a letter of amnesty to be written and attached to arms and thrown from six directions into the capital city. According to this letter, the following groups were given amnesty: the sayyids, the scholars, the Christian priests, the elders of the community and anyone else who refused to fight the Mongols.

Khwājah Naṣīr reports a remarkable encounter between Hūlāgū and caliph al-Musta'sim when the latter finally surrenders on Monday 4 Safar 656/11 February 1258 (al-Juwayni (1937), 3: 290). "Eat them", Hūlāgū orders the caliph, pointing to the gold he had just recovered from al-Musta'sim's treasury. "These cannot be eaten", the caliph objects. "Then why did you keep them? Why did you not spend them on your army? Why did you not melt these iron doors into spears and prevent me from crossing the Oxus River?" The caliph says because it was God's will. Hūlāgū replies, "that which will happen to you is also God's will."

Poetics

Khwājah Naṣīr would find time away from his military and administrative responsibilities, as well as time away from his scientific and philosophical writings, to attend to matters musical and poetic. In his treatise on music (al-Ṭūsī (1986): 250) he once considered prosody a particular branch of musicology. But he also devoted an entire book to the subject of prosody and poetics. His treatise on poetics, Mi'yar al-ash'ar, consists of an introduction and two chapters (al-Ṭūsī (1990): 21). Khwājah Naṣīr examines the nature of poetry in the introduction. The two chapters cover prosody ('arud and qdfiyyah). Although Mi'ydr al-ash'dr has been (unjustly) dismissed as "no great masterpiece" (Boyle (1968): 621), it provides one of the most insightful accounts of Persian poetics extant.

Following a long tradition in Arabic and Persian poetics and prosody, Khwājah Naṣīr identifies poetry as a speech-act

(kalam) which is imaginative (mukhayyal) and rhythmic (mawzun). But whereas he attributes this definition to logicians, he adds that customarily (in 'urf-i jumhur) poetry is "an act of speech which is rhythmic and has rhyme" (al-Ṭūsī (1990): 21). Thus he does not consider rhyme (qdfiyyah) as an essential part of a poem. A speech-act (kaldm) consists of words (alfdz) which are, in turn, made of letters (huruf) which, according to their particular configurations, indicate a specific meaning. It is impossible to imagine a poem without the use of words. However, Khwājah Naṣīr can conceive of an inarticulate manual or facial expression to function as a verbal form and thus perform a function in a poem. But rhythmic and rhyming words that do not mean anything cannot be considered a poem.

Imagination is constitutional to poetry. Khwājah Naṣīr defines imagination as the power of "influence of words on the soul" (al-Ṭūsī (1990): 21). This influence can appear in expanding or contracting the soul in its disposition. The functional purpose of poetry is to generate this imaginative influence on the soul, the ultimate objective of which is to lead the individual to perform, or abstain from performing, an action. The act of the poetic imagination could also generate a particular feeling in an individual, such as satisfaction or anger. Khwājah Naṣīr further adds that whereas the Greeks have considered imagination as constitutional to poetry, Persian and Arab poets have considered it an aspect of poetic excellence, which is to say that for the Greeks the act of imagination is innate to poetry, whereas for Persian and Arab poets it is an attribute, "an ideal to be achieved" (ibid.: 22).

Rhythm iwazri) is a unique configuration of movements and pauses in poetry which is a source of particular pleasure for

the reader. Rhythm is instrumental in the poetic acts of imagination. "Every rhythmic act is in one way or another conducive to imagination, yet not everything that induces imagination is rhythmic" (al-Ṭūsī (1990): 22). Imagination and rhythm are two separate aspects of poetry. Moreover, rhythm itself has a dual function, once as rhythm proper, once as a conducive force in the generation of imagination. Rhythm, or metre, is constitutional to poetry. There are "incomplete" configurations in metre, such as in Persian khusrawanls, which some have considered as part of the metric system and some have not (ibid.-. 22—3). Rhymes are identical wordings at the end of every systemic cycle (adwar), such as at the end of a hemistich. Khwājah Naṣīr reports that, in Greek poetry, rhymes are not significant. He further reports that rhyming has not been central in Persian poetry either. He then concludes that "the significance of rhyme is not constitutional to poetry, rather it is customarily instrumental to it" (ibid.: 23). In conclusion, "Poetry … is a rhythmic act of speech, and nothing more. But if rhyming is considered to be central to poetry, then it is a rhythmic
act of speech in such a way that if it exceeds one [such act, then] those identical acts rhyme" (ibid.).

In his comparative poetics, Khwajah Nasīr discusses the difference between Persian and Arabic prosody. Words are different in their gravity (rizdnat) and lightness (khiffat). "In comparison to Persian, Arabic is closer to gravity and heaviness [thiql, and Persian is closer to lightness" (al-Ṭūsī (1990): 24). The reason for the gravity of words has to do either with the more difficult source of their origin in vocal formations or with their particular configuration of letters. In correspondence to this gravity or lightness of words in a

language, graver or lighter metric systems are compatible with poetic compositions in that language.

In addition to poetics ('ilm-i naqd-i shi'r) and prosody (which consists of metrical structures, or 'arūd, and rhyme, or qdfiyyah), there are a number of other branches of knowledge that are related to poetry. Linguistics, rhetoric, aesthetics and literary criticism are among the disciplinary approaches to the study of poetry. The study of the nature and function of imagination is a branch of logic. The study of rhythm or metre is an aspect of musicology.

The bulk of Khwājah Naṣīr's Mīyàr al-ash'dr consists of two treatises on 'arūd (metrical structures) and qdfiyyah (rhyme). In his chapter on 'arūd, Khwājàh Nasīr provides a standard exposition of Arabic prosody with comparative references to Persian poetry. The poem he chooses to scan as an example is the opening verse of Firdawsī's Shdh-nàmah: "In the name of God of Spirit and Intellect / Beyond which the Imagination cannot reach" (al-Ṭūsī (1990): 35—6). After a full exposition of Arabic and Persian prosody, in which he constantly follows al-Khalil ibn Ahmad's (d. c. 170/786) famous concentric circles (ibid.: 40—68), he concludes with a chapter "On the Benefit and Advantages of Prosody" (ibid.: 123—5). He begins by reporting that there is a group of people who altogether question any validity, benefit, or significance to prosody. These people argue that appreciation of poetry (idrdk) is contingent upon an individual's having taste (dhawq). "He who has taste does not need prosody, and he who lacks it could through prosody enjoy poetry to some degree" (ibid.: 123). But Khwajah Nasīr proceeds to list four benefits for the science of prosody. Firstly, he suggests that a knowledge of prosody cannot come from taste but from

mastering the art of poetry itself. Having a taste for sweetness, he argues, is different from having a knowledge of the varieties of sweetnesses, their compositions, dispositions, specifics of their constitution, etc. Secondly, when one has knowledge of prosody, one immediately recognizes the defects of a poem. Those who merely have a taste for poetry could not possibly detect what is good and what is defective in a poetic structure. Thirdly, crucial distinctions between metrical systems are not always possible by merely having a taste for poetry. Khwajah Naṣīr cites examples from both Persian and Arabic poetry

where a knowledge of prosody is helpful in their correct reading. He also reports on a poet in his own time who had composed a long panegyric in taivil metre in which one of his verses did not match the metre (al-Ṭūsī (1990): 125). Khwājah Naṣīr says that he could not explain this to the poet because he did not know prosody. But after a while the poet intuitively discovered the defect and rectified it. Fourthly, for the person who lacks intuitive taste in poetry, prosody is helpful in distinguishing between prose and poetry. Khwājah Naṣīr further adds that for those who lack a natural gift of appreciation for poetry, a knowledge of prosody can generate an interest for them. Khwājah Naṣīr offers himself as an example of a person who, through knowledge of prosody, developed a taste for poetry.

In his treatise on rhyme, Khwājah Naṣīr continues with his comparative discussion of Arabic and Persian rules governing the rhyming of verses. Again he relies primarily on al-Khalll as his source and defines rhyme as "the configuration of letters and vowels between the last consonant letter of a verse and the consonant letter that precedes it" (al-Ṭūsī (1990): 129). He then provides his slight modification leading to the

following re-definition of rhyme: "a configuration consisting of a letter or [a number of] letters which is necessary to be [present] in similar words at the end of verses or hemistichs, in repetition or as if in repetition" (ibid.: 130). A typical discussion by Khwājah Naṣīr in this treatise is his critical dismissal of the use of shaygdn (the name of a legendary treasure) in rhyming verses. In words such as shdygan, asban (horses) and mardan (men), the latter two letters — an — could be used as the rhyming letters, and since there is an overabundance of such constructions, this kind of rhyming is called shaygdn. But Khwājah Naṣīr dismisses the uses of shdygan rhyming as unacceptable (ibid.: 154). He concludes this treatise with some remarks on certain problems in Arabic and Persian rhyming systems and provides solutions to them.

Khwājah Naṣīr himself was a gifted poet, and some of his poetry has survived (Naflsi (1956): 73–81; Mudarris Raḍawī (1955): 54—65). In the following few lines, he summmarizes his ontology:

Being is of two kinds in the mind:

Either the Necessary Being or contingent being.

The contingent being is either substance or accident,

The substance divided into five segments.

Body, and its two principles – matter and form,

Then Soul and Intellect, learn them fast.

Divided into nine are made accidents and this

learnt when discussing the substance of the Intellect.

How many, How much, Where, When, Added to What, located Where?

Then Active and Passive, and possession of being.

Thus the Necessary Being is exempted of all these,

Because it was, is, and shall be and none of these were.

(Mudarris Raḍawī (1955): 62)

Conclusion

It is impossible to exaggerate either the personal or the institutional significance of Khwājah Naṣīr al-Dln al-Tūs! in medieval Islamic philosophy. Had he not even founded the Marāghah Observatory as a major institution of higher learning and thus brought together a galaxy of distinguished philosophers and scientists, had he not served a world-conqueror as a philosopher/vizier and used that position to advance the causes of science and philosophy in an otherwise hostile environment, and had he not written so massively in Persian, thus making a major contribution to the establishment of this language as the second most important medium of scientific and philosophical inquiry in Islamic intellectual history, his own writings on a range of scientific and philosophical discourses would still have been enough to put him on a par with al-Fàràbī and Ibn Slna as among the finest achievements of medieval learning. Perhaps the most compelling image of Khwājah Naṣīr that shines through all

his writings and activities is that of a philosopher/vizier, a distinctly Persian phenomenon that combined avid theoretical learning with a relentless penchant for practical politics.

As a philosopher/vizier, Khwājah Naṣīr is prototypical of a breed apart, the closest approximation to the Platonic (and pre-Islamic Persian) ideal of the philosopher/king (see Dabashi (1990)). In (full) control of the centre of political power, he was also the most erudite philosopher of his time. The combination of these two forces - power and knowledge – results in a unique "political philosophy" which is both a politically based philosophy and a philosophically anchored politics. The implications of this discourse go beyond the immediate confinements of both political establishment and philosophical engagement. A unique position of legitimate authority is self-generated in this prototype of the philosopher/vizier that supersedes both the political order proper and the philosophical inquiry abstracted from its politics. The philosophical discourse of the philosopher/vizier assumes a unique ethical grounding that exacts obedience from both the political and the religious figures of authority. To the warlord (e.g., Hūlāgū), the philosopher/vizier speaks from the commanding position of a Muslim (interpreter of the sacred) philosopher (the possessor of reason, an astronomer, a physician). To the religious authorities, the ;ulamd' proper, the philosopher/vizier speaks with the voice and authority of the man of power, the political intellect
closest to the epicentre of (legitimate) violence, the warlord with his able hand on the sword. The philosopher/vizier, with Khwājah Naṣīr as its archetypal example, thus occupies a central position of command and obedience in the Islamic and Persian political culture, instrumental in creating the material

conditions for the growth and development of philosophy, the instrumentality of reason in pre-modern intellectual history.

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CHAPTER 33

From al-Ṭūsī to the School of Iṣfahān

John Cooper

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The period in Islamic philosophy from the death of Naslr aI-Dīn al-Ṭūsī in 672/1274 to the beginning of what has come to be known as the "School of Iṣfahān", which may, for convenience, be placed during the latter part of the tenth/ sixteenth century, encompasses some three hundred years of intense philosophical activity on many fronts, an understanding of which is essential in order to comprehend the changes which the speculative sciences underwent in the Safavid era. Unfortunately, however, this period has not received the attention which the earlier, and, to a certain extent, later periods have enjoyed in the history of Islamic philosophy. To some extent this lack of attention may be attributed to the tendency of writers in this period to produce commentaries, supercommentaries, glosses, superglosses and marginalia on the works of their predecessors rather than to write new texts (this is only in part true, as will become clear), and to the tendency of many modern researchers to see such writing as a sign of intellectual stagnation. This is a view which needs to be revised, however, if the richness and

importance of these texts is to be understood, for it is in the elaboration of the basic materials of Islamic philosophy in both the commenting texts and the original texts during this period that the ideas which gradually accumulated to produce the later flowering of the intellectual sciences can be found.

It is the purpose of this chapter to provide an overview of certain strands in the history of the philosophy of this period. The overview will be seen to be selective in that several important figures and "schools" have been omitted. Nothing here will be said about the "school" of Ibn 'Arab! which culminated in the writings of Jam!, nor of the closely related Sufi authors who give evidence of their acquaintance with the metaphysical world of the Shaykh al-Akbar in their poetry and commentaries
on poetry, typified at the end of the period under discussion by the Niirbakhshi Shaykh Shams aI-Dīn Lahljl, the author of one of the most famous commentaries on Shabastari's Gulshan-i raz, who died in 915/1506, respected by DawanT and Jam!, and visited three years before his death by the Safavid Shah Isma'll. Not that such schools and figures are not important in tracing the emerging synthesis of the Safavid era. But two main lines run through this chapter: that of the development of Peripatetic and ishrdql philosophy, and that of the increasingly important ground that philosophy came to hold in Shi ! thought.

At one end of the period examined in this chapter, the nearer to our times, stands the monumental achievement of Sadr aI-Dīn al-Shīrazī, in particular his Kitdb al-asfdr. This work has been viewed by modern scholars to be a majestic synthesis of several currents of speculative thinking in the Islamic tradition[1] – mashshat (Peripatetic) philosophy, whose

chief practitioner had been Ibn Sina; ishrdql philosophy, initiated by Suhrawardl; the gnostic philosophy of Ibn Arab! and his followers; and the kaldm (dialectical theology) of the Mutazilites, Ash'antes, and Shi'is – brought together within a framework provided by the Imamology of the Twelver Shl'is. At the other extreme these strands lie to a certain extent, but not altogether, separate, although it would be wrong to think of their ravelling as the work of a single person: in various combinations, strands are woven together by a number of thinkers over these centuries until it becomes virtually impossible by the end of the ninth/fifteenth century in Persia to name anyone who can be said to have stuck to only one of these currents of thought. Even in a figure such as Mir Findiriskl (d. 1050/1640—1), known from his extant works as a rnashshd'i, the Peripateticism is inevitably coloured for us by his reputation as a Sufi.[2] Henceforth it will be appropriate to speak only of a predominating tendency towards one strand of thought or another. The fusion achieved by Mullā Ṣadrā was to be an inseparable amalgam.

It is instructive to take Naslr aI-Dīn al-Ṭūsī at the further extreme of this period for he too wrote works within a broad spectrum of different approaches, yet he never brought them all together in one single work. The previous chapter lists his output, and from this it can be seen that Ṭūsī, at various times in his life, wrote on Isma'ill metaphysics, rnashshd'f philosophy, kaldm, ethics (in the broad traditional sense including economics and politics) and Sufism, and was acquainted with ishrdql philosophy and the thinking of Ibn Arabl (at least he corresponded with Sadr aI-Dīn al-Qūnawī, and cannot have been ignorant of his concerns); this is not to mention his work as a mathematician and astronomer, and his interest in poetry and poetics. It is true that philosophy is a

unifying characteristic in his work, if natural philosophy be included and the philosophizing tendency in his kaldm and ethics be acknowledged, but he wrote each of his works wearing, as it were, a different hat. As mentioned in
the previous chapter, it was also Naslr aI-Dīn al-Ṭūsī who founded the observatory at Marāghah, which provided a home for so many philosophers and scientists of his and the subsequent generation.

Who were the intellectual giants who stand at the beginning of this period? Ṭūsī himself died, as already mentioned, in 672/1274; Ibn 'Arab! had died in Damascus in 638/1240; and Fakhr al-Dln al-Razi, the renowned theologian, who can at least be counted as a philosopher for his commentary on Ibn Slna's al-isbarat wa'l-tanbihdt, [2]' and who numbered several philosophers among his students, had died in 606/1209. Another outstanding philosopher of the generation preceding Ṭūsī should also be mentioned, that is Afdal al-Dln Muhammad al-Kashanl, known as Baba Afdal, the most probable date for whose death is 610/1213—14.^ He is referred to by Ṭūsī on a point of logic in the latter's Shark al-Ishārāt, and it has been pointed out that Mullā Ṣadrā was indebted to him when writing his Iksir al-'drifinP Baba Afdal, who wrote most of his works in a stylistically and terminologically attractive Persian, stressed the path to salvation through knowledge of the Self, which has led Nasr to describe his philosophy as autology.[6] His epistemology, which thus emphasizes the self-knowledge of human beings, has affinity with that of Suhrawardi in its linking of ontology and epistemology, and foreshadows Mullā Ṣadrā and his doctrine of the essential identity of knower, known and knowledge (ittihadal-'dqil wai-ma'qut). Although his writings contain no explicit references to Sufism, and his style is that

of the Peripateticism of Ibn Sina, his philosophy is infused with a mystical strand and is described by Corbin as "Hermeticizing".[7]

The reputations of two contemporaries of Ṭūsī have survived to the present day, each on account of a text he wrote which became the original for numerous commentaries, and which are studied even today in madrasahs with one or other of these commentaries. The first is Athir al- Din Mufaddal ibn 'Umar al-Abhari (d. 663/1264), who was one of Fakhr aI-Dīn al-Razi's most outstanding pupils. Born in Mosul, he emigrated at the time of the Mongol invasion first to Damascus and then to Irbil. Nasir aI-Dīn al-Ṭūsī wrote a commentary on his l'anzil al-afkdr on logic, [8] but more important was his Kitāb al-hiddyah on metaphysics and natural philosophy, which has continued to be used as a teaching text, particularly in the Indian subcontinent, especially in conjunction with the commentary of Mullā Ṣadrā.[9] His al-isdghujl was a popular introduction to the study of logic, and was translated into Latin in the eleventh/ seventeenth century.[10] He is also credited with a al-Ishārāt and a al-mahsul, said to have been modelled respectively on Ibn Slna's famous work and the al-tahsil of Ibn Slna's student Bahmanyar." These two works testify to a teacher-pupil "chain" linking Ibn Sīnā with Tusl's generation of philosophers, which is traditionally given as: Ibn Sīnā – Bahmanyar Abu'l-Abbas al-Lawkari -

Afdal aI-Dīn al-Jilanl – Ṣadr al-Dīn al-SarakhsI – Farid al-Dln Damad al-Nisaburi, this latter having also been a pupil of Fakhr al-Dln al-Rāzī and a teacher of NasTr al-Dln al-Ṭūsī.[12]

Also a contemporary of TusT was the Shafi'1 philosopher and logician Najm al-Dln 'All ibn 'Umar al-Katibl al-QazwTnl, known as Dablran (d. 675/1276). He was a pupil of Abhari, and taught in Juwayn in present- day Afghanistan (where he is said to have taken Quṭb al-Dln al-Shīrazī to teach with him for a while) and at Tusl's observatory at Marāghah, which he helped to found.[13] His two most enduring works have been the much-commented al-Risdlat al-shamsiyyah on logic, [14] and the Hikmat al-'ayn on metaphysics, the latter being usually read with the commentary of al-Bukhari[1]" (it was, incidentally, one of the sources for Muhammad Iqbal's Development of Metaphysics in Persia). He was influenced by the ideas of Fakhr aI-Dīn al-Razi, on two of whose works, al-Muhassal and al-Mulakhkhas, he wrote commentaries. He rejected the proof for the Necessary Existent based on the impossibility of infinite regress, and gave another proof in a treatise called al-Risdlah fi ithbdt al-wajib.

Of the students of Ṭūsī, two in particular stand out for our consideration here: Quṭb al-Dln al-Shīrazī (634/1236—710/1311) and the 'Allamah al-Hilll (648/1250—726/1325). Both have been briefly referred to in the previous chapter, but Quṭb al-Dln deserves to be further discussed because of his interest in ishrdqi philosophy, which has been the object of a recent study.[16] Apart from studying with Ṭūsī (he studied Ibn Slna's al-Ishārāt with him) and Dablran Katibl, he was also steeped in the Sufi tradition (his father was a disciple of Shihab al-Dln 'Umar al-Suhrawardl (d. 632/1234—5)), is said to have met Jalal al-Dln RumT and is known to have studied with Rumi's son-in-law and successor, Sadr aI-Dīn al-Qūnawī (he studied Ḥadith with him as well as the mystical sciences). He is also the author of a commentary on al-Suhrawardi's Hikmat al-isbraq, which, although relying much on the earlier

commentary of Shams aI-Dīn al-Shahrazuri, which it superseded as the text for students up to the present day, expresses the Shaykh al-Ishraq's Philosophy of Illumination in Peripatetic terms, stressing the continuity of the Hikmat al-ishrdq both with Suhrawardl's other, more Peripatetic works, and also with the general Islamic philosophical tradition.[17] Another work by Quṭb al-Dln, his encyclopedic Durrat al-tdj li-ghurrat al-dubdj ("The Pearly Crown for Dubaj's Brow") is in Persian. The philosophical sections of this work, while being totally Peripatetic in style, have also been shown to be heavily dependent on Suhrawardi's Hikmat al-Ishrdq.[18]

The 'Allamah al-Hilll, Hasan ibn Yusuf ibn al-Mutahhar (648/1250— 726/1325), was one of the most celebrated Imam! scholars, renowned particularly for his contributions to law, legal methodology and theology.[19] His early studies were completed in al-Hillah under the tuition of his
father and his maternal uncle, the Muhaqqiq al-Hilll, Najm aI-Dīn Abu'l- Qāsim Ja'far ibn Hasan (d. 676/1277), as well as other scholars of this stronghold of Shl'ism, where he studied Hadīth, kaldm, law and legal methodology. Although no reports confirm al-Hillī's presence at Mara- ghah, he is known to have studied both with Naslr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī and al-Kàtib al-Qazwīnī. With the former he studied philosophy, particularly the ildhiyydt of Ibn Sînā's Kitāb al-shifa, and also probably theology and logic, and with the latter philosophy and logic. He wrote commentaries on TUST'S Tajrid al-'aqd'id and Qawaid al-'aqaid in theology, and on Kàtibī's al-Risālat al-shamsiyyah (logic) and Hikmat al-'ayn.[20] Al-Iatibī also introduced him to the works of Fakhr aI-Dīn al-Rāzī and Muhammad ibn Nàmàwar al-Khunjī. Al-Hillī was also probably familiar with the works of Ibn Arabī through

Shams aI-Dīn al-Kīshī (d. 695/1296), with whom he studied in Baghdad after his period studying with Ṭūsī and Kàtibī. He also studied with ʿIzz aI-Dīn al-Fàrūthī al-Wàsitī, a student of Suhrawardī, and among the Allàmah's works is a commentary on Suhrawardī s al-Talwthdt.[21] Most of his philosophical works have, however, been lost, and the only pupil who attained fame in the philosophical field was Quṭb al-Dīn al-Buwayhl al-Rāzī (d. 766/1365).[22] Al-Hilli s wide-ranging intellectual achievement and breadth of scholarship was to set a pattern for Imam! scholarship up to the present day, to the extent that even when the principal interests of a student lie in law and theology, and even if he or she feels a strong antipathy towards philosophical thought, he or she will read the works of the philosophers in order to gain familiarity with the methodology. Indeed, Imiimi theology and legal methodology after al-Hilll became so thoroughly infused with the terminology and style of philosophy that they are virtually incomprehensible to one who has not also mastered the rational sciences.

Al-Hillī's outstanding student in philosophy and logic was Quṭb al- Dīn Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Buwayhl al-Rāzī al-Tahtànī (d. 765/1365), [23] who also studied with the great Sunni scholar Adtid aI-Dīn al-Ijī (d. 756/1355).[21] Among his students was the Imam! jurist the Shahīd al-Awwal, Muhammad ibn Makkl al-'Àmili (d. 786/1384), who studied with him in Amul towards the end of Rāzī's life.[25] The Shahīd al-Awwal believed Rāzī to be an Imàmī, although Shàfiʿīs hold him to be one of them. In logic he contributed his own commentary on Kàtibī's al-Risālat al-shamsiyyah, [26] but his main philosophical work was his supercommentary on Ibn Sīnà's Kitāb al-ishdràt, whose title, al-Muhàkimāt bayn sharhay al-Ishārāt, indicates its contents, a critical evaluation

of the commentaries of Nasīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Ràzî, and gave rise to his title of Sàhib al-Muhàkimāt.

The probable acquaintance of the Allàmah al-Hillī with the ideas of Ibn Arabī has been mentioned, as has the correspondence between Ibn Arabī's foremost disciple, Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī, and Nasīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, [27] but the incorporation of the Shaykh al-Akbar's teachings into Imam! thinking, which was to bear fruit in the work of Mullā Ṣadrā, was initiated by three figures a little outside the mainstreams of philosophy and Imam! scholarship. The most important of these figures is undoubtedly the Sayyid Baha' aI-Dīn Haydar al-Amull (719 or 720/1319 or 1320—after 787/1385). What is known of his life is to be gleaned from two autobiographical accounts which he wrote in 777/1375—6 and 782/1360, when he had settled in Najaf. His last attested work, the Risdlat al-'ulūm al-'dliyyah, was written when he was sixty-five in 787/1385, after which nothing more is known of him.[28] Haydar Amull was born in Amul in northern Persia, and studied there, and in Astarabad and Iṣfahān. For a short time he was in the service of the ruler of Tabaristan, Fakhr al- Dawlah Hasan ibn Shah Kaykhusraw ibn Yazdigird. A profound religious experience resulted in his abandoning the courtly life in his thirtieth year, when he set out on the hajj. He travelled in the robes of a Sufi to the Shl'7 shrines, to Jerusalem and to Mecca and Medina, and then spent the rest of his life to the last date that is known for him in Iraq, first in Baghdad where he studied with the philosopher NasTr al-Dln 'All ibn Muhammad All al-Kashani al-Hilli (d. 755/1354), [29] and with the son of the Allamah al-Hilli, Fakhr al-Muhaqqiqln Muhammad ibn Hasan al- Hilll (d. 771/1370), [30] and finally in Najaf. Seven of his thirty-four listed works are extant, of which the Nass al-nusus, a

commentary on the Fusus al-hikam of Ibn Arab!, [31] and the Jami' al-asrdr wa-manba al-amvar, a ta 'wil of the Shari'ah, ' are today the best known. There remains also a vast commentary on the Qur'an entitled ah Mu hit al-a'zam, [33]

For Haydar Amull Shi'ism and Sufism are identical. The true believer is a mu'min mumtahan, a tested believer, who combines the practice, discipline and mystical insight of Shari'ah, tariqah and haqiqah, and the twelve Imams are the leaders and guides of all three aspects of Islam. Hence true Islam is not that of legalist Shl'ism, nor that of Sufism which (supposedly) rejects its Shl'T origins, but an esoteric Islam in which knowledge is attained through the Imams. His writings are strongly influenced by Ibn 'Arab!, from whom, however, he departs in one significant respect. In the Shaykh al-Akbar's thought, the important notion of waldyah, or sainthood, finds its culmination in the person of Jesus, the absolute seal of sainthood, and, according to some of his followers, in the person of Ibn Arab! himself as the limited seal of sainthood. The wall, of course, for a Shī'ī is the Imam, and Haydar Amull places All, the first Imam, in the position Ibn Arab! reserved for Jesus, and the Mahdl, the present wali and twelfth Imam, as the holder of the limited seal of sainthood. In this he followed two earlier Persian mystics, Sa'd al-Dln al-Hamuyah (587/1191—650/1252) and Najm al-Dln Dayah (d. 654/1256). [34]

Haydar Amull's influence on subsequent philosophy in the Persian milieu is thus to be found in his alignment (or, on his terms, realignment)
of Shl'ism and Sufism, particularly in the light of the latter's Akbarian manifestation, but he also represents a type which finds itself repeated in many Persian Imam! scholars down to

the present day. He founded no tariqah, nor is his adherence to any tariqah much in evidence in his writings. Instead he exemplifies the spiritual Shī'ī who is turned towards the Imams as the sole sources of knowledge and as guides to the understanding of the real nature of existence, which is God. The acquisition of this knowledge and understanding is thus equally a matter of reasoning and analysis and of the insights achieved through spiritual discipline and the resulting mystical illumination. The exact point of balance between reasoning and unveiling, between the intellect and the heart, in so far as these can be distinguished at the highest levels, varies among the later Shī'ī mystics, the 'urafd and determines the colouring of their teachings, but too much of a leaning in either direction is held to be a weakness and a sign of deviation from the straight path of true Islam. This is also a point emphasized in the writings of Suhrawardl, and is repeated by Mullā Ṣadrā. On the whole, however, it has to be said that later Shl'i opinion, with its generally rather severe attitude to tariqah Sufism, and seeking to retain the exclusive dependence of its spirituality on the persons of the Imams alone, remained critical of Haydar Amull.

The remaining figures who will be mentioned here belong to the ninth/fifteenth century, and all of them testify to the increasing interconnectedness of the various strands in Islamic speculative thinking which became a mark of these times. It is more difficult to establish direct links between these philosophers, or even, at this stage of scholarship, to gauge the precise nature of the effect their writings had on subsequent philosophy, but each of them left important works which testify to the continuing influence of philosophy during this century. Sa'in al-Dln 'All ibn Muhammad ibn Afdal al-Dln Muhammad Turkah al- Khujandl al-Isfaham, better

known as Ibn Turkah, (d. 835/1432), is acknowledged to have been one of the first to seek to unify the Peripatetic, ishrdqi and Akbarian strands in the perspective of Shi'Y esotericism.[35] Ibn Turkah belonged to an Iṣfahān! family of 'ulamd', and wrote some fifty- seven works on philosophy and mysticism, including commentaries on the I'ustis al-hikam of Ibn Arabi and on several classic texts of Sufi poetry, still in large part unedited. When Iṣfahān was invaded by Tamerlane, he was exiled to Samarqand, but he was able to return to Iṣfahān on the latter's death. The most influential of his works was probably the Tamhid al-qawa'id, a commentary on the Qawd'id al-tawhid of Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Iṣfahāni.[36] The latter was a Peripatetic philosopher who had become a Sufi, and sought in this short work to summarize the doctrine of tawhid in terms of the teachings of Ibn Arabi. Ibn Turkah was also learned in the science of numerical symbolism, which he incorporated into his writings.

The second figure in this group was Ibn AbT Jumhur al-Ahsa l (.c. 837/1433—4—after 904/1499).[37] Born in al-Ahsa (nowadays part of eastern Saudi Arabia, facing Bahrain), he began his studies there under his father's tuition before going on to Najaf. His travels took him to Syria, Mecca (for the hajj), Baghdad, Mashhad and Astarabad. He wrote works in most of the traditional sciences, including legal methodology, law, Ḥadith and theology (particularly on the Imamate), but also the large synthetic work on which his fame rests, the al-mujli.''* Cast in the form of a supercommentary on his own maslik al-afham ft 'ibn al-kaldm, it brings together, like the work of Ibn Turkah, theology, Peripatetic and ishrdqi philosophy, and the Sufism of Ibn Arabl, and is cast in the mould of Shi'i imamology. It is not clear to what extent this

work influenced Safavid theosophers, but it marks another important staging post in the direction of the integration of the various speculative disciplines under the aegis of Imam! teachings, which culminates in the work of Mullā Ṣadrā.

Belonging primarily to the Peripatetic school, but also manifesting an interest in mysticism was Jalal al-Dln al-Dawanl (830/1427—908/ 1502–3).[39] A native of Dawan near Kazarun in southern Persia, he studied initially with his father, who was qddi of the town. Moving to Shiraz, he held the office of sadr under the Qara Quyunlu Yusuf ibn Jahanshah, but resigned to take up the post of mudarris at the Begum Madrasah (Dar al-Aytam). Under the Aq Quyunlu he became qddi of Fars, but when Shah Isma'il began his takeover of the region he escaped. He set out again for Kazarun at the end of his life, but died a few days after reaching the excamp- ment of Abu'l-Fath Beg Bayandur, who had taken control of Shiraz. He was buried in Dawan. He wrote mostly in Arabic, although his most famous work, the Akhlāq-i jaldli, was a Persian treatise modelled on Naslr aI-Dīn al-Ṭūsī's Akhlāq-i nāṣirī. Over seventy-five works of his are recorded, covering the fields of philosophy, mysticism, theology and tafsir, among which is a commentary on the Haydkil al-nur of Suhrawardl al- MaqtuI, and three sets of glosses on the commentary by Ala al-Dln 'All ibn Muhammad al-Qushjl (d. 879/1474)[40] to Ṭūsī's al-tajrid. The first of these glosses, known as the Hdshiyyah-yi, qadim, was criticized in another set of glosses by the Amir Sadr aI-Dīn Muhammad al-Dashtaki (d. 903/1497—8), [41] and Dawani replied to these in a second set of glosses which became known as the Hdshiyyah-yi jadid. Once again Dashtakl set out his criticisms in a further set of glosses, to which Dawani replied in what came to be known as the Hdshiyyah-yi ajadd.

The complete set oi the three glosses by Dawani and the two by Sayyid al-Hukama' are known collectively as the Tabaqat al-jaldliyyah wa l- Stidriyyah. ' ' Sayyid al-Hukama''s son, the Amir Ghiyath al-Dln Mansur al-Dashtaki (d. 948/1541—2) wrote his own glosses on the al-tajrid, in which he renewed the attack on Dawani.

Ghiyath aI-Dīn al-Dashtakl has been portrayed as a precocious child, debating with DawanI in the presence of his father Ṣadr al-Dīn at the age of fourteen and mastering both Peripatetic and Illuminationist philosophy at the age of twenty. He was appointed sadr by Shah Tahmasp, but the Shah took the side of the powerful mujtahid al-Karakl in a debate before him between Dashtaki and Karakl over the latter's calculation of the direction of the qiblah (as a result of which mosque qiblahs throughout Persia had to be realigned), and Dashtaki was dismissed and replaced by a pupil of Karakl, beginning what was in effect the takeover of the important religious offices under the Safavids by the new Shl'l 'ulamd' from the centres of learning outside Persia from the old religious hierarchy of pre-Safavid times. Dashtaki is counted among the great Imam! scholars of his time in both the speculative sciences, and law and legal methodology. He wrote a commentary on the Qur'an, and on ethics (Akhlāq-i mansuriyyah, al-Tasawwuf wa'l-Akhlāq), geometry, logic and metaphysics; he also composed a commentary on Suhrawardl's Haydkil al-niir, engaging again with DawanI and his commentary.

With Dashtaki, the link is made with the School of Iṣfahān, for it was his students, among whom mention should be made particularly of Kamal aI-Dīn al-Ardablll (d. 950/1543), and their students who bridge the gap with the generation of Mir

Damad. At the beginning of the period studied in the chapter, philosophy, at least in the Persian world, already subsumed theology; three hundred years later, the discipline was prepared to see the accomplishment of the unification of all its branches, from logic and the natural sciences to speculative mysticism, in the work of its greatest philosopher Sadr aI-Dīn al-ShirazI.

NOTES

1 See, for example, James Winston Morris, The Wisdom of the Throne: an Introduction to the Philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā (Princeton, 1981): 21–39.

2 See Encyclopaedia of Islam, 2nd ed., suppl., s.v. "Findiriskl" (Seyyed Hossein Nasr): 308–9. Mir Findiriskl was also a noted author of works on alchemy and, as a result of his extensive travels in India, of works displaying a deep interest in Hinduism.

3 Abu Abd Allāh Muhammad ibn 'Umar ibn al-Husayn al-Räzi, Fakhr al-Dln, whose fame rests principally on his reputation as a theologian, was a profound and critical writer on philosophy who was, however, much criticized by later philosophers for his tendency to philosophical scepticism.

4 For the most detailed account in English of Babà Afdal, his works and his main philosophical concerns, see Encyclopaedia Iranica, 3, s.v. "Babà Afdal" (W. Chittick): 285–91. See also Seyyed Hossein Nasr, 'Afdal aI-Dīn Käshänl and the philosophical world of Khwàja Nasir aI-Dīn

Ṭūsī ", in Michael E. Marmura (ed.), Islamic Theology and Philosophy: Studies in Honor of George
F. Hourani (Albany, 1984): 249–64. Most of his oeuvre has been published in M. Mīnuwī and Y. Mahdawī, Mnsannafat-i Afdal til-Din Muhammad Mamqī Kāshānî, 2nd ed. (Tehran, 1987).

5 On both these points see Chittick's article cited in note 4.

6 See Nasr, op. cit.'. 260.

7 See Henry Corbin, Avicenna and the Visionary Recital, trans. Willard R. Trask, (London, 1960): 13.

8 See Mudarris Raḍawī, Ahivàl wa àthàr … Nasīr al-Dīn [Ṭūsī] (Tehran, 1975): 183.

9 Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Shîrāzī, Sharh al-hidàyah al-athīriyyah, litho. (Tehran, 1895, and offset reprint, n.p., n.d.). Another well-known commentary is that of Mir Husa Mu'In aI-Dīn al-Maybudl, written in 880/1475.

10 For commentaries on this work and the Latin translation, see Encyclopaedia Iranien, 1, "Abliarī" (G. C. Anawati): 216–17.

11 See Mudarris Raḍawī, op. cit.: 184.

12 See Mudarris Radawī, op. cit.: 6 and 171.

13 For Dablràn al-Kàtibī see Mudarris Radawī, op. cit.'. 226—8; and Encyclopaedia of Islam, 2nd ed., 4, "al-Katibi" (M. Mohaghegh): 762.

14 For an English translation see The Logic of the Arabians (Risdla-i-shamsiyya), Arabic text with Eng. trans. by A. Sprenger, first appendix to Dictionary of the Technical Terms … (Kishshāf istilāhāt al-funūn) (Calcutta, 1854). The most important commentaries were those by Sa'd al-Dīn al-Taftazānī and Quṭb al- Dln al-Rāzī, both still studied in the madrasahs.

15 Najm al-Dīn 'alī ibn 'Umar Al-Kātibī al-Qazwīnī, Hikmatal-'ayn, with commentary of Shams al-Dīn Muhammad ibn Mubārakshàh al-Bukhàrī, ed. with intro, by Ja'far Zāhidī (Mashhad, 1975). Glosses on this commentary were written by Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzî, All ibn Muhammad al-Jurjānī (al-Sharīf), and others. The Allāmah al-Hillī also wrote a commentary on the Hikmat al- 'ayn.

16 John Walbridge, The Scietice of Mystic Lights: Quṭb al-Dīn SlriRāzī and the llluminatiomst Tradition in Islamic Philosophy (Cambridge, Mass., 1992).

17 For translations into French of the latter part of Suhrawardī's text, together with selections from both Quṭb al-Dīn's commentary and Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī's glosses see: Shihāboddin Yahyā Sohravardî, Shaykh al-Ishrāq, Le Livre de la sagesse orientale: Kitāb Hikmat al-Ishrāq, commentaires de Qotboddîn Sbirazî et Mollît Sadrā Shîràzî, trad, et notes Henry Corbin, établ. Christian Jambert (Lagrasse, 1986).

18 See Walbridge, op.cit.: esp. chapter 3: 79–125.

19 For the life of al-Hillī see especially Sabina Schmidtke, The Theology of'al-'Allama al-Hillī (d. 726/1325) (Berlin, 1991): 9–40.

20 The latter commentary, called Iddh al-maqāsid, was published in Tehran in 1959.

21 Kashf al-mushkilāt min kitāb al-talwīhāt. For al-Hillī's teachers see Schmidtke, op. cit.: 12–22. Schmidtke's monograph also contains a detailed bibliography of al-Hillī's works.

22 Ibid.: 39.

23 See I lalabī, Alī Asghar, Tarīkh-i falàsafa-yi tram az àghāz-i islam ta imritz, 2nd ed. (Tehran, 1983): 477–80.

24
'Adūd aI-Dīn 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn Rukn al-Dln ibn Abd al-Ghaffàr al-Bakrī al-Shabànkārī al-Ijl, Shāfī'ī jurist and Ash'arī theologian, whose writings include works on theology and legal methodology.

25 Al-Sayyid al-Sharîf al-Jurjānl (740/1339–816/1413), the logician, philosopher and theologian, intended to study with Rāzî, and to that end travelled to Herat in 766/1365, but Rāzī, then near to death, told him to go to Egypt to study with Mubārakshàh, his pupil. However, JurjanI stayed in Herat and studied with Muhammad al-Fanārī, although he did meet Mubārakshàh later during a visit to Egypt.

26 This commentary, the Tahrir al-qaivaid al-mantiqiyyab fi sharh al-risālat al- shamsiyyah, litho. (Tehran, 1887), is still studied as the main introductory text on logic in the madrasahs.

27 See the previous chapter.

28 For Haydar Amull's life and works see Encyclopaedia of Islam, 2nd ed., suppl.: 363–5, "Haydār-i Amull" (J. van Ess), Encyclopaedia Iranien, 1, "Amoll, Sayyed Baha'-al-Dln Haydar … (E. Kohlberg): 983–5, and the French (Henry Corbin) and Arabic (Osman Yahya) introductions to Sayyed Haydar Amoli, La Philosophie shi'ite (Tehran and Paris, 1969); see also Henry Corbin, En Islam iranien: aspects spirituels et philosophiques, 3 (Paris, 1972): 149—213.

29 Nasir al-Dīn al-Kāshànl wrote works in philosophy, kaLim and law, among which were glosses on a commentary by Fādil Iṣfahān! on Nasir al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī's Tajrīd (kalām), superglosses on a commentary on Ibn Slnā's Kitāb al-ishārāt, and glosses on al-Risālat al-shamsiyyah.

30 A correspondence between Haydar Amull and Fakhr al-Muhaqqiqln on theological and legal matters, al-Masail al-dmuliyyah, survives in an autograph by Sayyid Haydar, although another work dedicated to his teacher on the silence of All ibn Abl lalib in the face of the assumption of the caliphate by the first three caliphs, the Risālat rāfi'at al-khilāf 'an wajh sukūt Amir al-Mu 'minin, is now lost.

31 Sayyid Haydar Amull, Le Texte des textes (Nass al-nosjts …). Les Prolégomènes, ed. H. Corbin and O. Yahya (Tehran and Paris, 1974).

32 Edited by H. Corbin and O. Yahya in La Philosophie shiite. 2—619.

33 Two other works of Haydar Amull have been edited: the Risdlah naqd dinuqiul fī ma'rifat al-ivujūd (ed. H. Corbin and O. Yahya in La Philosophie shi'ite: 620—710), which is an

abbreviation of his longer Risālat al-wnjnd ft ma'rifat alma'biid, not extant; and his Asrār al-sharī'ah wa-atwār al-tariqah wa-anwar al-haqīqah, ed. M. KhajawI (Tehran, 1983). The latter has been translated in English; see Sayyid Haydar Amull, Inner Secrets of the Path, trans. Assadullah al-Dhaakir Yate (Shaftesbury, 1989).

34 For the notion of sainthood and the seal of sainthood in the thought of Ibn Arab! see Michel Chodkiewicz, Le Sceau des saints: prophétie et sainteté dans la doctrine d'Ibn Arabi (Paris, 1986).

35 For the life and works of Ibn Turkah, see Sayyid 'All Mūsawi Bihbahānl, Ahwāl iva āthàr-i Sa in al-Dīn Turkah-yi Isfahānī', in M. Mohaghegh and FI. Landolt, Collected Papers in Islamic Philosophy and Mysticism (Tehran, 1971), Persian section: 97—132. See also Corbin, En Islam iranien, 3: chapter 3.

36 Ibn Muhammad Turkah, Sā'in al-Dln, Tamhid al-qaivaid (The Disposition of Principles), ed. Sayyid Jalāl al-Dln Ashtiyiitu (Tehran, 1976). See also the Persian
and English introductions to this text by Seyyed Hossein Nasr.

37 For Muhammad ibn 'All ibn Ibrahim ibn Hasan ibn Ibrahim ibn Hasan al- Hajär al-Ahsä'l ibn Abi Jumhūr, see Encyclopaedia of Islam, 2nd ed., suppl. art "Ibn Abl Djumhiir al-Ahsä'l" (W. Madelung): 380. See also Corbin, En Islam iranten, s.v. index.

38 Also known as Mujli mir'ät al-nūr al-munji, litho. (Tehran, 1907 and 1911).

39 For Dawani see Encyclopaedia of Islam, 2nd ed., 2, "al-Dawänl" (Ann K. S. Lambton): 174,

40 Ala' al-Dln 'All ibn Muhammad al-Qushjl was bom in Samarqand, where he studied mathematics and astronomy with the Amir Ulugh Beg. He became director of the observatory in Samarqand. After the murder of Ulugh Beg, Qūshjl left for Tabriz and subsequently Istanbul, where he died.

41 Sayyid al-Hukamä' al-Sayyid Abu'l-Ma'äll ibn Ibrahim al-Husaynl al-Shlnrz.I al- Dashtakl was the founder of the Mansūriyyah Madrasah in Shiraz. He was killed by Turcomans and buried in his school. A Shafi'i jurist, he also wrote glosses on Quṭb al-Dln al-Räzl's commentary on al-Risälat al-sbamsiyyah, and an Ithbilt al-wujūd on the proof of God's existence, as well as works on legal methodology, theology and mineralogy.

42 See Mudarris Raḍawī, Ahu'äl wa äthär … Nasir aI-Dīn: 426—7

CHAPTER 34

Mīr Dāmād and the founding of the "School of Iṣfahān"

Hamid Dahashi

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With the advent of the Safavids (reigned 907/1501–1145/
1732) in Persia in the early tenth/sixteenth century, the
nomocentric, dogmatic forces in Islamic intellectual
disposition immediately found a favourable political climate.
The anxiety of legitimacy was particularly acute in the case of
the Safavids. Although of Turkish, or probably Kurdish
(Bosworth (1967): 172), origin, they came to power by
fabricating a fictitious Shl'I genealogy for themselves, linking
their origins back to the sacred memory of the Shl'T Imams.
The probability that the founder of the Safavid order, Shaykh
Safī al-Dln (d. 735/1335), was perhaps a Sunni made the
Safavid monarchs, from Shah Ismā'll I (ruled 907/
1501—930/1524) onward, particularly anxious to
demonstrate and institutionalize their Shi'I affiliation. The
founder of the Safavid dynasty, Shah Ismā'īl, spent the first
ten years of his reign in a ruthless drive to consolidate his
power over Persia and to establish Shi'ism as the ideological

foundation of his, and his successors', legitimacy (see al-Shaybi (1980): 365—402). Aggravating the Safavid anxiety over their Shī'ī self-legitimation was the powerful presence of the Sunni Ottomans, who, under Sellm I Yavuz ("the Grim") (ruled 918/1512–926/1520), won a major victory in 920/1514 at Chaldiran against the Safavids. When the Safavids subsequently moved their capital from Tabriz to Qazwln and then to Iṣfahān, they distanced themselves from their powerful Sunni neighbours in more than just one sense. As they settled into their new capital, Iṣfahān became the new centre of the Shl'l world. The flourishing of Mīr Dāmād (950/1543—1041/1631) and the establishment of the "School of Iṣfahān" would hardly have been possible without these necessary political and social developments.

One particular Safavid monarch was instrumental in these developments. When England was ruled by Elizabeth I, Spain by Philip II, Russia by Ivan the Terrible, and India by Emperor Akbar, Persia achieved one of its greatest periods of high culture and material civilization under the legendary reign of Shah 'Abbas I (ruled 996/1588—1038/1629), who came to power when Mīr Dāmād was forty-five years old and died when he was eighty-six. During his reign the "School of Iṣfahān" found its most celebrated patristic foundation; and Persia experienced one of the greatest periods of its political and material prosperity. The Ottomans were evicted from Azarbaijan, the Safavid authority over the eastern Caucasus and the Persian Gulf was consolidated, widespread contact with Europe was established, and, with the Moghal dynasty on its east and the Ottomans on its west, the SM'I capital of Iṣfahān became the centre of a world civilization reminiscent of pre-Islamic memories.

Philosophy under the Safavids

In their relentless quest for self-legitimacy, the Safavid monarchs needed the Shl'l jurists and dogmaticians, as well as the preachers and clerics, to propagate the ideological foundation of their state (Amir Arjomand

: 109—21). This inevitably created an unfavourable atmosphere for the free exercise of logocentric tendencies in theological, philosophical and scientific disciplines. If we witness the rise of a particular philosophical disposition, recently identified as the "School of Iṣfahān" (Nasr in Sharif (1966), 2: 904–32; Corbin (1972), 4: 9–201; Ashtiyani (1972): 60—1), during the Safavid period, this phenomenon must be attributed more to the diligent and relentless philosophical engagements of a limited number of individuals rather than considered the product of favourable and conducive social circumstances. Those who engaged in philosophical matters did so at some peril to their personal safety and social standing. As is particularly evident in the case of Mir Damad, philosophers often sought a safe haven in an abstruse and convoluted discourse (Nasr (1978): 33) for fear of persecution. Or else they were forced, like Mīr Dāmād's distinguished student Mullā Ṣadrā (979/1571–1050/1640), to abandon the more congenial environment of their colleagues and students and live in exile at least for certain periods in remote parts of the country (Corbin (1972), 4: 54—122; Nasr (1978): 31–53). The Shi'i dogmaticians who had found a powerful state apparatus in their support were

least tolerant of logocentric discourses which they rightly considered detrimental not only to the metaphysical foundations of their own discourse but to their social status and political power as well. The result was that the fate of philosophy was left in the hands of whimsical monarchs who for a number of practical and symbolic self

interests, such as their need for a court physician and a court astronomer, would inadvertently provide for the possibilities of philosophical pursuits, historically linked to medicine and astronomy, at their court. Islamic philosophy has never had any institutional foundations except at the clandestine peripheries of the madrasah system, in the libraries of wealthy individuals, and ultimately in the whimsical vicissitudes of the court where the royal concerns with astrological and medical needs, as well as with the ceremonial apparatus of power, would provide such great luminaries of Islamic philosophy as Ibn Slna, Khwajah Nasīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī and Mīr Dāmād with material possibilities for their intellectual pursuits. That Islamic philosophy has flourished as a rich intellectual discourse testifies more to the philosophers' unyielding insistence than to a conducive social setting.

The dominant nomocentric proclivities in the Safavid period would also have the catalytic effect of initially producing a form of philosophical dogmatism where epistemological innovations would be discouraged and prevented in favour of a more pedantic repetition of received conceptions (Ṣafā (1959–85), 5, 1: 278). This unfavourable dogmatic condition must be considered further in relation to the major sectarian re-affiliation that took place during this period (Hinz (1936): 22—32; Mazzaoui (1972): 63—82; Savory (1980): 27—49). A principal impact of the Safavids' rise to power was the almost immediate disruption of intellectual activities by

Persian Sunni scholars who were forced to leave their homeland and migrate to more congenial places like India. It took a generation of "imported" Shī'ī scholars, mostly jurists and dogmaticians, from such predominantly Shī'ī lands as Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and Bahrain, to establish a new - and, from the Shī'ī Safavids' perspective, more palatable – doctrinal discourse (Browne (1902–24), 4: 360—1). Mīr Dāmād, in fact, represents the first generation of Shī'ī philosophers born and bred in Persia during the Safavid period. His father, Mīr Shams al-Dīn Dāmād, was the son-in-law of Muhaqqiq-i Karakī or Muhaqqiq-i Thānī (d. 940/1533), who had come to Persia early in the Safavid era (Tunikàbunī (1985): 346–7). The disruption of philosophical tradition by Sunni scholars in Persia and the superimposition of dogmatic and sectarian concerns on the logocentric discourse were such that even Shaykh Bahā' al-Dīn 'Amilī, also known as Sheikh Bahà'ī, the distinguished Shī'ī philosopher who was a close friend and associate of Mīr Dāmād, would refuse, according to some historians, to take Ibn Sīnā seriously on the assumption that he was a Sunni philosopher (Safā (1959–85), 5, 1: 381)!

Because of the rather unusual power of jurists during the Safavid period, as exemplified by Mīr Dāmād 's own grandfather Muhaqqiq-i Thānī (Amir Arjomand (1984): 133–7), philosophy was more than ever a suspicious discourse. There are reports that on the front doors of some schools in Iṣfahān the patrons had specifically prohibited the teaching of philosophy: "And it is necessary that the books of imaginary sciences, the sciences of doubts and uncertainties, which are famous and known as rational and philosophical sciences, such as [Ibn Slna's] al-Shifa and alls hard t [wa'l-tanbihat …, etc.] should not be read in the introduction

to religious sciences" (Hadl (1984): 17). The ideological roots of the Safavids in the mystical tradition, particularly in its populist dimensions (Mazzaoui (1972): 41—82), had further made philosophical inquiry a hazardous preoccupation. As always in the course of Islamic intellectual history, during the Safavid period the practice of philosophy was a precarious act that Persian philosophers pursued at their own peril. Financial support for students of philosophy was virtually non-existent. Having a wealthy and influential father, as in the case of Mīr Dāmād and his student Mullā Ṣadrā, was a crucial factor in facilitating a philosophical career. But even these two independently wealthy Shl'l philosophers were not totally immune to financial difficulties. In one of his extant letters to Mir Damad, Mullā Ṣadrā complains in almost the same breath of his financial burdens in supporting his family and of harassments to which he has been systematically subjected (Mullā Ṣadrā (n.d.): 57). The madrasah system and its total reliance on religious endowments prohibited any financial support for students who were attracted primarily to philosophy.

Against all these odds, with the generation of Mīr Dāmād a new breed of Shi'i philosophers came forward which was far too serious about matters of philosophical primacy to be dissuaded by unfavourable social conditions. They resumed and rejuvenated a robust philosophical discourse. Their problem, of course, remained the opposition that the jurists and dogmaticians displayed against them. The prefaces and conclusions of almost all the philosophical treatises of this period are filled with grievances against the juridical authorities who harassed and persecuted the philosophers (Mullā Ṣadrā (1961): 39). Mīr Dāmād and Mullā Ṣadrā never lose an opportunity to condemn the dogmaticians who

considered them blasphemous infidels. Qadi Sa'id Qumi (d. 1103/1691), a prominent philosopher of the period, issued a stern condemnation of these clericals in the introduction to his al-Anwdr al-qudsiyyah. The dogmaticians, in turn, attacked the philosophers vehemently, considered them infidels and their writings blasphemous. They fundamentally challenged the authority of reason in the prevention of error. Quṭb al-Dln Muhammad Nayrlzl (d. c. 1173/1759) forbade his followers from reading Ibn Slna's and other philosophers' writings. Mulla Muhammad Tahir QummT (d. 1098/1686) wrote a book against both philosophers and Sufis, al-Fawd'id aI-Dīniyytth fi'l-radd 'aid' al-hukamd' iva'l-sufiyyah. The same Mulla Muhammad accused the distinguished philosopher Mulla Muhsin Fayd (d. 1091/1680), one of the most brilliant students of Mullā Ṣadrā, of being a "Zoroastrian master" (Ṣafā (1959–85), 5, 1: 282). One of his poems condemned all philosophers and all philosophies:

A party of people have gone astray from the gate of faith And followed I bn Sinā and Bahmanyār instead.

Out of ignorance they have turned Aristotelian and Platonic,

Far away from the sacred Imam's spearhead.

They imitate Socrates and Galen,

Escaping from what Bàqir and Sadia have said.

In their opinion most vile and impious,

He who knows philosophy is utterly perfect.

Perfect indeed is in God's eyes

He who has followed the family of the Prophet.

I seek knowledge from the gate of the city [i.e., 'All],

From the Greeks I will not anything get.

(Safà (1959–85), 5, 1: 282–3)

Mullā Muhammad proceeds to boast that the Qur an is his ulShifā with a pun on the literal meaning of the title of Ibn Sīnà's text, implying that God's word cures him of all his mental diseases (e.g., philosophical inclinations). The collection of prophetic hadīth will do well for Mullā Muhammad instead of Ibn Sînà's al-Ishārāt wa l-tanbīhāt. He insists that "much of the Greek philosophy is fallacious" and that the Shfī Imams' sayings are far superior (Safā (1959—85), 5, 1: 283).

The juridical opposition to philosophy went far beyond verbal abuse and physical harassment. A major re-codification of the dogmatic principles of the faith was an immediate result of the juridical awareness of the philosophical threat. Mullā Muhammad Bàqir Majlis! (d. 1111/1699), the most prominent dogmatician of the Safavid period, set upon himself the Flerculean task of collecting and codifying the Shl'l Imams' traditions precisely to combat his contemporaries' diversion to philosophy. In answer to a question about the viability of philosophy, he is reported to have said that "if God Almighty recognized people sufficient in their intellect, He would not have sent them messengers and prophets" (Safā (1959—85), 5, 1: 283).

Despite these unfavourable conditions for philosophy, the general atmosphere of religious consciousness was particularly acute under the Safavids. Beginning with Shah Ismà'îl (ruled 907/1501–930/1524), the Safavid kings and their royal families became the greatest patrons of religious learning - particularly in the fields of legal dogmatics and jurisprudence. Mothers, sisters and wives of the Safavid monarchs were particularly attentive to religious endowments. A sister of Shah Tahmàsp (ruled 930/1524—984/1576), Sutlāmun (d. 969/1561–62), "made her entire estate, including her jewellery, into a religious endowment" (Amir Arjomand (1984): 190). Great luminaries of Shl'I learning such as

Muhaqqiq-i Karakî and 'Al la mall Majlisī are the products of this period giants of Shfl scholastic learning who while consolidating and legitimizing the ideological foundations of the Safavid state, systematized, codified and considerably advanced the level of juridical discourse they had inherited from their previous generations.

Mīr Muhammad Bāqir Dāmād

In the history of Islamic philosophy during the Safavid period, Mīr Dāmād is remembered with uncommon affection and unceasing admiration (Àshtiyānī (1972): 3; Khwansārī (1976), 2: 234; Tunikābunī (1985): 334). Muhammad Tāhir Tunikābunī, the author of the biographical dictionary Qisas al-mdma, reports that one day Mullā Ṣadrā, when the celebrated Shl'ī philosopher of the Safavid period was still a

student of Mīr Dāmād, was waiting for his teacher to enter the room and start their discussion. The door is opened and in comes a local Iṣfahān! merchant who needs to ask Mīr Dāmād a question. While the merchant and Mullā Ṣadrā are alone in the room, the merchant asks whether Mīr Dāmād is superior in his learning to a prominent cleric in Iṣfahān. "Mir is superior", Mullā Ṣadrā says. What about Ibn Sīnā, the merchant inquires further, how does he compare with the master of Peripatetic philosophy? "Mir is superior", Mullā Ṣadrā repeats. What then of the Second Teacher, al-Fārābī (second only to Aristotle)? Mullā Ṣadrā hesitates for a moment. "Do not be afraid", Mīr Dāmād encourages his student from the adjacent room, "tell him Mir is superior (Tunikābunī: 334).

The same hagiographical affection is also present in yet another story reported by another biographer, Tabriz! Khlyābānl (in Mīr Dāmād (1977): lvii). Muhaqqiq-i Karakl is reported to have seen in a dream the first Shl'l Imām, Alī, who instructs Muhaqqiq-i Karakl to give his daughter in marriage to Shams aI-Dīn Muhammad. "She will give birth to a son who will inherit the knowledge of the prophets and the sages." Muhaqqiq- i Karaki does as he is told. But later that daughter, now wife to Shams aI-Dīn Muhammad, dies before giving birth to a son. Muhaqqiq-i Karaki is puzzled by the event. Soon after the original dream is repeated, and this time the first Shī'ī Imām identifies another daughter of the learned cleric as the appointed bride. Muhaqqiq-i Karakl proceeds by giving his second daughter to Shams aI-Dīn Muhammad, to whom is born Muhammad Bāqir, the future Mīr Dāmād, who will prove right the dream of his distinguished grandfather.

Mir Burhān al-Dīn Muhammad Bāqir Dāmād, whose poetic nom de plume was "Ishrāq" and who was also referred to as "the Third Master" (after Aristotle and al-Fārābī, who have been known as the First and the

Second Masters, respectively), was born into a distinguished religious family (Nasr (1966); AshtiyanI in Mullā Ṣadrā (1967): 83—90; Izutsu in Mīr Dāmād (1977): 1, the English Introduction; Tunikābunī (1985): 333; Hadl (1984): 15—20). Another honorific title by which Mīr Dāmād has been known is Sayyid al-Afadil, or the "Master of the Most Learned". His father, Mir Shams aI-Dīn, was the son-in-law of All ibn Abd al-All, known as Muhaqqiq-i Than! or Muhaqqiq-i Karakl (Had! (1984): 21—22; Khwansarl (1976), 2: 234), the prominent Shī'ī cleric of the Safavid period (Tunikābunī (1985): 333). Because of this relationship, the honorific title "Damad", which means "the son-in-law", remained in Mir Shams al-Dln's family and was given to his son Mir Muhammad Baqir (Hadl: 13, Iskandar Bayk Turkaman (1985): 113—14). That Mīr Dāmād himself is considered the son-in-law of Muhaqqiq-i Karaki (Nasr (1978): 26) is a mistake. The report that Mīr Dāmād was Shah Abbas's son-in- law has also been discounted (Tabrlzl Khiyabani in Mīr Dāmād (1977): lvii). Mīr Dāmād's grandfather, Muhaqqiq-i Thani, was by far the most distinguished cleric of the early Safavid period and, during the reign of Shah Tahmasp (ruled 930/1524—984/1576), enjoyed unprecedented power (Amir Arjomand (1984): 140–2). Astarabad, the city in the northeastern part of Persia from which Mīr Dāmād's family emerged (Hadl: 11—12), enjoyed particular economic and social significance during the Safavid period. Mīr Dāmād's father is also known as "Astarabad!" (Khwansarl (1976), 2: 234). Mīr Dāmād was recognized as a prominent and distinguished philosopher in

his own time. Iskandar Bayk Turkaman, the author of Td'rikh-i 'dlam ara-yi 'abbdm, pays considerable attention to his achievements and prominence (1985: 113).

Mīr Dāmād was born in Astarabad but raised in Mashhad. He received his early education in this religious capital of Shl'i Persia where he studied Ibn Sīnā'ss texts closely. Prior to coming to Iṣfahān during the reign of Shah Abbas, he also spent some time in Qazvln and Kashan. In Iṣfahān, Mīr Dāmād continued his education. He paid equal attention to intellectual and transmitted sciences. His contemporary, Iskandar Bayk Turkaman, reports of Mīr Dāmād's prominence and significance as a philosopher and a teacher. At the time of Iskandar Bayk's writing, 1025/1616 (1985: 113), Mīr Dāmād was active in teaching and writing. During his own lifetime, Mīr Dāmād was recognized as an accomplished philosopher, mathematician, jurist, hermeneutician and traditionalist. In jurisprudence, his judgment was canonical for other jurists. In most of these areas he had written influential treatises. His fame was such that, when Iskandar Bayk wrote about him, he knew not only of his published work but also of his writings in progress._ Mīr Dāmād died in 1041/1631 (Madani in Mīr Dāmād (1977): liv; AshtiyanI in Mullā Ṣadrā (1967): 89) when he fell ill on his way to Karbala, in the entourage of Shah Safi (ruled 1038/ 1629—1052/1642), and was buried in Najaf (Hadl (1984): 32—33).

Mīr Dāmād The Philosopher

As is evident from his contemporary sources (Iskandar Bayk Turkaman: 113), Mīr Dāmād was recognized simultaneously as a jurist, a mystic and a philosopher – a rare but not altogether impossible accident in Islamic intellectual history. His writings were recognized by his contemporaries as reflecting his comprehensive and encyclopedic interests in various disciplines. He wrote on philosophy and theology, prophetic and Imam! traditions, Shl'l law, Qur'anic commentary, ethics and mysticism as well as logic. He was recognized by his contemporaries as having a prodigious memory. Although he was a gifted poet, his biographers are reluctant to recognize him as a poet. "Although it is beneath his great status, " one biographer concedes, "sometimes he composed some poems." In 1025/1616, Iskandar Bayk Turkaman reports that "today he lives in the capital city of Iṣfahān. I hope that his most gracious being for years will adorn the garden of time, and that the seekers of knowledge will be graced by the illuminating rays of his sun-like mind" (ibid113–14). Mīr Dāmād's ascetic exercises have been noticed particularly by some of his biographers (Husaynl Kashani in Mīr Dāmād (1977): xxviii). These exercises are combined, if his biographers' sometimes hyperbolic tone is to be believed, with a precocious attention to philosophy. It is reported (ibid.: xxix) that his earliest philosophical writings began when he was still in Mashhad. By 988/1580 his reputation as a distinguished philosopher was known. When in this year he came to Kashan, one of his biographers, Husaynl Kashani, went to visit him and to pay his respects (ibid.: xxix). Contrary to Iskandar Bayk Turkaman, Husaynl

Kashani is not hesitant in his admiration for Mīr Dāmād's poetry. "Although he has achieved perfection in every field, his inclination more than anything else was to poetry, and most of the time beautiful poems came to his mind. Like other great masters, he was much inclined toward quatrains" (ibid.: xxix—xxx). When, in 933/1526, Husaynl Kashani again sees Mīr Dāmād in Kashan, he continues to praise the philosopher's poetic gifts not only in quatrains but also in qasidahs and mathnawis (ibid.: xxx).

Despite his prominent status as both a mystic and a jurist, an uneasy combination made possible by certain specific features of the "School of Iṣfahān ", it was principally as a philosopher that Mīr Dāmād recognized, praised and distinguished himself, as seen in many of his self-praising poems, e.g.:

I conquered the lands of knowledge,

I lent old wisdom to my youth.

So that I made the earth with my al-Qabasdt The envy of the heavenly abodes.

(Hadl (1984): 134)

or

I made my heart the treasure of Divine Secrets.

In the world of Intellect I reigned.

In al-Qabasdt I became the sea of certitude.

The script of doubt and uncertainty I destroyed.

(Had! (1984): 134)

He bore proudly and confidently the attribution of "the Third Teacher", after Aristotle and al-Farabi (Zarrinkub (1983): 246).

Mīr Dāmād's general philosophical discourse has been identified as primarily "gnostic": "in the sense that the intellectual activity of the mind is conducive toward the experience of spiritual visions while the visionary experience stimulates the function of rational thinking giving both to new concepts and ideas" (Izutsu in Mīr Dāmād (1977): 3, the English Introduction). Anticipating Mullā Ṣadrā's attempt to synthesize all the competing discourses of Islam's intellectual dispositions, Mīr Dāmād brings together the Peripatetic (Aristotelian—Ibn Sinan) and the Illuminative (Neoplatonic—Suhrawardlan) traditions of Islamic philosophy. The result is a peculiarly successful philosophical discourse in which, as Izutsu has stated, "beneath the surface of … [his] dry thinking and through the veils of the abstract concepts which he handles with remarkable dexterity, we notice the presence of swarming visions originating from an entirely different source, the living experience of a mystic" (ibid.). This combination of rational and metarational orientation in philosophical disposition, when properly anchored to the doctrinal principles of the Shi'i faith, would constitute the major characteristics of what we now call the "School of Iṣfahān ".

Mīr Dāmād's Contemporaries

Among the prominent teachers with whom Mīr Dāmād studied were Husayn ibn Abd al-Samad al-Amill, the father of Shaykh Baha'i, Mīr Dāmād's contemporary colleague in Iṣfahān. His other teacher was Shaykh Abd al-Karald, the son of Muhaqqiq-i Than!, i.e., Mīr Dāmād's own maternal uncle (Had! (1984): 23–26).

Mīr Dāmād's time was that of legendary friendships and rivalries among the prominent men of knowledge (Had! (1984): 27–30). In the ruins of a royal building in Iṣfahān, dating back to the Safavid period, there is a fading fresco that depicts three distinguished men in the presence of a terrifying lion (Hadl (1984): 30). This fresco depicts a famous story, according to which one day Mīr Dāmād and two of his prominent contemporaries, Shaykh Baha'i and Mir Findiriski, were sitting in a royal hall, engaged in a philosophical discussion. Suddenly a lion that
had escaped from the royal zoo enters the hall. The fresco depicts Shaykh Bahai as collecting himself with signs of fear on his face, Mīr Dāmād as prostrating in gratitude, and Mir Findiriski as utterly indifferent to the lion's presence. The three distinguished friends were later obliged to provide an explanation of their immediate reactions. Shaykh Baha'i is reported to have said that by the power of reason he knew that unless the lion was hungry, it would not attack him, and yet instinctively he was moved to protect himself. Mīr Dāmād explained that, being a descendant of the Prophet, he knew

that the lion would not attack him, so he prostrated and thanked God for being a descendant of the Prophet. And Mir Findiriski is reported to have said that he mastered the terrifying beast by the power of his inner serenity and self-control. The story, in its hagiographical hyperbole, indicates the range of doctrinal, philosophical and mystical issues current at the time – issues that will become the central problematics of the "School of Iṣfahān". If certitude and mental preparedness were the critical criteria of how to confront the anxieties of being, the three Safavid sages represent the three possible modes of attaining those objectives. Either doctrinal faith in the saving grace of the Prophet's intercession, or rational engagement with realities that be, or else mystical dismissal of the anxieties of the "real" are embodied and represented in the respective accounts of these three key figures of the "School of Iṣfahān".

An array of distinguished philosophers, theologians, Sufis and jurists were contemporaries of Mir Damad. He had a full and fruitful course of dialogue and correspondence with them, chief among whom was Shaykh Baha'i. Both Shaykh Baha'i and Mīr Dāmād enjoyed prestigious positions in Shah Abbas's court. They had utmost respect for each other. The other distinguished contemporary of Mir Damad, Mir Findiriski, was a prominent philosopher/mystic in his own right. Among his other contemporaries in Iṣfahān was Mir Fakhr aI-Dīn Sammak.

The legendary friendship between Mīr Dāmād and Shaykh Baha'i, when they were both in the service of Shah Abbas, provides notable access to the political ramifications of having prominent men of religious learning at the royal court. One biographer of Mīr Dāmād (Tabriz! Khiyabani in Mīr

Dāmād (1977): lviii—lix) reports that one day Shah Abbas was riding his horse in the company of Mīr Dāmād and Shaykh Baha'i. Because Mīr Dāmād was fat and heavy, he and his horse would regularly fall behind. Shah Abbas is reported to have approached him and in jest suggested that Shaykh Baha'i is not polite and reverential enough and gallops fast ahead of Mir Damad. "That is not true, your Majesty", Mīr Dāmād is believed to have responded. "His horse is so happy for having such a great man riding it, it cannot control itself and jumps and pushes ahead of everyone else." Shah Abbas goes to Shaykh Baha I and this time complains of Mīr Dāmād's weight and says he is so fat he cannot keep

up with the entourage. "That is not the reason, your Majesty, " Shaykh Baha'i is reported to have said, "the poor animal cannot bear the weight of so much knowledge that it carries. Mountains would break carrying the weight of Mīr Dāmād's knowledge." Shah 'Abbas is reported – and here is the political aspect of such high-ranking men of religious learning to have descended from his horse and in front of all his entourage kissed the ground and thanked God Almighty for having blessed him and his kingdom with such great men of humility and learning. Shah 'Abbas's going back and forth between Mīr Dāmād and Shaykh Baha'i (to which one can easily add Mir Findiriskl) is also an indication of the constant political need of realizing the relations of power between the king and any particular subdivision of his religious constituency. Representing the juridical, philosophical and mystical centres of power in the Safavid realm, Mir Damad, Shaykh Bahai and Mir Findiriskl need Shah 'Abbas's political backing as much as the monarch needs theirs. That Mīr Dāmād and Shaykh Baha'i deliberately safeguard their respective positions and do not fall victim to Shah 'Abbas's

trap could be read as an indication of the pious hagiographer's wishes rather than reality. Shah 'Abbas's supposed prostrations, while Mīr Dāmād and Shaykh Baha'i are still on the horse, is the ultimate testimony of the often-concealed proclivity of the religious authorities for political power.

Mīr Dāmād's famous and distinguished student was Mullā Ṣadrā Shirazi, by far the most influential philosopher of the Safavid period and of the "School of Iṣfahān". Mullā Ṣadrā began his early education in his native Shiraz. He then moved to Iṣfahān and studied with the most distinguished Shī'ī scholars of the time, chief among them Mir Findiriskl, Shaykh Baha'i and Mir Damad. He would proceed to develop a revolutionary philosophical school, highly ambitious in its universal attempt to synthesize not just the divergent orientations of the Islamic Peripatetic and Illuminationist traditions, but even more fundamentally to co-ordi- nate that already difficult synthesis with both the gnostic and Shi'i juridical doctrines. Yet in many respects the immediate impact of his studies with Mir Damad, Mir Findiriskl and Shaykh Baha'i remained with the ShiRāzī philosopher. In addition to Mullā Ṣadrā, Mīr Dāmād had a number of other, less prominent, students (Hadl (1984): 31), among them Shams al-Dln Jllani, Mir Lawhi, and Quṭb aI-Dīn al- Ushkuri. Zulali Khwansari, a distinguished poet of the period with a particular penchant for philosophy and mysticism, composed many poems in honour of his teacher Mīr Dāmād (Hadl (1984): 47). In his poetry one detects Mīr Dāmād's profound influence, an influence particularly pertinent to the formation of the "School of Iṣfahān". In one of his poems, there is a conversation between two protagonists, one mature and perfect, the other immature and inferior. The question is

simply put, "What is the function of the heavenly sphere and of primary matters?"

Logical, biological, theological, philosophical and gnostic questions are raised, doctrinal issues are debated, using all the developed and loaded terminologies of these exclusive disciplines about the nature, function and purpose of existence. The questions are as fundamental as "Why is preeternity separated from post-eternity?" But the progressive questions are brought to an abrupt end by the immediate theocentric assumption (put in the form of a question) that "In whatever form these things are / WTio are they obeying in Eternity?" The answer, upon this a priori theocentric postulation, is then given through a shift from these logocentric questions to a mystical discourse. "The prophet is love, religion love, God love / From the deepest earth to the highest heavens love I … I Every atom is in ecstasy from love / Everyone is like Mansur [al-Hallaj] by love" (Had! (1984): 47).

Mīr Dāmād's Writings

Some fifty treatises have been attributed to Mīr Dāmād (Had! (1984): 37—45). Not all these have been found and positively identified. Most of his writings are still in unedited manuscripts. Fie wrote al-Qabasdt, Sirdt al-mustaqim and Ufuq al-mubin in theology and philosophy. His Rawdshih al-samdwiyyah is an exegesis on a collection of Shl'l ImamI traditions. He has a Qur'anic commentary called Sidrat al-muntaha. His other famous treatises include al-Jadhawāt and Tashriq al-haqq. His theological concerns are evident in such works as al-'Imdddt ival-tashrifat fi mas'alat al-ḥudūth

al-'alam wa'l-qidamihi, Taqwim al-imdn fi mabhath wdjib al-wujūd wa taqdisahu wa tarnjidahu or al-Iqadat fi khalq al-a'mdl wa 'afidl al-'ibad. The latter treatise is an exposition on Ibn Slnan ontology. Mīr Dāmād was also concerned with such questions as why Moses' body did not burn on Mount Sinai, while the stones of the mountain did. He treated this question in his famous Persian treatise al-JadhawdP. fi bayan sabab 'adam ihtirdq jasad Miisd 'alayhi al-salam wa ihtirdq al-jabal fi hall al-tajalli tur Sind, which he wrote for Shah "Abbas. In the field of Ḥadith, he has a commentary on al-Kulayni's al-Kdfi. This book, al-Rawdshih al-samdwiyyah fi sharh aḤadith al-imamiyyah, has not yet been completely edited and published. Mīr Dāmād also wrote a Persian treatise on jurisprudence. This treatise is composed in a series of hypothetical questions and answers. The subject and theme of this book follow the standard topics of the juridical genre, with specific chapters on ritual purity, prayer, religious alms and hajj pilgrimage, as well as more mundane commercial transactions. In his juridical judgments, Mīr Dāmād supports his arguments by all necessary traditional (ynanqul) sources. Yet he also resorts to intellectual (ma'qiil) arguments in substantiating his case. A typical

juridical judgment of his is as follows. Suppose A gives B an object for safekeeping and then instructs B to give it to C. In the meantime, D appears and proves to B beyond any shadow of a doubt that the object rightfully belongs to him. What should B do? Mīr Dāmād maintains that if the rightful possession of the object by D is perfectly evident to B, he should give it to him and neither A nor C has any legal claim on him (Hadl (1984): 43—4). Mīr Dāmād repeatedly brought his considerable philosophical prowess to bear on the doctrinal dogmatics of shl'lsm. For example, he wrote a treatise on why it is forbidden to call the Twelfth Shi'I Imam

by his name (Hadl (1984): 44; Tabrlzl KhiyabanI in Mīr Dāmād (1977): xii). His Qur'anic commentaries include Amdnat-i ildht in Persian, Ta'wil al-muqta'dtfi awd'il al-suwar al-qur'aniyyah, Tafsir surat al-ikhlds, and Sidrah al-muntdha. A philosophical commentary on Ibn Kammunah, a commentary on Ibn Sīnā'ss al-Najat, a treatise on logic (Risalah fi'l-mantiq), and a commentary on Shaykh al-Ṭūsī's al-Istibsdr are also among his other writings. The five important books for which he is most celebrated and discussed are al-Rawdshih al-samdiviyyah, al- Sirdt al-mustaqim, al-Ufuq al-mubin, al-Qabasdt and al-Jadhawāt (Ashkiwari in Mir Damad (1977): xxxii). Al-Qabasdt, al-Ufuq al-mubin, al-Sirat al-mustaqim, al-Taqdisat and al-Habl al-matin are his chief treatises in philosophy (Madam in Mīr Dāmād (1977): liv). But Mīr Dāmād's most significant text by far, containing the essential features of his philosophy, is al-Qabasdt (Izutsu in Mīr Dāmād (1977): 2; the English introduction).

Al-Qabasat

Until quite recently there was no critical edition of al-Qabasdt. The definitive edition was critically edited, annotated and published in 1977 (Mīr Dāmād 1977). The full title of the book is al-Qabasdt haqq al-yaqin fi ḥudūth al-'dlam. Al-Qabasdt consists of ten qabas ("a sparkle of fire") and three successive conclusions. The central question of this book is the creation of the world and the possibility of its extension from God. Mīr Dāmād wrote al-Qabasdt in 1034/1624 (Mīr Dāmād (1977): v). The first qabas discusses the variety of created beings and the divisions of existence

(ibid.: 3—36). In the second qabas, Mīr Dāmād argues for a trilateral typology of essential primacies (al-sibaq al-dhati) and his preference for the primacy of essence (dhat) (ibid.-. 37—80). The duality of perspectives through which existence is subdivided and an argument to that effect through pre-eternal primacies constitute the third qabas (ibid.: 81—120). In the fourth qabas, Mīr Dāmād provides Qur'anic evidence, as well as references from the Prophetic and Imam! traditions, to support his preceding arguments (ibid.: 121—42). The fifth qabas is devoted to a

discussion of the primary dispositions through an understanding of natural existence (ibid.-. 143—182). The connection (ittisdl) between "time" and "motion" is the subject of the sixth qabas (ibid.-. 183—238). In this section, Mīr Dāmād also argues for a "natural order" (al-nazm al-tabti) in time. Here he argues for the finality of numeral order and against the infinity of numbers in time-bound events (al-hawddith al-zamdniyyah). He then devotes the seventh qabas to a refutation of opposing views (ibid.-. 239–78). In the eighth qabas, he verifies the Divine Authority in the establishment of such orders and the role of reason in ascertaining this truth (ibid.-. 279—344). The ninth qabas proves the archetypal substance of intellect (al-jawdhir al-'aqliyyah) (ibid.: 345—4(J6). In this chapter Mīr Dāmād provides an argument for the presence of an order in existence, a cycle of beginning and return. Finally, in the tenth qabas, he discusses the matter of Divine Ordination (al-qadd' wal-qadar), the necessity of supplication, the promise of Flis reward and the final return of all things to His Judgment (ibid.: 407–84).

In al-Qabasdt Mīr Dāmād engages in the age-old debate over the priority of "essence" (mdhiyyah) versus the priority of

"existence" (wujūd). After a long discussion, he ultimately decides in favour of the priority of essence, a position that would later be fundamentally disputed by his distinguished pupil Mullā Ṣadrā. Al-Qabasdt has remained a central text of Islamic philosophy since its first appearance. A number of philosophers of later generations have written commentaries upon it, including those by Mulla Shamsa GllanI and Aqa Jam MazandaranI (Ashtiyani in Mullā Ṣadrā (1967): 86 n. 1). Mīr Dāmād wrote al-Qabasdt in response to one of his students who had asked him to write a treatise and in it prove that the Creator of creation and being is unique in His pre-eternality, pre-eternal in Flis continuity, continuous in His everlastingness and everlasting in His post-eternality (Mīr Dāmād (1977): 1). In this text, he set for himself the task of proving that all existent beings, from archetypal models to material manifestations, are "contingent upon nothingness" (rnasbuqun bii-'adam), "inclined towards creation" (tdrifan bi'Thudūth), "pending on annihilation" (marhunun bi'l-haldk), and "subject to cancellation" (mamnuwwun bi'l-butldn) (ibid.: 1). The question oi the pre-eternity (qidam) or createdness (hudutb) of the world is one of the oldest and most enduring questions of Islamic philosophy, deeply rooted in the early Mutazilite codification of Islamic theology (Watt (1962): 58–71; Fakhry (1985): 67–8; Leaman (1985): 11–12, 132—4). Mīr Dāmād reminds his readers that even Ibn Sīnā considered the nature of debate on this question to be "dialectical" (fadali) rather than based on "proof" (burhdti), (For Ibn Sīnā "proof" was a mode ol logical argument superior to "dialectic".)

"Creation" (ibda) is the "bringing-into-being" of something from absolute-nothing. That which is "evident" (ma'liim), if left to its own

"essence" (dhdt), would not be. It is only by virtue of something outside it, i.e. its cause, that it is or, more accurately, it is brought-into-being. Things in their own essence have an essential, not a temporal, primacy over things that are located outside of them, such as their cause for becoming evident and manifest. Thus the secondariness of the caused over the primacy of its cause is an essential not a temporal secondariness. From this it follows that unless the relation between the cause and the caused is a temporal one, not every caused is created in time, i.e., not every ma'lul ("caused") is a muhdath ("created-in-time"). Only that caused is created-in-time which is contingent upon time (zamdn), motion (harakah) and change (tagbayyur) (Mīr Dāmād (1977): 3). That created- being which is not subsequent to time is either subsequent to absolute nothingness, whose creation is called ibda (or "brought-into-beginning"), or subsequent to not-absolute-nothingness, in which case its creation is called ihdath (or "brought-into-being-in-time"). If the created-being is subsequent to time, it can have only one possibility, which is its being- in-time subsequent to its being-in-nothingness (Mīr Dāmād (1977): 3–4).

There is also a hierarchical conception of time that Mīr Dāmād begins to develop, mostly from previous arguments made by Ibn Slna, Nastr-i Khusraw and Khwājah Naṣīr Ṭūsī (Mīr Dāmād (1977): x). First there is "time" (zamdn), to which the "atemporal" (dahr) and ultimately the "everlasting" (sarmad) are superior and more expansive (ibid.: 7). This hierarchy of time-span is also to be understood in terms of relationship. Sarmad postulates the relation of the permanent to the permanent; dahr, the relation of the permanent to the changing; and zamdn, a relation of the changing to the changing (Nasr in Sharif (1966): 915—17). From this

trilateral conception of time, Mīr Dāmād reaches for his unique understanding of creation. Both Ipudilth ("creation") and qidam ("pre-eternity") are of three kinds: dhdtl (or "essential"), dahri (or "atemporal") and zamdni (or "temporal"). Essential pre-eternality (the counterpart of the essential createdness) is that whose being and actuality are not subsequential to its not-being (laysiyyah) and/or nothingness ('adam). Atemporal pre-eternality (the counterpart of the atemporal createdness) is that whose being and actuality are not subsequential to its absolute nothingness in the span of the atemporal. On the contrary, from preeternity it is in-being. And finally, temporal pre-eternity (the counterpart of temporal createdness) is that temporal-thing whose being is not specific to a time and whose already-being (husill) is constantly present in the course of all time, and for the beginning of its being there is no temporal beginning.

Mīr Dāmād proceeds to systematize further the received Ibn Sinan conception of "createdness" (ḥudūth), with particular reference to al-Isharat iva'l-tanbihdt (1977: 5), by arguing that "temporal createdness" (al-huduth al-zamdni) contains the other two "creatednesses" as well. "Temporal cre- atedness" is the only kind of ḥudūth that consists of three different kinds: gradual, instant and timely - which means that temporal createdness can be realized either gradually and by incremental achievements in correspondence to specified divisions of time, in instant realization without any division of time, or finally in a timely space between points A and B. Contemporary commentators of Mīr Dāmād (Mohaghegh in Mīr Dāmād (1977): xii—xiii) have traced the origins of his ideas on the question of pre-eternality and createdness as being primarily to Plato, Aristotle, and Ibn

Sina, and then chiefly to Khwājah Naṣīr aI-Dīn al-Ṭūsī and Shihab aI-Dīn al-Suhrawardi.

As a believing Muslim, Mīr Dāmād must advance, perforce, the argument of the createdness of cosmic existence. Neither "essential createdness" (al-huduth al-dhati) nor "temporal createdness" (al-huduth al-zamdni) is subject to disagreement among philosophers because they are self-evident. It is only in the question of "atemporal createdness" (, al-huduth al-dahri) that disagreement arises. God's creation of the universe, Mīr Dāmād concludes, is of the ibda ("brought-into-begin-   ning")   and   sun ("brought-into-createdness") kind as it pertains to "atemporal createdness" and of the ihdath ("brought-into-being-in-time") and takwin ("brought-into-existence") kind as it pertains to "temporal createdness".

By the common consensus of many of his commentators, al-Qabasdt is Mīr Dāmād's most significant philosophical text (Musawi BihbahanI in Mīr Dāmād (1977): lxiv). His principal contribution in this text to the continuous debate over the pre-eternity (qidam) or createdness (.ḥudūth) of the world is his concept of al-ḥudūth al-dahri ("atemporal createdness"). He argues that the created world cannot be considered as merely "essentially" (dhati) created, because in that case only its "essential" non-being (al-'adam al-dhati) precedes it. "Essential" non-being is a relative and not a self-evident attribute. The created world can be "essentially" contingent upon non-being and yet, in a relative sense, be. Moreover, the created world cannot be considered as contingent upon "temporal" non-being, because in that case time itself, which is a dimension of the created world, must be contingent upon its own non-being in time; and in the space thus considered

time cannot be and not be in the same instant. There is also a theological problem in making the created world contingent upon a "temporal" non-being, because the postulation still necessitates a state of being when God was and His bounty to the world was not.

Mīr Dāmād proceeds to distinguish between three kinds of "world". First is the "Everlasting World" (al-'alam al-sarmadi), which is the space for Divine Presence, His Essence, and Attributes; second is the "Atemporal World" (al-'dlatn al-dahri), which is the space for the pure archetypes (al-mujarraddt); and third is the "Temporal World" (al-'dlam al-zamdni), which is the space for daily events, created beings, and generation and corruption. There is a hierarchical relationship among these three worlds: the Everlasting World encompasses the Atemporal and the Temporal. The Temporal World is the weakest and least enduring of the three.

As temporal events are contingent upon time, i.e., there are times when they are not and then they are "produced", or brought-into-being, in time, the same contingency governs the hierarchical order of sarmad (everlasting), dahr (atemporality), and zamdn (temporality). (See Izutsu in Mīr Dāmād (1977): 4, the English introduction, where Izutsu prefers "no-time" for sarmad, "meta-time" for dahr, and "time" for zamdn.) Every inferior stage, such as zamdn, is in an actual state of non-being in relation to its superior state, in this case dahr. The real existence of the superior stage is identical to the actual non-being of the inferior stage. Reversing the order, the accidental defectiveness of the inferior stage - zamdn to dahr, or dahr to sarmad — is not present in the superior stage. The in-itself existence of the superior stage, in other words, is the ipso facto non-existence

of the inferior stage in-itself. Mīr Dāmād then concludes that the contingent non-being of the world of the arche- typals of the dahri stage in the stage of sarmadt existence is a real and self-evident non-being. Thus all created beings and their archetypal are consequent to real and self-evident non-being. Their creation is an atemporal (dahri) creation and not, as theologians maintain, a temporal (zamdni) creation (Musawi Bihbahani in Mīr Dāmād (1977): lxvi-lxvii). From this it follows that beyond their "essential creation" (, al-huduth al-dhati) all temporal events are contingent upon and consequent to three real modes of non-existence: temporal, atemporal and everlasting. All the archetypal beings in the stage of temporal being are also contingent upon and consequent to one kind of non-being, namely the everlasting. And of course the everlasting world is not contingent upon and consequential to anything (see Musawi Bihbahani in Mīr Dāmād (1977): lxxiii; for an alternative reading of the sarmad— dahr—zamdn relationship, see Izutsu in Mīr Dāmād (1977): 4—10, the English introduction).

What Mīr Dāmād achieves through this systematic separation of a trilateral stipulation of existence is the effective separation of God at the top of the hierarchy where Fie can initiate and sustain the world and yet not be subsequent to temporal corruption, to which all visible creations must yield. Moreover, the necessary contingency of an agent of creation, which is evidently active in the zamdni and dahri stages of existence, is not necessary in the superior stage of sarmadi. As one of Mīr Dāmād's commentators rightly observes, "By devising the concept of huduth-i dahri (atemporal creation), he [Mir Damad] has succeeded in establishing a compromise between the theologian and the philosopher, in other words,

between the religious law and reason" (Musawi Bihbahani in Mīr Dāmād (1977): lxix).

Jadhawāt

Mīr Dāmād's Jadhawāt is also devoted to an understanding of the nature of existence, for him a theophany distanced from the Divine Essence, a movement which is complemented by a reversal of this emanation back to its Origin. There are gradations and stages in this descending/ascending act of creation. In the descending order, first there is the Niir al-anwdr ("Light of Lights") (the Suhrawardlan First Principle) from which are issued all the descending orders of existence. From Nur al-anwdr first is issued anwdr-i qdhirah or "archetypal lights", primus inter pares among which is 'aql-i kull or "the universal intellect". Anwdr-i qdhirah constitutes the first order of existence'in'close proximity to the source of all being, the pure Light, the Light of All Lights, or Nur al-anwdr. In the second order of descending creation of existence is yet another constellation of lights called anwdr-i mudabbirah or "the governing lights", primus inter pares among which is nafs-i kull or "the universal soul". Nafs-i kull receives its light and existential energy from 'aql-i krdl, as the latter does from Niir al-amudr. In the same order, the anwdr-i mudabbirah receive their authority and existential energy from the anwdr-i qdhirah, themselves in turn created and energized by Niir al-anwdr. In this second order of descending existence, the anwdr-i mudabbirah and nafs-i kull chief among them constitute the nufus-i falakiyyah or "the heavenly souls" from which are descended all the lower stages of existence. The third order ol descending creation

directly under the authority of nufus-i falakiyyah are nufus-i muntabi'ah or "the natural souls", which contain the archetypal sources of all that exists in the heavens and earth. From these archetypal sources descend the fourth order of existence, which is siirat-i jismiyyah or "the bodily form", itself the source of hyle or physical matter. In the ascending order, first there is jism-i mutjaq or "absolute body"; then the composite bodies, the vegetative soul in plants, the animal soul in animals, and penultimately the intellectual soul of human beings, which stands right below the Truth Itself (Nasr in Sharif (1966): 917–21).

Ontology

As is evident in both al-Qabasdt and Jadhawāt, for Mīr Dāmād being is circulated through a cycle of emanation from the Divine Presence to the physical world and then a return to It. In a progression of distancing
emanations, the material world is gradually emanated from the Divine Presence. From the Light of Lights (Niir al-anwdr) are first emanated the archetypal lights (anwar-i qdhirah), of which the universal intellect ('aql- i hull) is the first component. From this stage is emanated the "heavenly souls" (nufus-i falakiyyah), the "ruling lights" (anwar-i mudabbirah), of which the "universal soul" (nafs-i kill) is the primary member. The "natural souls" (nufus-i muntabi'ah) were subsequently created by the "universal soul". The archetypes of the heavens, planets, elements, compounds and the four natures are thus created. The final stage of the ontological emanation of being is the creation of matter from these archetypal origins. There is then a reversal order through

which matter is sublimated back to light. Through this order, absolute or irreducible body (jism-i mutlaq) is advanced to the mineral stage of compound compositions. The minerals are then sublimated to the vegetative stage and then upward to the animal. Humanity is the highest stage of this upward mobility before the absolute matter rejoins the Light of Lights (Nasr in Sharif (1966): 918). At the centre of this descending/ ascending order, stands the human being, who is the existential microcosm corresponding to the macrocosm of the universe of Being.

Another principal aspect of Mīr Dāmād's ontology is his philosophical preference for the "priority of essence" (asdlah al-mdhiyyah) over the "priority of existence" (asdlah al-wujiul). (See AshtiyanI (1972): 40—7 for a critical assessment, and Izutsu in Mīr Dāmād (1977): 10, 14, the English introduction, for a more sympathetic review.) The debate over the priority of mdhiyyah (essence or, more accurately, quiddity) or ivujud (existence) is a long contentious problematic in Islamic philosophy. While Mīr Dāmād believed in the priority of mdhiyyah, his celebrated student Mullā Ṣadrā became the most ardent propagator of the priority of wujUd (AshtiyanI (1972): 45). The priority of quiddity considers the appleness of the apple which is its essence to be real and its existence to be a mere accident, a necessary attribute for the actualization of the appleness. All existent beings share this accidental necessity of existence, but what distinguishes them and thus constitutes their unique ontological status is their quiddity, their what-it-isness, their appleness as opposed to orangeness. The philosophical genealogy of this position is to be traced back to Suhrawardi and Platonism (Izutsu in Mīr Dāmād (1977): 11—12, the English introduction). Mullā Ṣadrā resoundingly disputed his

teachers' firm belief in the priority of quiddity over existence and in a moving passage announced:

In the earlier days I used to be a passionate defender of the thesis that the quiddities are extramentally real while existence is but a mental construct, until my Lord gave me guidance and let me see His own demonstrations. All of a sudden my spiritual eyes were
opened and I saw with utmost clarity that the truth was just the contrary of what philosophers in general had held. Praise be to God who, by the light of intuition, led me out of the darkness of the groundless idea and firmly established me upon the thesis which would never change in the present World and the Hereafter. As a result [I now hold that] the individual existences of things are primary realities, while the quiddities are the "permanent archetypes [ayan thdbitah] that have never smelt even the fragrance of existence". The individual existences are nothing but beams of light radiated by the true Light which is the absolutely self-subsistent Existence. The absolute Existence in each of its individualized forms is characterized by a number of essential properties and intelligible qualities. And each of these properties and qualities is what is usually known as quiddity.

(translated by Izutsu in Mīr Dāmād (1977): 13—14, the English introduction)

Mīr Dāmād's position, however, is founded squarely on the originality of essence over existence. Here is how he argues his case in the second chapter of the Qabasdt.

The essence of a thing [al-shay'), in whatever shape or format it might be, is the occurrence [wuqu of the essence [nafs of

that very thing in that form [zarf = literally "vessel", "container"], not the attachment or appendage of something to it. Otherwise, simple matter [al-hdl a I-basil] would be turning into compound matter [al-bdl al-murakkab). Yet the bringing into being [thubiit] of a thing in itself is the bringing-into-being of that thing in that thing. Thus whoever considers the existence of the essence [, al-mdhiyyah] an attribute [wasf] among the actual attributes, or an aspect [amr] among the mental aspects, above and beyond the concept of the Originating Existence, he would not be among those worth talking to, and he would not be among those in search of truth, as indeed it has been said by our [two] foregone companions in the act [of philosophy, i.e., Ibn Sīnā and al-Farabi'].

(Mīr Dāmād (1977): 37)

Transmigration of the Soul

As an example of this descending/ascending order of existence, there is the treatise called Risdlat al-khal'iyyah attributed to Mīr Dāmād (Ashkiwari in Mīr Dāmād (1977): xxxiv—xxxv; Madani in Mīr Dāmād (1977): lv-lvi)
in which he describes the momentary transmigration of his own soul. (See "Exaltations dans la Solitude" in Corbin (1972), 4: 30—53.) He writes that on Friday 16 Sha'ban 1023 (21 September 1614), as he was engaged in a rigorous solitary self-reflection, after an intense period of remembering God Almighty, calling Him by His Most Bounteous Name, he was completely isolated from the physical world. At this point he felt himself totally surrounded by the sacred precinct of God's

Presence. His Light cast totally upon him, Mir Dāmàd remembers having left his physical body, abandoned the network of his sense perceptions, and been completely released from the bounds of nature. He soars towards the Absolute Presence of Truth, having completely left his body behind. He transcends everything that there is, supersedes temporality and reaches the realm of atemporality. He transcends all created things, all things that were brought into being. He transcends the physical and the metaphysical, the sacred, the material, the atemporal, the temporal, the division between faith and blasphemy, Islam and ignorance, transcends all degrees, all stages, all who came before, all who will come later, for ever and ever. He transcends everything that ever was, everything that can ever be, small and large, permanent and mandatory, present and yet-to-come. Then everything in solitude or in a group was ready at the gates of His Majesty and there he saw His Most Majestic Presence, with the eye of his inner intentions, in a way he could not understand. In utter annihilation everything recited His Name, pleading, begging, asking for His help, calling Him "O Thou the Rich, Thou the Giver of Richness!" These all were said in a way not known to them. Mir Dāmàd persists in that state of utter mental unconsciousness, forgetting the substance of his faculties of understanding, in a total state of non-being. Then he comes out of that absolute state of unconsciousness and returns to the material world.

Comparing this experience to the Ibn Slnan "visionary recitals", Corbin gave a full enthusiastic interpretation of this account (Corbin (1972), 4: 39—45), considerably emphasizing the significance of the middle of Sha'ban, the Prophet Muhammad's reported favourite month. Referring to the lsma'īlī significance of this month, Corbin adds that: "Les

traditions ismaéliennes insistent sur le sens ésotérique de cette Nuit. A la question d'un adepte demandant pourquoi l'on parle parfois de l'excellence du 'jour (qawm) de la mi-Sha'bàn, alors que dans le hadīth rapporté du Prophète, il est question de la nuit et non pas du jour, – il est répondu qu'ici le jour et la nuit indiquent les positions respectives du Prophète et de l'Imām. Le Prophète a déclaré: 'Sha'bàn est mon mois, ' ce qui réfère à son message, La Risàlaf (ibid.: 41—2). Corbin's interpretation is based on a text that gives the date of Mīr Dāmād 's vision as "Friday 14 Sha'ban 1023". There is no such date in the year 1023 of the Islamic calendar. As the text (MadanI in Mīr Dāmād (1977): 55—6) indicates, the night in question is "Friday 16 Sha'ban 1023" which corresponds to Friday 21 September 1614. In the year 1023/1614, 14 Sha'bān was on Wednesday 17 September, and not on a Friday. The Friday in question was 16 Sha'ban, and Corbin's interpretation must be modified accordingly.

The notion of the transmigration of the human soul from the material body into the realm of Divine Presence must be understood in the context of Mir Dàmād's meta-epistemology whereby all the uncertainties of the material faculties are eliminated in a realm of metarational experience that the human soul leaves the body and ascends all the stages of existence he has identified in both the Qabasàt and Jadhawāt. What substantiates this assessment is the attribution of many ascetic exercises to Mīr Dàmād. Flis nocturnal solitude, best discussed by Corbin (1972, 4: 39—45), would have created a favourable condition for such conceptions. Mīr Dāmād, in effect, translated a mystical conception of reunion with the Truth (Zarrīnkūb (1983): 246) into a metaphysics of his own, in which the transmigration of soul from body, through

excessive concentration in ascetic exercises, into the Divine Presence constitutes the ultimate state of achieving certitude.

Mīr Dāmād's Prose

Mīr Dāmād's philosophical discourse in both the Qabasàt and Jadhawāt is indexical and suggestive, symbolic and referential. He relies heavily on a thorough knowledge of the history of Islamic philosophy to his time. He has a particular penchant for obscure Arabic words that he successfully incorporates into his philosophical discourse. The legendary difficulty of his philosophical prose (Mohaghegh in Mīr Dāmād (1977): xvi; Izutsu in Mīr Dāmād (1977): 3, the English introduction; Nasr (1978): 33; Hadl (1984): 34—6) will have to be understood in the general anti-philo- sophical climate of the period promoted by the politically powerful nomocentric jurists. Perhaps the greatest philosopher of this period, Mullā Ṣadrā, was forced to leave the capital city of Iṣfahān at the instigation of the high clerical establishment precisely because of the articulate clarity of his prose. In this respect there is a story in Qisas al-'ulama' which is indicative of this problem. Tunikābunī reports (1985: 334–5) that Mullā Ṣadrā once saw Mīr Dāmād in a dream and asked him why people condemned him as a blasphemer while he had just repeated what Mīr Dāmād had already said. "The reason is, " Mīr Dāmād is believed to have answered, "that I wrote philosophical matters in such a way that the religious authorities 'ulama] could not understand them, and that nobody other than philosophers would comprehend them. But you have popularized the philosophical issues and said them in such a way that if

a teacher of an elementary religious school reads them, he can understand them. That is why they have called you a blasphemer and not me." Had it not been for the occasional protection of such powerful kings as Shah ʿAbbas, the philosophers, whose knowledge of astronomy and medicine was always beneficial to the royal court, would not have enjoyed even the limited freedom of discourse and inquiry that they did manage to sustain. Concealing one's philosophical or gnostic ideas in difficult and abstruse prose was one particularly effective way to limit the hermeneutic circle legitimately operative around philosophical texts.

In a letter attributed to Mīr Dāmād (Had! (1984): 35—6), he makes a specific reference to the difficulty of his prose.

It is the utmost indication of shamelessness that idle souls and rugged individuals rise in meaningless dispute and superfluous boasting against sacred minds and most sacrosanct jewels. One has to have enough intelligence to know that understanding my discourse is an art, not quarrelling with me and then calling it an "argument". It is perfectly evident that understanding superlative ideas and comprehending subtle issues is not possible for every short-witted, ill-prepared individual. Consequently, entering into a dispute with me in philosophical matters is necessarily due to some natural defects and not because of the precision of observation by a bunch of bat-like blind people who mistake their sense perceptions for the heavenly abodes of knowledge and consider them the highest achievement of the intellect. They had better not boast and express animosity in competition against those who are among the present in the Divine's presence, those whose ray of intellect rotates around the orbits of the lights of the heavenly world. That is not right

or proper. However, the disputation of whimsical fantasy with intellect, the hostility of untruth with truth, the struggle of darkness against light is an abomination not accidental, a transgression not recent. Grievance is to be taken to God, and peace be upon him who follows the right path:

When he who is incomplete attacks me,

To my perfection that is a perfect testimony.

Those who follow these, O Khaqanl!,

Are but crows wishing to walk like pheasants.

Suppose the asparagus made its body look like a snake, Where's its poison for its enemies, or love for its friends?

The difficulty of his prose has often been the occasion of much poetic humour. For example, in reference to his Sirdt al-mustaqim ("The Right Path"), someone has said

Of Mīr Dāmād's "Right Path"

May Muslims not hear, nor the infidel see!

(Had! (1984): 41)

Many commentaries on Mīr Dāmād's philosophical work have also been necessitated by the difficulty of his prose. Sayyid Ahmad 'AlawT, for example, wrote a commentary on the Qabasdt to explain its difficult expressions and phrases (Mohaghegh in Mīr Dāmād (1977): xvi—xviii). There are a number of other commentaries as well on the Qabasdt (ibid.:

xviii-xx). There are, however, those biographers of Mīr Dāmād who praise him for his eloquence (Husaynl Kashani in Mīr Dāmād (1977): xxviii).

Poetics

Mīr Dāmād was a gifted poet (Hadl (f984): 46—7) who left a collection of poetry in both Persian and Arabic. As convoluted and twisted as his philosophical prose is, his poetic voice is crystal-clear and rather elegant. Much "poetic licence" was conventionally given and tolerated by the visceral literalism of the dogmaticians. Mīr Dāmād took full advantage of this "poetic licence" and expressed considerable aspects of his philosophical and gnostic ideas in poetry.

There is a rather remarkable self-confidence in Mīr Dāmād's poetic voice. He repeatedly boasts of his learning and erudition in his poetry. "1 am the nightingale of virtue, art is my garden / I have cauterized the forehead of knowledge with my seal" (Hadi (1984): 89). In full confidence he announces that "I am twenty lunar years old / and yet in knowledge older than wisdom." He then proceeds to claim:

I am the lord of virtues, prince of knowledge,

Intellect is my throne, wisdom is my seat….

If like the moon kings borrow

Their majesty from the crown and throne,

I make my crown from my knowledge of the Divine,

Of natural sciences I make my throne….

My fortress is my knowledge of subjects in Arabic,

My palace is my knowledge of sciences in poetics.

I am like an aged wine, the universe is my container.

I am like pure wine, the world is my bottle….

(Hadi (1984): 89–91)

As the repeated apologies of a recent editor of Mīr Dāmād's poems indicate (Hadi (1984): 48, 87), it was considered below the status of a distinguished philosopher to engage in poetry. Among philosophers poetry appears to have been considered a light avocation for momentary distraction from more serious discourses. The nature of this dismissive attitude towards poetry seems to stem from both a metaphysical and a social disdain for what is considered to be a frivolous distraction. Although the frequency and volume of poetic output attributed to Mīr Dāmād prevent us from assuming that the poet himself considered his poetry as frivolous, it is also true that in his poetry we fail to detect a poetic voice distinct from his philosophical ideas expressed elsewhere in prose. Even when he engages in a poetic dialogue with Nizami (535/1141–600/1203), in his famous response to Makhzan al-asrdr, Mīr Dāmād is still an effective and eloquent translator of his philosophical prose into poetry. Poetry qua poetry, with an independent aesthetic presence and a marked difference from a logocentric disposition, has no particularly discernible place in Mīr Dāmād's Kitdb mashriq al-anwdr dar jawdb-i makhzan al-asrdr. Be that as it may,

Mashriq al-anwdr is still an eloquent mathnawi that Mīr Dāmād composed in dialogue with Nizami's Makhzan al-asrdr. This mathnawi follows the traditional sections canonized by Nizami. First there is a prologue in praise of God, followed by two supplicative prayers (;rnundjat) and a seeking of forgiveness (talab-i maghfirat). Then there are two conventional praises of the Prophet, followed by two successive praises of 'All, a section on all Shi'i Imams, and a concluding praise of the Twelfth Imam.

Mīr Dāmād's significance as a poet should not be underestimated. Poetic "licence" gave philosophers like Mīr Dāmād the possibility and the imaginative discourse of seeing and thinking at a level beyond the immediate logocentricity and nomocentricity of their philosophy and jurisprudence proper. Husaynl Kashanl's overwhelming praise for Mīr Dāmād's poetry (in Mīr Dāmād (1977): xxix—xxx) leaves no doubt that his contemporaries recognized and praised him more as a poet than as a philosopher. He, in fact, considers Mīr Dāmād in the same league as the greatest poets of Khurasan, Pars or 'Iraq, by which he means western Persia (ibid.: xxx). His commentary on Nizami's Makhzan al-asrdr is particularly noted as his greatest poetic achievement.

The "School of Iṣfahān"

The term "School of Iṣfahān" was established most successfully by Nasr and Corbin (Nasr in Sharif (1966): 904—32; Nasr (1978): 19—53), Corbin (1972, 4: 9—201) and Ashtiyani (1972: 6) and then extended by others (Izutsu in Mīr Dāmād (1977): 12, the English introduction) as a

generic term identifying the syncretic discourse that emerged in the Iṣfahān of Mīr Dāmād's period. Mīr Dāmād himself is credited with having established this school. The three prominent figures that Corbin studies (1972, 4: 9—201) in his discussion of this school are Mir Damad, Mullā Ṣadrā Shlrāzī and Qādī Sa'ld Qumml (d. 1103/1691). To these names Nasr adds those of Shaykh Baha' aI-Dīn 'Amill (Shaykh Baha'i), Mir Findiriski, Mullā 'Abd al-Razzàq al-Lāhljl (d. 1072/1661) and Mullā Muhsin Fayd Kāshānī (Nasr in Sharif (1966): 908—32). Mullā Rajab 'All Tabriz! (d. 1080/1609), Àqà Husayn Khwànsāri (d. 1098/1686) and Mullā Shasmā Gīlànī (d. 1081/1670) are also studied in the same group of philosophers (AshtiyanI (1972): 218–494).

Before the star and the highest achievement of the "School of Isfahān", Mullā Ṣadrā, could emerge as the leading philosopher of the Safavid period and of the "School of Isfahān", much preparatory work had to be done by Mīr Dāmād's generation. Protected by his eminent religious family, particularly his grandfather, Muhaqqiq-i Karakl, and his own learning in juridical sciences, Mīr Dāmād engaged in philosophical writings with a particular penchant for mystic and Illuminationist tendencies. His attempt to wed Suhrawardl and Ibn Slnā (Nasr (1978): 26) was matched by an unyielding concern with mystical possibilities of "understanding". Mīr Dāmād, Mir Findiriski and Shaykh Bahā'l were the dominant figures of the pre-Mullā-Sadrā period, all sharing this simultaneous interest in gnostic, Peripatetic, Illuminationist and juridical (doctrinal) positions of Shi'ism. As Shī'ī men of learning, Mīr Dāmād, Mir Findiriski, Shaykh Bahā'ī and ultimately Mullā Ṣadrā were at the receiving end of the collective philosophical legacies of Ibn Slnā, al-Ghazzālī, al-Suhrawardī and Ibn Arab!. The

ultimate objective of the Shi'i philosophers of the Safavid period was to demonstrate the central and meta-epistemological harmony among all these discourses. In his person, Mīr Dāmād exemplified this synthetic ambition of the "School of Isfahān". As a Shl'l philosopher/jurist/mystic, he wrote logical treatises and juridical edicts with the same ease and competence with which he composed mystical poems. "He expounded a rigorously logical philosophy and yet wrote a treatise on a mystical vision he had received in Qom. He harmonized Ibn Slnan cosmology with Shi ite imamology and made the 'fourteen pure ones' (chahàrdah ma sum) of Shi'ism the ontological principles of cosmic existence" (Nasr (1978): 32—3).

The flourishing of the "School of Isfahān" in general and the political possibilities of engaging in philosophy for Mīr Dāmād in particular were due to a considerable degree to the exclusive attention paid to religious learning by Shah 'Abbās the Great. As the greatest and perhaps most powerful of all the Safavid kings, Shah 'Abbās was particularly concerned, anxious even, about his relations with the religious establishment at large. Other than Mīr Dāmād and Shaykh Bahā'ī, for both of whom the Safavid monarch had a particular affection and reverence (Falsafl (1990), 3: 883—7), there were a number of other prominent religious authorities with whom he regularly associated. Mullā 'Abd al-Muhsin Kāshī, Mullā Muhsin Fayd, Mawlànā Abd Allāh Shūshtarī and Shaykh Lutf Allāh Mays! 'Amili are among these high-ranking authorities. They would regularly attend his court where he would arrange for discussions and arguments around a religious issue. Particularly during the month of Ramadan, he would break his daily fast with the religious authorities. Each of these high-ranking clerics would have his

individual dining cloth, on which would be served an extravagant array of dishes, which included sweets and chocolates imported from Europe (ibid.: 883). Whatever was left of this sumptuous meal was sent home with the clerics. This was in addition to regular sums of money that Shah 'Abbās would give to his high-ranking religious dignitaries.

Religious dignitaries like Shaykh Baha'i and Mīr Dāmād were regularly among Shah 'Abbàs's entourage, even when he was on a military campaign. There are even reports that he visited these great men of religious learning at their places of residence. His respect for his religious dignitaries ought to be seen, at least partially, in light of his pious devotion to his faith. One of Shah 'Abbās's servants, who had evoked his wrath, appealed to Shaykh Ahmad Afshàr Ardablll, known as Muqaddas, a particularly revered cleric. Muqaddas wrote a letter to Shah 'Abbās: "The custodian of the transitory kingdom should know that if this man had once committed a transgression, now he appears to be transgressed against; if you forgive him, maybe God Almighty may forgive some of your own sins. Signed the Servant of the King of Absolute Sovereignty [All], Ahmad Ardablll" (ibid.: 885). Shah 'Abbās responded in utter humility: "May 'Abbas humbly report that your command has been heartily obeyed. May you not forget this devotee of yours in your prayers. Signed, the dog at the door of 'All, 'Abbās" (ibid.: 885—6). The more humble Shah 'Abbās would appear in front of these religious dignitaries, the more legitimate his own power and authority would be vis-à-vis his subjects.

The two major urban settings that flourished in this period were Isfahàn and Shīràz. This may, in fact, fundamentally modify the "School of Isfahàn" appellation, unless we give

the Safavid capital its due political significance. One prominent member of the "School of Isfahàn", Mullā Ṣadrā Shīrāzī, not only was born, raised and received his early education in Shīrāz but, in fact, was chased out of Isfahàn by Shl'l dogmatists. Mullā Ṣadrā's most productive writing years were spent in the remote village of Kahak near Qom. As early as the beginning of the ninth/fifteenth century, Shīràz was the scene of considerable philosophical activity. Mullā Jalàl Dawànī (d. 908/1502) had a flourishing teaching career in Shiraz. Amir Ṣadr al-Dīn Muhammad ibn Ibrahim Dashtakl Shīrāzī (d. 903/1497) and his son Amīr Ghayàth al-Dīn Mansùr advanced the cause of philosophical studies in Shīràz. And ultimately Mullā Ṣadrā taught for years at the madrasah of Khàn in this city. This is not to underestimate the significance of Isfahàn as a great cosmopolitan centre of learning under the Safavids. When Shah Abbas I ascended the Safavid throne, Iṣfahān became a particularly favourable setting for a number of leading philosophers. Mir Damad, Mir Findiriski and Shaykh Baha aI-Dīn Amill became the great figures of philosophical learning in the Safavid capital.

Under favourable conditions created by the Safavid monarchs, and despite severe expressions of hostility by the nomocentric jurists, an array of distinguished philosophers, with more or less similar epistemological orientations, emerged in tenth/sixteenth-century Persia. The principal core of the "School of Iṣfahān" was an attempt to bring together the diverse and opposing forces of Islamic intellectual history into a harmonious epistemological and ontological unity. Until the culmination of this movement in Mullā Ṣadrā Shirazi, the efforts of Mīr Dāmād's generation must necessarily be considered as preparatory groundwork. Out of necessity or conviction, or a combination of both, Mīr

Dāmād's generation of Shi'i scholars wrote on a range of diverse issues, including Peripatetic and Illuminationist philosophy, Mu'tazilite theology, Ibn Arabi's school of mysticism, Quranic commentary, juridical edicts, Shi'I dogmatics, and even on such popular topics as pious supplications to Shi'i Imams, etc. The earliest traces of this synthetic tendency among the ShTi scholars in particular are to be seen in such encyclopedic collections as Husayn Aqili Rustamdari's Riydd al-abrar, composed in 979/1571 (Ṣafā (1959—85), 5, 1: 285). In this book, the Shi'i encyclopedist brings together an array of theological, philosophical and mystical topics, plus such issues as "occult sciences" ('ulum-i gharibah), with a consistent penchant for the primacy of Shi'i sentiments and credal dogmas. Mīr Dāmād's Risdlat al-i'daldt fi funiin al-'idum wa'l-sind'dt is a text in this genre. Other prominent figures of the "School of Iṣfahān", such as Mir Abu'l-Qasim Findiriski, wrote similar treatises on the variety of "sciences". Mir Findiriskl's Risdlah sand'iyyah, Mulla Muhsin Fayd Kashani's Fihrist al-'ulfan and Muhaqqiq-i Sharwani's (d. 1099/1687) Unmudhaj al-'tdum are among the most notable examples of this genre of writings. In such encyclopedic collections of texts, we witness, although with no articulate epistemological or ontological statement, an attempt to bring the diverse array of Islamic intellectual discourses into some sort of harmony.

The emergence of the "School of Iṣfahān" was predicated on the continued success of the Peripatetic and Illuminationist discourses dominant in Islamic philosophy since the time of Ibn Sīnā and Suhrawardi, respectively. These two philosophical discourses were equally matched by widespread concern with Ibn Arabi's school of mysticism. The most prominent figures of the "School of Iṣfahān", including Mīr

Dāmād and Mullā Ṣadrā Shirazi, reached for a level of philosophical discourse that combined these three dominant traditions and then in turn sought
to wed the result to the ShiT doctrinal positions. Through the active articulation of such key conceptual categories as "the unity of being" (wahdah al-wujūd), "the priority of being" (asdlah al-wujūd), "tran- substandal motion" (al-harakat al-jawhariyyah) and "the unification of the knower and the known" (ittibdd al-'dqil waī-maqūl), the "School of Iṣfahān" shifted the philosophical preoccupation of Islamic philosophers to a plane of operation more responsive to mystical sensibilities. The synthetic discourse with which the "School of Iṣfahān" was gradually identified was hikmah (Nasr (1966): 907). Central to this discourse was an attempt to combine the doctrinal teachings of the Shx'1 Imams with the wide range of theoretical speculations in gnosis, philosophy and theology.

The triumphant development of the "School of Iṣfahān" as a distinct philosophical orientation ought to be seen in the context of the Safavid state and the self-assuring confidence it engendered and sustained in the Sln'i intellectual disposition. Mīr Dāmād and the "School of Isfahān" were the supreme cultural products of a confident, prosperous and self-assertive Safavid state. With Mir Dāmàd's generation of Shī'ī philosophers, mystics, jurists and legal theorists, a new mode of intellectual confidence was created that could attend, with perfect authority, the whole gamut of Islamic intellectual history. The formation of the "School of Isfahān" is the institutional expression of a daring synthetical discourse set to bring together three conflicting thrusts in Islamic intellectual history – the philosophical, the mystical and the (Shl'l) doctrinal. Regardless of their degree of success or failure, the

chief exponents of the "School of Iṣfahān", from Mīr Dāmād to Mullā Ṣadrā, its most celebrated achievement, contributed towards the emphatic establishment of a level of unprecedented philosophical discourse which saw no fundamental difference between the intellectual configuration of reality and its mystical comprehension or between these two modes of coming to terms with a significant truth (a truth that signifies) and the doctrinal mandates of the Shfl faith. What would later be known as al-hikmat aTmuta'allyah ("the transcendental philosophy") is the theoretical culmination of this synthesis, a cutting deep through all the dominant, and fundamentally hostile, intellectual discourses in Islam. Mīr Dāmād's rather distinctive self-confidence (repetition of his poetic boasting of what a profound philosopher he is, a rather surprising phenomenon given the timidity and humility with which the Muslim literati usually describe their history, and his authoritative voice when attending to any number of philosophical, mystical, doctrinal, Qur'ànic, hermeneutic, and other Shī'ī discourses) is the reflection of a triumphant Safavid dynasty reimbursing Shi'ism for centuries of persecution and humility. The ambitious terms with which Mīr Dāmād and other members of the "School of Isfahān", particularly Mullā Ṣadrā, thought they could conceive to bring
together the whole universal repertoire of Islamic intellectual history could have been possible only in a kingdom under "the Shadow of God on Earth".

Among the earlier generations of philosophers preceding the "School of Iṣfahān", Qādī Maybudī (d. 910/1504) had already combined a Peripatetic orientation in his philosophical writings with a mystical disposition best represented in his poetry. He was a student of Mullā Jalàl Dawānī. Because of

his Sunni beliefs, Qādī Maybudī was murdered at the order of Shah Ismā'īl (Safā (1959—85), 5, 1: 297). Qādī Maybudī wrote extensively on Peripatetic philosophy. His commentaries on Hiddyah al-hikmah of Athīr al-Dīn Abharī (d. 633/1235) and Hikmah al-'ayn of Najm al-Dīn Dabīrān (d. 675/1276) were widely read and discussed. In theology, he Wrote a commentary on Tawàli al-anwdr of Qādī Baydāwī (d. 685/1286). But the traces of a synthetic discourse, wedding philosophy and mysticism, are more immediately evident in his Jām-ī gītī-namà, a treatise he wrote in Persian and in which he combined aspects of the philosophical and mystical discourses.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Ghayāth al-Dīn Mansur Dashtakī Shīrāzī (866/1463—948/1541) was another distinguished philosopher of this earlier generation, anticipating the "School of Isfahān". He is considered the Khwājah Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī of the tenth/sixteenth century. In fact, many of the honorific titles with which he has been praised are identical with those of Khwājah Naṣīr (Safā (1959—85), 5.1: 299—300). When Shah Ismā'īl conquered Shīrāz in 909/1503, he ordered Ghayāth al-Dīn Mansūr to repair the Marāghah Observatory. During the reign of Shah Tahmàsp (930/1524—984/1576), for a period of time, between 936/1529 and 938/1531, he became a vizier to the Safavid king. A rivalry developed between him and Muhaqqiq-i Karakī, Mīr Damad's maternal grandfather, which led to his dismissal from the Safavid court. He subsequently returned to Shīrāz and resumed his writings on philosophy. In his Mir at al-haqd'iq, Ghayāth al-Dīn Mansūr begins to work his philosophical ideas into a synthetic discourse between the Peripatetic and Illuminationist schools of philosophy. In his critical commentaries on Mullā Jalàl

Dawànī's exegesis on Suhrawardī's Haydkil al-nūr, he puts forward a vigorous Peripatetic twist to the Illuminationist discourses of both Suhrawardī and Dawānī.

Mīr Findiriskī is perhaps the most distinguished example of this ecumenical and synthetic spirit rising simultaneously with Mīr Dāmād. He travelled as far as India, became acquainted with Zoroastrian and Hindu ideas, and even wrote a notable commentary on Yoga Vaiseska. His Risdla-yi sana'iyyah is an encyclopedic collection of all "rational" and "transmitted" sciences. Other than his philosophical treatises, like Maqiildt al-harakah wa'l-tahqiq flhd, in which he challenges the notion of Platonic ideas, Mīr Findiriskī reproduced much of his philosophical ideas in his
poetry. The opening lines of one of his most famous qasidahs is a good example of this philosophical poetry:

The Universe with stars in it is all so beautiful, pure, and in harmony,

Whatever is in the heavens has a form down here on earth.

(Had! (1984): 66)

The ambitious challenge that the "School of Iṣfahān" sought to meet was wedding together all the diverse and opposing discourses of legitimate understanding that had historically divided Muslims and then have doctrinal Shi'ism preside over them all. The principal points of contention were not only the philosophical traditions of the Peripatetic and Illuminationist branches, but also the gnosis of Ibn 'Arabl and the Shi'ism of the post-Ghaybah period. Luminaries of the "School of Iṣfahān", such as Mīr Dāmād and Mullā Ṣadrā, became the

chief protagonists of this new philosophical discourse, took the possibilities of ascetic exercises and of gnostic Illumination seriously, and saw the result in perfect harmony with the Shfl doctrinal position. In the figure of Mīr Dāmād, for example, were combined the otherwise conflicting characters of a logocentric philosopher, a practising mystic and a powerful jurist. Even if the report that Shah 'Abbàs was actually afraid of him and had plotted to kill him (Zarrīnkūb (1983): 246) is not true, still the assumption is a good indication of the political implications of such a constructed image of social and metaphysical authority.

Mīr Dāmād 's principal work in the "School of Isfahàn" was his reconstruction of a Peripatetic philosophical orientation with a practical mysticism akin to the Illuminationists. Separation from the physical body, in this meta-epistemology, becomes the necessary precondition of conceptual cognitions. Mīr Dāmād 's ascetic exercises, thus rooted in his epistemology, become equally constitutional in his appeal to the mystics. The optimum balance that Mīr Dāmād was able to maintain between delicate intrusions of philosophical and mystical doctrines into the dogmatic and juridical principles of the faith was not continued by his pupils. By the time Mullā Ṣadrā (d. 1050/1640) sought to carry Mīr Dāmād's suggestions to their logical conclusions, he had managed to antagonize the Shī'ī clerics considerably, so much so that he had to flee to the remote village of Kahak. Mullā Ṣadrā, in fact, manages to antagonize both the Sufis and the jurists. In his al-Asfdr al-arba'ah, Kasr asndm al-jdhiliyyah and Risdlah-yi sih asl he severely criticizes both the intoxicated Sufis and the literalist jurists. Mullā Ṣadrā's antagonism against some of the practising Sufis seems to have stemmed from a necessary desire to distance his adaptation of a

mystical discourse into his general philosophical narrative from such functional Sufism associated with the Sufi orders which had neither theoretical sophistication nor social prestige at

that time. As is evident in both Mīr Dāmād and Mullā Ṣadrā s writings, the "School of Iṣfahān" is the collective expression of an intellectual enterprise that seeks to denounce the ecstatic mysticism of a more popular orientation in favour of an articulate adaptation of Sufi gnosis integrated into a principally philosophical discourse. But at the same time this systematic logocentricity has to maintain a safe and necessary distance from the literal nomocentricity of the jurists with its quintessentially anti- philosophical and anti-mystical convictions.

The synthetic nature of the hikmat al-muta'aliyah, as the highest theoretical achievement of the "School of Iṣfahān", is also evident in its constant references to the works of Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazzali in his later works, where he had already achieved a balanced equilibrium among the existing discourses of his time. In his magnum opus, al-Asfdr al-arba'ah, Mullā Ṣadrā demonstrated the viability of the mystical discourse by adopting its formal narrative for his otherwise most ambitious philosophical project. An ambitious synthesis of a logocentric discourse, combined with mystical observations, and ultimately governed by the Quranic language is perhaps the most enduring legacy of the "School of Iṣfahān" as represented in its best spokesmen Mir Damad, Mullā Ṣadrā and their respective students.

Mullā Ṣadrā was perhaps the greatest figure and the most celebrated representative of the "School of Iṣfahān". As Mīr Dāmād's principal student, he gave the fullest account of the

principal doctrines of the "School of Iṣfahān". Since there are separate chapters on Mullā Ṣadrā in this volume, I need not discuss him fully here. Suffice it to say that he generously benefited from the work and achievement of his three principal teachers – Mir Damad, Mir Findiriski and Shaykh Baha'i – and in his magnum opus, al-Asfdr al-arba'ah, as well as in such major treatises as al-Mashd'ir, al-Shatvdhid and al-Hikmah al-arshlyah, he gave the synthetic discourse of the "School of Iṣfahān" its most successful expression.

In addition to Mullā Ṣadrā, the generation of Mir Damad, Mir Findiriski and Shaykh Baha'i trained a number of other distinguished philosophers, among whom is Mulla Rajab 'All Tabrlzl (d. 1080/1669), the author of Ktlid-i bihisht. Tabrlzl had studied with Mir Findiriski and became a prominent religious authority during the reign of Shah 'Abbas. Mulla Shamsa Gilani (d. 1081/1670) was another student of Mir Damad. He continued his teacher's interest in the Divine act of creation and wrote a treatise on it (Ashtiyani in Mullā Ṣadrā (1967): 93; Ashtiyani (1972): 408–93). He also wrote a commentary on Mīr Dāmād's al-Qabasdt. Like his teachers, Mulla Shamsa was under the influence of Suhrawardi, and in opposition to Ibn Sina, in considering the comprehensive nature of Divine Knowledge above and beyond the knowledge of the essence. In the same generation of post-Mīr Dāmād philosophers is Aqa Husayn Khwansari (d. 1098/ 1686), who wrote extensive commentaries on Ibn Sīnā'ss al-Shifa' (Ashtiyam in Mullā Ṣadrā (1967): 94—5; Ashtiyani (1972): 362–407).

With the third generation (Saduql Suha (1980): 22–33) of the "School of Iṣfahān", Mullā Ṣadrās students had already learned to be more cautious in the formulation of their ideas.

In his Shawdriq, Mulla 'Abd al-Razzaq LahijI (d. 1072/1661), Mullā Ṣadrā's student and son-in-law, reformulates an originally Ghazzallan position (Zarrinkub (1983): 251) that mystical observations are the ultimate tests of preceding rational conclusions. The viability of the mystical discourse as a meta- epistemological basis of legitimate understanding continued to occupy a central position in the theoretical apparatus of the "School of Iṣfahān". The principal problems that led the philosophers of the "School of Iṣfahān" towards the viability of the mystical discourse were created by the confrontation between the Peripatetic school of philosophy and the theological mandates of the Islamic faith. Such central dogmas as the nature of prophetic knowledge, the possibility of revelation, the plausibility of a day of judgment and of its corollary doctrine of bodily resurrection and, of course, ultimately the Existence and Attributes of God were paradigmatic problematics created for Islamic philosophy by virtue of its epistemological operation in the context of the Islamic creed. Islamic philosophy proper, as best represented in its Peripatetic tradition by Ibn Sina, could go only so far in stipulating the ontological viability of the Necessary Being. As best exemplified in Ibn Sīnās al-lshardt wa'l- tanbihat, even the master of Peripatetic philosophy had recognized the inherent limitations of reason and of logocentricity to ascertain the revelatory mandates of the faith and sought to explore the possibilities promised in the mystical discourse. WTiile in the mystical discourse proper, at least up until Ibn Arabi, there is a fundamental suspension of reason in favour of an alternative certitude that bypasses the intermediary of intellect, in the al-hikmat al-muta'aliyah of the "School of Iṣfahān" the attempt is made to adapt the possibilities of the mystical discourse, especially in its Ghazzallan and Ibn Arabian formulations, into the working operation of an

otherwise logocentric discourse when it finds it impossible to reach for a comprehensive conception of the metaphysical doctrines of the faith. Whereas both mysticism and philosophy proper had gone separate ways in their respective conception of existence, al- hikmat al-muta'aliyah sought to hold to the initial logocentricity of a philosophical inquiry into the nature of being and then, when it reached the impasse of not being able to account for the doctrinally mandated principles of the faith, it turned to the mystical discourse and the possibilities of the metarational perceptions it promised.

In his Gawhar-i murnd (LahijI 1985), Mulla Abd al-Razzaq LahijI compared and contrasted the philosopher's method and the mystic's path, concluding that while the former "confirmed" all preliminary existent
beings in order to reach for the Final Cause, the latter "negated" all preliminary stages of existence until it reached a positive annihilation in Being. It is this mystical path that made the prophetic state conceivable to the philosophers of the "School of Iṣfahān". In his philosophical orientation, Làhiji is much more cautious than his_ teacher Mullā Ṣadrā in openly identifying with mystical conceptions (Ashtlyàni in Mullā Ṣadrā (1967): 99. But there are many occasions in Gawhar-i murdd, which is more than anything else a text of philosophical kalàm, where he openly identifies with the "Illumination ist" and mystical attainment of certitude. For example, in his chapter on prophethood (Lahljl (1985): 247–87) he devotes a section to proving the necessity of prophethood by a tradition of the Sixth Shī'ī Imam, Ja'far al-Sadiq, followed by successive sections arguing in the same way according to theologians, philosophers and finally the mystics. For years Làhijl taught the texts of Mullā Ṣadrā, including al-Shawàhid al-rububiyyah. His most famous

student was Qàdl Sa'id QummI (d. c. 1104/1692). His choice of both texts to teach and philosophical projects to undertake confirms the assessment (Zarrinkub (1983): 251–2) that Lahljl's understanding of mystical metacertainty beyond the limited achievements of philosophy proper corresponds to the later works of al-Ghazzali, especially his al-Munqidh min al-daldl. His preference for the mystical discourse over the philosophical in Gawhar-i murnd has also been compared to al-Ghazzàll in Klmlya-yi sa'adat (ibid.-. 253).

Another student and son-in-law of Mullā Ṣadrā, Mullà Muhsin Fayd (d. 1091/1680), belongs to the same philosophical school. He, too, represents a synthetic attempt to wed mystical perceptions with dogmatic principles and brings both into a legitimate philosophical discourse. Shah 'Abbàs II (ruled 1052/1642–1077/1666) (see Luft (1968): 159—63) was particularly respectful of him. In his al-Muhdkimah bayn al-mutisawwifah wa ghayrahim, Mullà Muhsin tries to distinguish between popular (what he calls "ignorant") Sufism and the gnostic discourse he finds legitimate and useful in matters of philosophical pursuits. He has a treatise, called al-Insdf ft baydn al-farq bayn al-haqq wa'l-itisdf in which he identifies four major groups of Muslims: the philosophers, the mystics, the theologians and "the deviates" (muta'assif) (Zarrinkub (1983): 255–6). Although none of these groups are infidels, they have all gone astray in their respective pursuits. He particularly condemned the philosophers for having abandoned the book of God and adopted the books of the Greeks in their pursuit of truth. By philosophers here, he means the rationalistic philosophers because his own Usui al-ma 'drifts an important text in the tradition of the hikmat al-muta'dliyah. But mystics and theologians are equally to blame. The implicit conclusion of

this sweeping dismissal of all existing Islamic discourses is the validation of Mullà Muhsin's own contribution to the continued validity of al-hikmat al-muta'dliyah. The principal foundations of this discourse, Mullà Muhsin insists, are the Qur'ān and the Prophetic and Imam! traditions. Any kind of philosophical speculation which is not traceable to the Qur'an and Hadīth is to be discarded. Mullà Muhsin Fayd's commentary on al-Ghazzālī's Ihya 'ulūm al-dīn, called al-Mahajjat id-baydà ' fī tahdhīb al-ihyā, has rightly been considered (Zarrînkūb (1983): 256—7) the indication of a renewed interest in a mature combination of logocentrism and gnostic orientations. He achieves in al-Mahajjat al-bayda a systematic reconstruction of al-Ghazzàlī's mature reflection on the nature of religious ethics on the foundations of Shl'ism and its traditions.

The adaptation of a supplementary mystical discourse in their otherwise logocentric orientation made the members of the "School of Iṣfahān" particularly sensitive to and critical of the more popular forms of Sufism. Thus, a major characteristic of the philosophers of the "School of Iṣfahān" is their denunciation of practising popular Sufis of their period, whom they identify with reckless endangerment of the faith. Mir Dāmàd, Mullā Ṣadrā, Mullà 'Abd al-Razzāq Làhījī, and Mullā Muhsin Fayd all prefaced their theoretical adaptations of gnostic discourses with a visceral condemnation of popular mysticism. Mir Abu'l-Qāsim Findiriski went one step further and, in his Risala-yi sinaiyyah, accused the popular Sufis of disrupting the social order (Zarrînkūb (1983): 258). Shaykh Baha'i wrote a satirical treatise, Mūsh wa gurbah, in which he condemned and dismissed the decadent type of Sufism of the more popular sort although he himself was a Sufi (Baha'i (1982): 175–287).

But no matter how diligent the philosophers of the "School of Iṣfahān" were in their attempts to distance themselves from popular Sufis and subject their gnostic/philosophical discourse to ShI'I doctrinal principles, considerable hostility was still directed against them by the dogmaticians. Mullā Muhammad Tāhir QummI (d. 1100/1688) wrote two treatises against mystics and philosophers. His al-Fawā'id al-dīniyyah fi'l-radd 'alal-hukamā' wal-sūfiyyah, as is perfectly evident in the title, is on the classical model of the appropriation of the faith by the clerical establishment through a visceral denunciation of philosophy and mysticism. In this classical genre of disputation, the particular literalist version of the faith is identified with al-dīn ("the faith"), and the alternative readings are condemned as aberrations of al-hukama and al-sūfiyyah. Yet not all jurists were anti-mystical or anti-philosophical in their nomocentric disposition. The greatest traditionalist of the period, Shaykh Muhammad TaqI (the First) Majlis! (d. 1070/1659), looked favourably upon mysticism and, in fact, wrote a treatise against Mullā Muhammad Tāhir Qumml's anti-mystical position. Still, both this Majlis! and his son Mullā Muhammad Bāqir (the Second) Majlis! (d. 1111/1699) distinguished fundamentally between "traditional" Sufism of the patristic generation and what they observed among their contemporary Sufis. The Majlisī's tolerance of "traditional Sufis", however, does not extend to philosophers

as well. Both Majlisls considered the human intellect to be insufficient for grasping the nature of the prophetic message. That message has to be accepted as a Divine mandate and in terms sui generis to it. The Second MajlisI, in his Ttiqādāt, took strong exception to the philosophers' interpretation of the Qur'anic and Prophetic truths so that they would coincide with "an infidel Greek's ideas" (Zarrīnkūb (1983): 261). It is

with the continuity of precisely the same sentiments that, during the reign of Shah Sultan Husayn (ruled 1105/1694—1135/1722), one of the most distinguished philosophers of the period, Mawlānā Muhammad Sādiq Ardistanl, was harassed, persecuted and forced to leave Iṣfahān. He left Iṣfahān under such difficult circumstances that his infant child succumbed to the cold weather in the highway (Zarrinkūb (1983): 261; Ashtiyani in Mullā Ṣadrā (1967): 109–10)."

Conclusion

The central, yet subtextual, problematic of Islamic philosophy, its theo- centricity, was initially reactivated but ultimately further consolidated in the gradual but persistent formation of the "School of Isfahān". The a priori certainty of the mystical discourse was transformed into the timid logocentricity of Peripatetic philosophy, and both were considerably assimilated into Shaft doctrinal dogmas. Aspects of Shl'l liturgical piety, forces of mystical metacertainty, and remnants of Aristotelian logic were brought together under the general rubric of a philosophical discourse that remained quintessential^ theocentric and cross-referential with the revelatory language of the Qur'ān. This remained the case without the slightest recognition of the legitimacy of the philosophical discourse on the part of Shī'ī legal orthodoxy. Shl'l philosophers, in or out of the "School of Isfahān", remained the constant targets of suspicion. Mīr Dāmād sought refuge from anti-philosophical doctors of law in his convoluted discourse, Mullā Ṣadrā practically fled persecution and lived a life of exile for some years in a small

village. Mīr Findiriski and Shaykh Baha'i sought a poetic or satirical discourse as a haven. That they did produce a philosophy in which they sought to bring together the conflicting discourses of philosophy, (Sln'l) theology and mysticism is a testimony to the relentless grip of their inquiring minds. That they could never escape or supersede the relentless theocentricity of their discourse, that all successive paradigmatic breakthroughs in Islamic philosophy (from Peripatetic to Neoplatonic to Illuminationist to the "School of Isfahān" and its highest achievement, Transcendental Philosophy) remained shy of a fundamental epistemic revolution as found in the modern West, are more commentaries on the Islamic tradition within which these philosophers thought and functioned than their generic concern with the rule

of reason, the uninhibited pursuit of truth or reality or, perhaps more accurately, the ironic possibilities of two counter-dogmatizing quotation marks around every rhetorical claim to "truth".

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CHAPTER 35

Mullā Ṣadrā: His life and works

Hossein Ziai

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Sadr aI-Dīn Shirāzī is one of the most revered of all philosophers in Islam, especially among Muslim intellectuals today. His full name is Muhammad ibn Ibrāhīm al-Qawāmī al-Shlrāzī, and he is commonly known as "Mullā Ṣadrā" to multitudes of Muslims, especially in Persia, Pakistan and India.[1] His honorific title, Ṣadr al-Dīn ("Pundit of Religion"), indicates his accepted rank within traditional theological circles, while his designation as "Exemplar, or Authority of Divine Philosophers" (Sadr al-Muta'allihln) signifies his unique position for generations of philosophers who came after him. He was born in Shiraz in southern Persia in c. 979/1572 to a wealthy family. His father was reportedly a minister in the Safavid court, but was also a scholar. Sadr aI-Dīn is said to have made the pilgrimage to Mecca six times, and on his seventh journey died in 1050/1640 in Basra where he is buried and where his grave was known until recent times.[2] Fairly extensive and accurate information on his life, his studies, his students and his works are available. Owing in part to the relative proximity of his time to ours, several

autographs of his works, many letters and glosses on earlier textual traditions have survived, giving us a better insight into his personality than most of the philosophers of earlier periods. Most historians and commentators of his works divide his life into three distinct periods.[3]

Study

Upon completing preliminary studies in his native Shiraz, the young thinker travelled to Iṣfahān, the seat of Safavid rule and perhaps the most important centre of Islamic learning in the tenth/sixteenth century. There
he first enrolled in courses on traditional Islamic scholarship, commonly called the "transmitted sciences" (al-'ulūm al-naqliyyah), in which the great jurist Bahā' aI-Dīn Muhammad al-Amill (d. 1031/1622) was laying the foundations of a new, well-defined Shi'ite jurisprudence. Ṣadr al-Dīn's comprehensive early studies of Shi'ite views concerning jurisprudence and Ḥadith scholarship and his exposure to Qur'anic commentary by the great Shi'ite thinker distinguish him from almost all the earlier philosophers of medieval Islam, whose knowledge of such subjects was elementary at best. This side of Ṣadr al-Dīn's intellectual formation deeply marked his thinking and represents one of the two main trends in his works.

During the same period, Ṣadr al-Dīn began his studies of what are commonly known as the intellectual sciences (al-'ulūm al-'aqliyyah) under the tutelage of one of the greatest and most original Islamic philosophers, Sayyid Muhammad Bàqir Astaràbàdī, well known as Mīr Dāmād (d. 1040/1631). This

famous, erudite philosopher, known as the "Seal of Philosophers" (Khdtam al-Hukamā') and the "Third Teacher" - after Aristotle and al-Fàràbî – was overwhelmed by his pupil's unusual competence in constructing philosophical arguments and bestowed lavish praise on him. Had it not been for Ṣadr al-Dīn's eclipsing prominence, Mīr Dāmād might have been remembered more than he currently is for his collection and revisions of the complete textual corpus of Islamic philosophy. In many ways Mīr Dāmād's endeavours, funded by the enlightened endowments of the arts and sciences by the Safavid court (into which he had married), led to the establishment of superior libraries where the older manuscript traditions were collected, copied and published. Evidence for this profuse activity are the impressive numbers of Arabic and Persian manuscripts now housed in major collections all over the world, all produced in Iṣfahān during this period. In his court- supported patronage as well as in his own works on philosophical subjects, especially his Qabasàt[4] and his unpublished al-Ufuq al-mubin, Mīr Dāmād's work was the impetus for the revival of philosophy known as the "School of Iṣfahān".[5] Ṣadr al-Dīn's lengthy studies with this visionary thinker mark the philosophical aspect, or second trend, in Ṣadr al-Dīn's works. It represents the height of yet another "new" synthesis and reconstruction of metaphysics in Islamic philosophy after Suhrawardl. This philosophical trend soon became one of the main schools of Islamic philosophy, if not the dominant one to this day, and bears the name of metaphysical philosophy (al-hikmat al-muta'aliyah). This name was chosen specifically by Sadr aI-Dīn to indicate his specific philosophical intention, which needs to be adequately examined.

Complete Retreat from Society

After a formal period of study, Ṣadr al-Dīn withdrew from society and from city life altogether, choosing the seclusion of the small village of Kahak, near the holy city of Qom. This period marks Sadr aI-Dīn's increased preoccupation with the contemplative life and also the years in which he laid the ground work for most of his major works. This period is marked by long periods of meditation and spiritual practice complementing that of formal study, thus completing the programme for the training of a real philosopher according to Suhrawardl. It was during this period that the knowledge which was to become crystallized in his many works was attained.

Teaching and Philosophical Contemplation

Ṣadr al-Dīn's fame as master of the two branches of Shi'ite learning - the transmitted and the intellectual – soon spread across the Safavid capital. Many official positions were offered to him, which he shunned, as his biographers all agree. His disregard for material rewards and refusal to serve the nobility in any form is evidenced by the fact that not one of his works bears a dedication to a prince or other patron, although such inscriptions were common practice of the day. Historians also state that Ṣadr al-Dīn's new fame met with

typical jealousy on the part of members of the scholarly community, whose unfounded charges of blasphemy were a factor in his rejecting the limelight of Safavid circles in Iṣfahān. He did, however, agree to return to public life and teach in the madrasah which was built and endowed by the Safavid nobleman Allāhwirdi Khan in Shiraz. The new institution of learning, away from the political ambiance of the capital, suited Sadr aI-Dīn's increasing preoccupation with both teaching and meditation.

The language used to describe Sadr aI-Dīn's contemplative life strongly indicates his Illuminationist attitude to philosophy in general and the Illuminationist position of the primacy of the intuitive, experiential mode of cognition in particular.[6] Suhrawardl had demonstrated the validity of vision-illumination (mushdhadah u>a ishrdq) as the means for recovery of eternal truths to be used in philosophical construction. The Illuminationist tradition had repeatedly employed the allogory of the inner yet objectified journey into the mundus imaginalis ('dtlam al-khaydl) as the highest method for obtaining sound principles of philosophy. Suhrawardl had called for a prescribed sequence of specific actions as a necessary first step toward achieving this vision, which was believed to lead to the atemporal, immediate cognition of the whole of reality. Sadr
al-Dln evidently took these dicta quite seriously. All of his biographers mention his ascetic practices (riyadat) and his visionary experiences (mushdhadah, mukdshafab[7] Many of Ṣadr al-Dīn's philosophical compositions inform the reader that the essence of a specific philosophical argument was first revealed to him in a visionary experience, which he then analyses within the discursive system.[8]

It is also during this period of his life that Ṣadr al-Dīn trained a number of students who went on to become significant in subsequent philosophical activity in Persia. His two most important pupils produced works that have been widely studied to this day. The first of these noteworthy students, Muhammad ibn al-Murtada – well known as Mulla Muhsin Fayd Kashanl – wrote a treatise titled al-Kalamdt al-maknimah, which emphasizes the two sides of the master's thinking: the gnostic ('irfdn) and the Shi'ite interpretation of the Qur'anic realm of the "unseen" (ial-ghayb) as the source of inspiration. Second is Abd al-Razzaq ibn al- Husayn al-Lahijl, whose Persian summaries of the master's more Peripatetic inclinations have been especially popular in Persia. His Shawdriq al-ilham deserves special mention here for its inclusion of an older Ibn Slnan view of ethics. Both of these young scholars were also married to two of Ṣadr al-Dīn's daughters, revealing an increasingly intimate relationship between master and teacher in Shi'ite learned circles, which is prevalent to this day. Several other students are mentioned in biographical sources, including two of the master's sons.

Monumental though the impact of Ṣadr al-Dīn's works and thinking has been on Islamic intellectual history, very few comprehensive, systematic studies of his philosophy are available in Western translation. The earliest extensive study was done by Max Horten, whose Daspbilosophische System von Schirazi (1913) is still a good source, despite the author's use of premodern philosophical terminology and older Orientalist views.

In more recent decades Henry Corbin's text editions and pioneering studies opened a new chapter in Western

scholarship on Islamic philosophy, producing an awareness of the existence of original trends in the post-Ibn Slnan period, if not a complete analytical understanding of their philosophical significance. Corbin's emphasis on the presumed esoteric dimension of Ṣadr al-Dīn's thought has tended to hinder a modern, Western philosophical analysis of "metaphysical philosophy", however.[9] Following Corbin, Seyyed Hossein Nasr's study of Sadr al- Dln's thought[10] and James Morris's study and translation of a less significant philosophical work by Ṣadr al-Dīn, called 'Arshiyyah (translated by Morris as Wisdom of the Throne),[11] also emphasize the non-systematic aspect of this philosophy. Their choice of terms such as "transcendent theosophy" does not indicate the philosophical side of the original genius of Ṣadr al-Dīn's thinking. To date the only in-depth study of Sadr al- Dln's "metaphysical philosophy" is Fazlur Rahman's The Philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā. Rahman's use of contemporary philosophical terminology and approach to the Islamic philosophical system of thought represents a meaningful introduction in English that is comparable in scope and analysis to many of the European works of the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries.

How original a thinker is Ṣadr al-Dīn? And how logically consistent and philosophically sound is his new synthesis and reformulation of what he believed to be the whole of philosophy, to which he gave the name metaphysical philosophy? These are questions that can be answered only once further studies have been undertaken by philosophers interested in these questions, and who with a trained eye can look deeper than the presumed "theosophical" aspect of Sadr aI-Dīn's thought. This is not an easy task, for to date only a few of his works have been properly edited; fewer still (if

any) have been meaningfully translated from a technical philosophical perspective.

The only scholar known to me who has analysed and written on various aspects of Islamic philosophy from a modern philosophical perspective using contemporary language and analytic approach is the distinguished Islamic philosopher Mehdi Ha'iri Yazdi. While most of his works are in Persian, thus not widely accessible, his most recent study in English, titled Knowledge by Presence, represents a serious attempt to open a dialogue with the contemporary Western philosopher.[12] In this work, students of modern philosophy can follow the centuries-old philosophical arguments concerning the epistemological priority of the special intuitive and experiential mode of cognition, which was fully re-examined and verified by Ṣadr al-Dīn. Students may still prefer the purely predicative, prepositional mode, accepting the logicist position, but they will no longer be confused by the plethora of polemical works that have generally dismissed the Illuminationist epistemological concept of "seeing" (rnusháhadah) — the mode of knowledge by presence – simply as "mystic experience" (generally called Sufi experience). Some readers of Islamic epistemological arguments may find a remarkable resemblance to Western ideas, such as Brouwer's "primary intuition" in his Intuitionist foundation of mathematics, for example. Some may also find parallels with contemporary thinking on the problem of intuition that regards it as the result of the knowing subject's grasp of an object when the subject—object dichotomy does not apply – in other words, when they are one. Quite simply, this is what is meant by "the unity of the knower, the known, and the mind" (al-ittihad al-'dqil wa'l-maqūl wal-'aql), introduced by Suhrawardl and

further analysed by Sadr aI-Dīn.[13] Much scholarship remains to be done, the first step being the editing and philosophical translation of Arabic and Persian texts. Generations of philosophers in Islam, most of whom did not consider themselves to be Sufis, have studied Illuminationist texts as well as texts in the tradition of Sadr aI-Dīn's "metaphysical philosophy" and have found them to represent well- thought-out, rational systems while confirming the centrality of Illumination.

Major Works

More than fifty works are attributed to Ṣadr al-Dīn.[14] They may be divided into two main trends of his thought: the transmitted sciences and the intellectual sciences. Ṣadr al-Dīn's works on subjects that predominantly relate to the transmitted sciences, covering the traditional subjects of Islamic jurisprudence, Qur'anic commentary, Ḥadith scholarship and theology, are best exemplified by: (1) Sharh al-usid al-kafi, a commentary on Kulaynī's famous work, the first Shi'ite Ḥadith compilation on specifically juridical and theological issues; (2) Mafdtih al-ghayb, an incomplete Qur'anic commentary (tafslr); (3) a number of short treatises each devoted to commentary on a specific chapter of the Qur'an; (4) a short treatise called Imamat on Shi'ite theology; and (5) a number of glosses on standard kaldm texts, such as Qūshchī's Sharh al-tajrid, [15]

Ṣadr al-Dīn's more significant works, widely accepted by Muslims to represent the pinnacle of Islamic philosophy, are those that indicate the intellectual sciences. His major works

in this group include: (I) al- Asfdr al-arba'at al-'aqliyyah ("Four Intellectual Journeys"), [16] Ṣadr al-Dīn's definitive philosophical corpus, which includes detailed discussions on all philosophical subjects; (2) al-Shawāhid al-rubūbiyyah ("Divine Testimonies"), [17] generally accepted to be an epitome of the Asfdr, and (3) glosses on Ibn Sīnà's Shifd' and on Suhrawardī's Hikmat al-ishrdq.[18] Both of these glosses, available only in facsimile editions, are indicative of Ṣadr al-Dīn's mastery of elaborating, refuting or refining philosophical arguments. Unlike many previous commentaries and glosses, he is not content simply to elucidate a difficult point, but is concerned with demonstrating or refuting the consistency and philosophical validity of the original arguments. Mullā Ṣadrā also wrote a number of shorter treatises some of which, such as al-Hikmat al- 'arshiyyah ("Wisdom from the Divine Throne"), al-Mabda' wa'l-ma'dd ("The Beginning and End") and Kitdb al-mashd'ir ("The Book of Metaphysical Sciences") have become very well known and taught in philosophical circles in Persia. In India Mullā Ṣadrā's Sharh al-hiddyah ("Commentary upon the Book of Guidance of Athīr al- Dīn Abharī") became the most famous of his works and is taught in traditional madrasahs to this day.

To conclude one can say that in more ways than one Ṣadr al-Dīn's "metaphysical philosophy" represents a new trend in Islamic philosophy. Ṣadr al-Dīn makes every effort to examine fully every known philosophical
position and argument concerning principle and method. He then selects what he considers to be the best argument, often reformulates it and finally goes about constructing a consistent system. His systematic philosophy is neither Peripatetic nor Illuminationist but a novel reconstruction of

both, serving as testimony to the continuity of philosophical thought in Islam. That Ṣadr al-Dīn's system differs from today's emphasis on a specific aspect of "rationality" does not mean that its founder conceived it to be "irrational" nor predominantly given to "mystical experience". The system does, however, emphasize a world view in which intuitive vision is integral to knowledge.

NOTES

1 Numerous studies on Mullā Ṣadrā have been published in the past few decades, mainly in Persian, but a few also in English. Among the Persian studies Jalàl al-Dln Ashtiyānī's Sharh-i hāl wa ārā'-i falsafi-yi Mullā Ṣadrā (reprint: Tehran, 1981) stands out for its depth of analysis. Fazlur Rahman's The Philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā (Albany, 1975) is the only English-language analytical study of Mullā Ṣadrā's systematic philosophy.

2 An account of his life is given in S. H. Amin, The Philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā Shirazi (London, 1987): 1—35. See also the introduction of S. H. Nasr to his edition of Mullā Ṣadrā's Sih ad: 5—14. A first-hand report on Mullā Ṣadrā's grave site in Basra is given by Sayyid Abu'l-Hasan Qazwlnl in "Sharh-i hal-i Sadr al-Muta'allihīn wa sukhani dar harakat-i jawhariyyah", in Sih maqālah wa du nāmah (Tehran, n.d.): 1–4.

3 See, for example, Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'l, "Ṣadr al-Dīn Muhammad b. Ibrahim ShîRāzī", in Sih maqālah wa du nāmah: 15—26.

4 See Mir Dàmàd, al-Qabasàt, ed. M. Mohaghegh and T. Izutsu (Tehran, 1977), which includes an extensive account of Mīr Dāmād's life and works.

5 For a general account of the School of Isfahān see S. H. Nasr, "The School of Ispahan", in M. M. Sharif (ed.), A History of Muslim Philosophy, (Wiesbaden, 1966): 904–32.

6 See Fazlur Rahman, op. cit.: 3—7.

7 See, for example, Ashtiyānī, op. cit.: 6—7.

8 See, for example, Mullā Ṣadrā, al-Asfār al-arba'ah (Tehran, 1960): 1—6; 8. Ashtiyānī considers the intuitive foundations of Mullā Ṣadrā's system of al- Hikmatal-muta'āliyah to be, in part, due to Suhrawardl's Illuminationist position in epistemology. See Ashtiyānī, op. cit.: 102—16.

9 For example Corbin in his translation of Mullā Ṣadrā's work Kitāb al-mashā'ir - which is of lesser philosophical value than other works such as al-Asfār al- arba'ah (op. cit.) and al-Shawāhid al-rububiyyah (ed. Jalàl Ashtiyàni, Mashhad, 1967— translated Le Livre des pénétrations métaphysiques (Tehran, 1964), and chose a theosophical terminology to emphasize an esoteric dimension of Mullā Ṣadrā's thought. This type of interpretive translation does not serve to inform the Western reader interested in analytical philosophy as it avoids the logical side of Mullà Sadrā's system of metaphysics. Even the title, al-Hikmat al-
mutadliyah, chosen by Mullā Ṣadrā to specify his predominantly reconstructed system of metaphysics, when translated "transcendental theosophy", will at best lead to a

misunderstanding for those interested in the analytical aspect of Mullā Ṣadrā's thought.

10 S. H. Nasr, Sadr aI-Dīn Shirdzi and his Transcendent Theosophy: Background, Life and Works (Tehran, 1978), and his "Mullā Ṣadrā", in Sharif (ed.), A History of Muslim Philosophy.

11 See James Morris, The Wisdom of the Throne (Princeton, 1981). Morris, too, emphasizes a presumed "transcendental" element in Mullā Ṣadrā's thought, which is, however, a clear and systematic concern on the part of the great thinker to construct a valid, consistent system of metaphysics where a well-defined philosophical terminology is employed to refine mostly classical ontological and epistemological arguments. The new system is called al-hikmat al-muta'dliyah, best translated as "metaphysical philosophy". This philosophical system bears little resemblance to the theosophical writings of Swedenborg (as claimed by Corbin) or Rudolf Steiner, or the ideas of the Theosophical Society (although it does share elements in common with theosophy as it was originally understood namely as theosophia (literally divine wisdom or al-hikmat al-ildhiyyah)) [eds].

12 See Mehdi Ha'iri Yazdi, The Principles of Episte?nology in Islamic Philosophy: Knowledge by Presence (Albany, 1992).

13 This epistemological principle is among the set of twelve philosophical problems commonly believed to constitute Mullā Ṣadrā's greatest achievements in advancing philosophical arguments. See, for example, Qazwlnl, op. ¿it.: 4—5; and Tabataba'l, op. cit.: 21–5. I have elsewhere shown,

however, that the principle of the unity of the subject and object as intuitive consciousness of a thing as-it-is was first fully developed by Suhrawardl in his theory of knowledge by Illumination. See my Knowledge and Illumination (Atlanta, 1990): 143—55.

14 See Tabataba'l, op. cit.: 25–6. For a bibliography of Mullā Ṣadrā see Nasr, Sadr aI-Dīn: 40—50.

15 Many of these works remain unpublished, some have been printed in facsimile editions, and Shark al-usul al-kdfi has been published in an as yet incomplete version in Tehran (1992).

16 This work has been edited and published by M. Rida al-Muzaffar (Tehran, 1960); an older facsimile edition of this work is also available (Tehran, n.d.).

17 This work has been edited and published by Jalal AshtiyanI (Mashhad, 1967).

18 Both are printed in facsimile editions: Sharlp al-shifa: al-ildhiyydt (reprint: Tehran, 1988); and Ta'liqdt (Gloss on Hikmat al-Ishrdq) in Shīrazī, Shark hikmat al- Ishrdif (Tehran, 1895), margins.

CHAPTER 36

Mullā Ṣadrā: His teachings

Seyyed Hossein Nasr

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Sadr aI-Dīn Shīrazī, known as Mullā Ṣadrā, appeared nearly a thousand years after the rise of Islam and his works represent a synthesis of the millennium of Islamic thought which preceded him. He was thoroughly versed in the Qur'an and Ḥadith, Islamic philosophy and theology, Sufism and even the history of Islamic thought, and must have had access to an unusually rich library. To all his knowledge must be added his own intellectual powers as a philosopher and visionary and intuitive capabilities as a gnostic ('arif) who was able to have direct experience of Ultimate Reality or what in the later school of Islamic philosophy and theosophy is called "gnostic experience" (tajruba-yi 'irfdni). His knowledge of the revealed sources of Islam was probably more extensive than that of any other Islamic philosopher. It included intimacy not only with the Qur'an, but also well- known commentaries, not only prophetic Ḥadith but also the sayings of the Shi'ite Imams whose philosophical significance he revealed for the first time. His Qur anic commentaries and Sharh usul al-kdfi ("Commentary upon the Usid al-kdfi" of Kulaynl) and commentary upon the Light Verse (ayat al-nur), both among

the premier masterpieces of Islamic thought, attest to his incredible mastery of the Qur'an and Ḥadith.

Mullā Ṣadrā and Earlier Islamic Philosophy

Mullā Ṣadrā was also knowledgeable in the deepest sense in the schools of Islamic philosophical thought before him. He knew Peripatetic (, mashshd'l) philosophy intimately, especially the thought of Ibn Slna, upon whose Shifid' he wrote a major commentary. But he was also well

acquainted with later Peripatetics, such as Naslr al-Dln Ṭūsī and Athlr aI-Dīn Abhari, upon whose al-Hiddyah ("The Guide") he wrote a commentary which was destined to become one of his most popular works, especially in India. He was also a master of ishrdqi thought and copied a number of the visionary recitals of Suhrawardl in his own hand as well as writing a major commentary in the form of glosses upon the Hikmat al-ishrdq ("Theosophy of the Orient of Light") of the master of the School of Illumination. He was also well versed in both Sunni and Shi'ite kaldm or theology, especially the works of al-Ghazzali and Imam Fakr al-Dln Rāzī whom he cites often especially in the Asfdr ("The Four Journeys") which is his masterpiece and like the mother of all his other books. Moreover, he was well acquainted with Shi'ite kaldm which included Twelve-Imam Shi'ism to which he belonged as well as Isma llism whose works he studied carefully including philosophical tracts such as the Rasd'il ("Treatises") of the Ikhwan al-Ṣafā.

Finally, it is most important to realize Mullā Ṣadrā s mastery of the doctrines of Sufism or gnosis especially as taught by Ibn 'Arab!. In certain issues such as eschatology, he borrows heavily from the Andalusian master, and the last book of the Asfdr, in which he deals with al-ma'ad or eschatology is in fact replete with extensive quotations from Ibn Arabl's al-Futuhdt al-makkiyyah ("The Meccan Illuminations"). Moreover, he had a special love for Persian Sufi poetry and quotes from its masters such as 'Attar and RumT even in the middle of his Arabic works. Part of this knowledge is derived from the earlier masters of the School of Iṣfahān such as its founder Mir Damad, a school to which Mullā Ṣadrā belonged, but his knowledge in these matters goes beyond any of his teachers and represents his own extensive study of the major works and sources of Islamic thought.[1]

The Synthesis of Previous Schools of thought and Modes of Knowing

Mullā Ṣadrā synthesized not only various schools of Islamic thought but also the paths of human knowledge. His own life, based upon great piety, deep philosophical introspection and reasoning and purification of his inner being until his "eye of the heart" opened and he was able to have a direct vision of the spiritual world, attests to the unity of the three major paths of knowledge in his own person. These three paths are according to him revelation (al-wahy), demonstration or intellection (al- burhdn, al-taaqqul) and spiritual or "mystical"

vision (aTmukdshafah, al-mushahadah). Or, to use another terminology prevalent among his school, he followed a way which synthesized al-Qiir'dn, al-burhan and al- 'irfdn, which correspond to the terms above.

Mullā Ṣadrā's epistemology is directly related to that of Suhrawardī and the school of Illumination in general, a school in which distinction is made between conceptual knowledge (al-'ilm al-husūlt) and presential knowledge (al-'ilm al-hudurt), [2] forms of knowledge which are unified in the being of the possessor of knowledge on the highest level, a person whom Suhrawardi calls hakim muta'allih, literally a wise man, philosopher or theosopher who has become imbued with Divine Qualities and become "God-like". Conceptual knowledge is gained through concepts in the mind of that which is to be known whereas presential knowledge implies the presence of the very reality to be known in the human intellect without the intermediary of mental concepts such as when one knows oneself, the intelligibles or the divine realities. Such knowledge is illuminative and beyond the realm of ratiocination, but it is not without intellectual content. Mullā Ṣadrā accepted this ishrāqī thesis, to which he added the significance of revelation as a foundational source for knowledge of a philosophical and theosophical order. The tradition of Islamic philosophy in Persia accepted fully this truth and awarded to Mullà Sadrā the title of Sadr al-muta'allihln, that is, foremost among those who according to Suhrawardi belong to the highest category of possessors of metaphysical knowledge. No higher title could be given to anyone in the context of the world view in which later Islamic philosophy functioned.

In any case the grand synthesis of Islamic thought created by Mullā Ṣadrā is based on the synthesis of these three ways of knowing through which he was able to integrate the earlier schools of Islamic thought into a unified world view and create a new intellectual perspective known as al-hikmat al-muta'āliyah which a number of leading scholars of Islamic philosophy who have written on him in European languages, such as Henry Corbin and Toshihiko Izutsu, have translated as the "transcendent theosophy"[3] while a number of scholars have protested against using such a term.'[4] In any case the "transcendent theosophy" marks the birth of a new intellectual perspective in the Islamic world, one which has had profound influence during the later centuries in Persia as well as in Iraq and India, while the term al-hikmat al-muta'āliyah had been used in a more general and less defined sense by a number of earlier Islamic thinkers such as Quṭb al-Dīn ShīRāzī.[5] In analysing the various aspects of Mullā Ṣadrā's thought we are in reality studying the hikmat al-muta'āliyah which became a distinct school of Islamic thought much like the Peripatetic (mashshā'ī) and Illuminationist (ishrāqī) schools. Mullā Ṣadrā was in fact so devoted to this term that he used it as part of the title of his major opus which is al-Asfār al-arba'ah fi'l-hikmat al-muta'āliyah ("The Four Journeys Concerning Transcendent Theosophy").

The foundation of the "transcendent theosophy" and the whole metaphysics of Mullā Ṣadrā is the science of being (wujūd), which is used by him to denote both existence, in the sense of the existence of
objects, and existence that is not in any way privative but which also includes the Divine Principle, Pure Being and even the Absolute, which is beyond Being as ordinarily

understood. Much of his writings, including nearly all of the first book of the Asfdr, is devoted to this issue and he returns again and again to it in such works as al-Shawahid al-rubiibiyyah ("Divine Witnesses"), al-Hikmat al-'arshiyyah ("The Wisdom of the Throne"), al-Mabda' wa'l-madd ("The Origin and the Return") and especially Kitdb al-masha'ir ("The Book of Metaphysical Penetrations") which is the most important summary treatment of this subject in his writings.[6]

The Study of Being

At the heart of the whole philosophical exposition of Mullā Ṣadrā stands the gnostic experience of Being as Reality. Our usual experience of the world is that of things which exist, this ordinary experience serving as the basis of Aristotelian metaphysics which is based on existents (mawjiid). For Mullā Ṣadrā, however, there occurred a vision in which he saw the whole of existence not as objects which exist or existents but as a single reality (wujud) whose delimitations by various quiddities (mdhiyydt) gives the appearance of a multiplicity which "exists" with various existents being independent of each other. Fleidegger complained that Western metaphysics had gone astray since the time of Aristotle by studying the existent (das Seiende), to use his vocabulary, and that the proper subject of metaphysics was existence itself or das Sein with whose study he was starting a new chapter in Western philosophical thought.[7] As far as Islamic philosophy is concerned, such a distinction was made three centuries before Heidegger by Mullā Ṣadrā who according to himself received through inspiration a vision of reality in which everything was seen as acts of existence (wujud) and not objects that

exist (:mawjud). The vast development of Sadrian metaphysics is based upon this basic experience of Reality and subsequent conceptual distinctions made on the basis of this experience of wujud as being at once one, graded and principial.

Mullā Ṣadrā distinguishes clearly between the concept of being (mafhum al-wujud) and the reality of being (haqiqat al-wujud). The first is the most obvious of all concepts and the easiest to comprehend while the second is the most difficult for it requires extensive mental preparation as well as the purification of one's being so as to allow the intellect within to function fully without the veils of passion and to be able to discern wujud as Reality. That is why one of Mullā Ṣadrā's most famous followers, HajjT Mulla Hadl Sabziwarl, writes in the Sharh al-manzumah, which is a summary of the master's doctrines,

Its [wujud's] notion is one of the best known things,

But its deepest reality is in the extremity of hiddenness.[8]

A consequence of the gnostic experience of being is the realization of its unity, which is called wahdat al-wujud. This fundamental doctrine of Sufi metaphysics is associated with Ibn 'Arab! but has possessed many interpretations ranging from the extreme interpretation of it by the Andalusian Sufi and philosopher Ibn Sab'ln, according to whom only God is real and nothing else exists in any way, to Ibn Arabi's interpretation, which sees the manifested order as theophanies (tajalliydt) of the Divine Names and Qualities upon the mirror of nothingness, to the view of Mullā Ṣadrā, who conceives the unity of being in relation to the multiplicity of existence as

the rays of the sun in relation to the sun. The rays of the sun are not the sun and at the same time are nothing but the sun. In the Asfdr, which contains a histoiy of Islamic philosophy[9] as well as his own teachings, Mullā Ṣadrā deals extensively with various understandings of this central doctrine before turning to the exposition of his own views.[10] In any case, wahdat al-wujud is a cornerstone of Sadrian metaphysics without which his whole world view would collapse.

A companion doctrine is tashkik al-wujud or the gradation of being. Being is not only one but it also participates in a gradation or hierarchy from the Being of God to the existence of the pebble on the beach. Every higher level of wujud contains all the reality that is manifested below it. Here Mullā Ṣadrā bases himself upon the Suhrawardlan doctrine of differentiation and gradation according to which things can be distinct from each other through the very element that unites them such as the light of the candle and the light of the sun which are united by being both light and yet are distinct from one another also by light which is manifested in the two cases according to different degrees of intensity. Being is like light in that it possesses degrees of intensity while being a single reality.[11] The universe in its vast multiplicity is therefore not only unified but is also thoroughly hierarchical. One might say that Mullā Ṣadrā accepted the idea of the "great chain of being" which has had such a long life in the West from Aristotle to the eighteenth century but in the light of the unity ol being which gives a completely different meaning to the doctrine of cosmic and universal hierarchy.

The views of wujud are complemented by the principle of asalat al- wujūd. or principiality of existence. To understand this doctrine, it is necessary first of all to turn to the classical

distinction in Islamic philosophy between existence (tvujud in its meaning of being related to the world of multiplicity) and mdhiyyah or quiddity which in its original Latin form is derived directly from the Arabic mdhiyyah)[12] All objects are composed of these two components, the first corresponding to the answer given to the question "is it?", and the second to the question

"what is it?". The question posed in later Islamic philosophy, and especially by Mullā Ṣadrā, is which of these elements is principial and bestows reality upon an object. Mullā Ṣadrās own teacher Mīr Dāmād and Suhrawardi are considered as followers of the school of principiality of quiddity (asalat al-mahiyyah) while Ibn Slna is considered as a follower of asalat al-wujūd, although in his case this doctrine takes on a completely different meaning than in Mullā Ṣadrā since the former did not believe in ivah da t al-wujud.

In any case in his youth, Mullā Ṣadrā followed his teacher Mīr Dāmād and only after another visionary and gnostic experience came to realize that it is wujild which bestows reality upon things and. that the mdhiyydt are literally nothing in themselves and are abstracted by the mind from the limitations of a particular act of wujud. When we say that a horse exists, following common sense we think that the horse is a reality to which existence is added. In reality, however, what we are perceiving is a particular act of wujud which through the very fact that it is manifested is limited to a particular form which we perceive as horse. For those who have realized the truth, the fact that a horse exists becomes transformed into the reality that the act of being has manifested itself in a particular form which we call horse. The form or mdhiyyah of the horse has no reality of its own but derives all of its reality from the act of wujild.[13]

Reality is then nothing other than wujud, which is at once one and graded, existentiating the reality of all things. The metaphysics of Mullā Ṣadrā can in fact be understood by understanding not only these principles but also their interrelations. Wujud is not only one but also graded. And it is not only graded but also principial or that which bestowed reality upon all quiddities, which in themselves possess no reality at all. The vast metaphysical edifice created by Mullā Ṣadrā and his whole theology, cosmology, psychology and eschatology rely upon the three principles of wahdat al-wujūd, tashkik al-wujud and asalat al-wujud and it is only in the light of these principles that his other doctrines can be understood.

Trans-Substantial Motion and the Creation of the World

One of the most striking doctrines of Mullā Ṣadrā is trans-substantial motion (al-harakat al-jawhariyyah) which is the basis of his explanation of many of the most difficult problems of traditional philosophy including the creation of the world and the whole meaning of becoming in light of the Immutable and the Eternal.[14] As is well-known, earlier Islamic philosophers, especially Ibn Slna, had followed Aristotelian natural
philosophy in accepting motion (al-harakah) only in the categories of quantity (kamm), quality (kayf), situation (wad') and place (ayn), all of which are accidents and denied

explicitly the possibility of motion in the category of substance. Ibn Sīnā's main argument was that motion requires a subject that moves and if the very substance of an object changes through transubstantial motion, then there will be no subject for motion.

Mullā Ṣadrā opposed this thesis directly by saying that any change in the accidents of an object requires in fact a change in its substance since accidents have no existence independent of substance. He asserts that there is always "some subject" (mawduun ma) for motion even if we are unable to fix it and delimit it logically. Mullā Ṣadrā asserts that the whole of the physical and even psychic or imaginai universes which extend up to the Immutable or luminous Archetypes are in constant motion or becoming. Were it to be otherwise, the effusion (fayd) of Being could not reach all things. This trans-substantial motion, which Henry Corbin calls "l'inquiétude de l'être" referring to the existence of the universe below the level of the intelligible and archetypal realities, is not to be, however, confused with the re-creation of the world in every instant as taught by the Sufis.[15] In the Sufi doctrine at every moment the universe is annihilated and re-created. Previous forms return to the Divine Order and new forms are manifested as theophany. That is why this doctrine is called al-labs bad al-khal' (literally, dressing after undressing of forms).

In contrast Mullā Ṣadrā's doctrine has been called al-labs bad al- labs (that is, dressing after dressing). This implies that the form and matter of an existent become themselves the matter for a new form and that this process goes on continuously as if one were to put on one coat on top of another. All beings in this world are moving vertically as a result of

trans-substantial motion until they reach the plenum of their archetypal reality. The sperm becomes a foetus and grows to the form of a baby who is then born and continues to grow from one form to another until he or she reaches full maturity and the body becomes weaker as the soul grows stronger until one dies and reaches the "imaginai world" and finally the Divine Presence. Each state of this movement contains the forms of its earlier states of existence, while this transubstantial movement continues throughout all these stages.

It is important to emphasize that Mullā Ṣadrā's dynamic vision of the world in constant becoming, which implies the continuous intensification of the act of wujud within a particular being, must not in any way be confused with Darwinian evolution. For Mullā Ṣadrā, the beings of this world are manifestations of the light of wujūd cast upon their archetypal realities which through the arc of descent (al-qaws al-nuzūlî) bring various creatures into the realm of physical existent. Trans-substantial motion marks the arc of ascent (al-qaws al-su'ūdī) through which the
ever-increasing intensity of light of wujud allows existents to return to their archetypal realities in the supernal realm. For Darwinism, on the other hand, there are no such things as archetypal realities and the species, far from reflecting celestial archetypes, are merely forms generated by the flow of matter in time. Furthermore, for evolution the role of wujud, its unity, gradation and principiality are meaningless whereas for Mullā Ṣadrā they constitute the very foundations of his metaphysics. Also for Mullā Ṣadrā trans-substantial motion is teleological and has an important spiritual role to play. The universe is moving toward a perfection which is its purpose and end and the spiritual progress of humanity is also

achieved through a mode of trans-substantial motion. A saint is not only more perfect than others. It might be said that he or she is more than others in the sense that the act of wujud in him or her is of a more intense degree than in less perfect human beings. It would therefore be a grave mistake, as committed by a number of modernist Muslim thinkers, to equate al-harakat al-jawhariyyah with Darwinian evolution.

The doctrine of trans-substantial motion is the key for the solution of many problems for Mullā Ṣadrā, including that of the creation of the world debated for eight centuries before him by the Islamic philosophers and theologians. As is well known, the faldsifah believed the world to have had no origination in time but to have been originated beyond time by God, the world thus being eternal (qadim) while the mutakallirnun claimed that the world was created in time (haditb), an issue which was discussed in many classical works of Islamic thought such as al-Ghazzall's Tahdfut al-faldsifah.[16] The philosophers claimed that if the world were created in time, it would require a change in the Divine Nature which is impossible because God is immutable. The theologians believed that if the world were qadim, then something eternal would exist besides God and would not even be caused by Him. Different Islamic thinkers sought to solve this problem in various ways, including Mullā Ṣadrā s own teacher, Mir Damad, who came up with the idea of al-kuduth al-dahri, which means origination of the world not in time (zamdn) nor in eternity (sarmad), but in dahr or aeon, and he became celebrated for the exposition of this doctrine.[17]

Mullā Ṣadrā rejected this dichotomy of views altogether by pointing to the doctrine of trans-substantial motion. If the

cosmos is changing at every moment, at each instance of its being, it is different from what it was before and what it is now was non-existent before (masbuq hi I- 'adarn). Therefore, one can accept the doctrine that the world was created from nothing (ex nihilo) while accepting the continuous and uninterrupted effusion (fayd) of the light of Being which is none other than the Divine Light.[18] He thus seeks to provide a philosophical explanation for one of the most difficult of philosophical issues in not only Islamic thought but Jewish and Christian thought as well.

The Union of the Intellect and the Intelligible

Another of Mullā Ṣadrā's major doctrines, again related inextricably to the rest of his metaphysics, is that of the union of the intellect and the intelligible (ittihdd al-'àqil wa'l-maqūl). This doctrine was asserted by Abu'l-Hasan al-'AmirI in the fourth/tenth century but rejected thoroughly by Ibn Slna and later Islamic philosophers. But it was resurrected by Mullā Ṣadrā and given a new meaning in the context of the unity of wujūd and trans-substantial motion. According to him at the moment of intellection the form of the intelligible (maqūl), the possessor of intellect (3dqil), and even the intellect itself ('dql) become united in such a way than one is the other as long as the act of intellection lasts.[19]

This doctrine is not only important for Mullā Ṣadrā's theory of knowledge, but is also of great significance for the understanding of the role of knowledge in human perfection.

Through trans-substantial motion the act of knowing elevates the very existence of the knower. According to a Ḥadith of the Prophet, "knowledge is light" (al-'ilm nūrun), a principle which is also foundational to Mullā Ṣadrā's thought.[20] The unity of the knower and the known implies ultimately the unity of knowing and being. The being of man is transformed through the light of knowing and being. The being of man is transformed through the light of knowledge and also our mode of being determines our mode of knowledge. In this profound reciprocity is to be found the key to the significance of knowledge for Mullā Ṣadrā and of the idea that knowledge transforms our being even in the posthumous state. The writings of Mullā Ṣadrā are replete with various applications of this doctrine and he returns again and again to the principle of the ultimate unity of being and knowing.

The Imaginal World and the Archetypes

Mullā Ṣadrā accepted the reality of the archetypes (al-aydn al-thdbitah or al-muthul al-nūriyyah) in conformity with the view of Suhrawardi and against the claims of Muslim Peripatetics such as Ibn Slnà. And he brought many philosophical arguments to refute those who have denied them.[21] There is in fact no doubt concerning the major role performed in Mullà Sadrā's thought by the archetypes or "Platonic Ideas", pure intelligibles belonging to the domain of immutability which many have confused with forms in the imaginai world which although beyond matter nevertheless still participate in becoming and transubstantial motion. The

latter play a crucial role in the "transcendent theosophy" without in any way replacing the immutable archetypes or luminous "ideas" in the Platonic sense.

Considering the absence of the imaginal world in Western philosophy for many centuries, it is necessary to delve more deeply into the meaning of the 'dlam al-khayal, the mundus imaginalis, which Corbin and I have translated as the imaginal rather than imaginary world, considering the pejorative connotation of the latter term in modern European languages. The traditional hierarchy of being in the mainstream of Western thought goes from the realm of material existence, to the psyche, to the intelligible or angelic world with its own vast hierarchy and finally to God who is Pure Being and for some Western metaphysicians, the Beyond- Being. This scheme was more or less followed by early Islamic philosophers with adjustments related to the fact that they were living and philosophizing in an Islamic universe. Suhrawardl was the first person to speak of the imaginal world at least in the microcosm. He was soon followed by Ibn 'Arab! who elaborated upon this theme and expanded the understanding of the imaginal world to make it a central pillar of his metaphysics.[22] Henceforth, the imaginal world became part and parcel of the understanding of the Islamic universe upon which numerous Sufis and philosophers were to write important treatises.

It was, however, Mullā Ṣadrā who gave the first systematic and philosophical explanation of this world. He added to the view of Suhrawardl that this world was connected to man's microcosmic reality (khaydl al- muttasil), the thesis that the imaginal world has also a macrocosmic and objective reality independent and disconnected from man (khaydl al-munfasil).

He emphasized that this world has even more reality than the physical world. As for its characteristics, it is a world possessing forms called al-suwar al-khayaliyyah (imaginal forms) which, however, are not wed to matter, at least not the matter of the physical world. That is why they are also called al-muthul al-mu'allaqah (suspended forms). Nevertheless they are forms having colours, shapes, odours and everything else that is associated with the forms of this world. This is a world of concrete realities which, however, are not physical, the world immediately above the physical, identified with the mythical cities of Jabulqa and Jabulsa, a world which the seers can experience in this life and into which human beings enter at the moment of death. It is a world in which we have subtle or imaginal bodies (al-jism al-khaydli) as we have a physical body in this world.[23]

Eschatology and Resurrection

No Islamic philosopher has dealt in such great detail as Mullā Ṣadrā with eschatology and resurrection (al-ma'dd) concerning both the individual and the cosmos. The fourth book of the Asfdr, much of it based on Ibn 'Arab!, is the vastest and most detailed study in Islamic philosophy of the soul (nafs) from its birth to its final meeting with God and includes elements concerned with the phenomenology of death. If we were to seek something like the Tibetan Book of the Dead in Islamic sources, probably this fourth book of the Asfdr would be the best candidate. Moreover, Mullā Ṣadrā devoted much space in his other major writings such as al-

Mabda ' wa l-ma'¡id and al-Shawähidal-rubūbiyyah to the subject and wrote separate treatises devoted only to this subject such as the Risdlat al-hashr ("Treatise on Resurrection").[24]

Basing himself completely on traditional Islamic description of the posthumous states and eschatological events, Mullā Ṣadrā seeks to interpret such terms as the Bridge of Sirät, the Balance and the lower paradisal states as well as the infernal states in terms of the imaginal world. All these events related to death, judgment and the like as mentioned in the Qur'an and Ḥadith take place in this world which itself is an intermediate realm (al-barzakh) between the physical world and the world of purely angelic or intelligible substances. Moreover, this world is comprised of many intermediate realms (bardzikh) stretching from the al-bardzikh al-a 'Id or higher intermediate realms to al-bardzikh al-asfal or lower ones. The higher comprise paradisal states although still not the supreme heavens and the lower the infernal ones. This realm is in fact also a kind of purgatory through which souls pass on their way to their final beatitude or damnation.

Mullā Ṣadrā speaks of a doctrine which at first seems somewhat strange and can be understood only in the light of the doctrine of trans- substantial motion. He claims that the soul (nafs) is created with the body but becomes immortal and spiritual through the Spirit, or, using his own terminology, the nafs or soul is jismdniyyat al-hudūth wa rūhdniyyat al- baqd'. Its vertical ascent through transubstantial motion in fact does not cease in this world but continues after death as the soul journeys through various intermediate realms in conformity with the types of actions it has performed and its mode of being in this world.

In the great debate about whether resurrection is spiritual (rūhänt) or bodily (jismäni), Mullä Sadrä categorically favours bodily resurrection but he points out that, upon death, individuals are bestowed with subtle bodies (al-jism al-latif) which correspond in many ways to the astral body of Paracelsus. After death they are therefore not simply disembodied souls but possess bodies which are "woven" of the actions that they have performed in this world. They also enter a world which conforms to their inner nature. In a sense an evil soul chooses hell because of the nature of its being at the moment of death. Moreover, the reality of the body in this world is the form of the body and not its matter. In the final resurrection all of the levels of one's being are integrated including the form of the physical body, which is the reality of the body, so that one can definitely accept bodily resurrection as asserted by the Qur'än
and Ḥadith and at the same time provide intellectual demonstrations for it on the basis of the general principles of Sadrian metaphysics.

God's Knowledge of the World

Another difficult question discussed by numerous Islamic philosophers and theologians is that of God's knowledge of the world. Al-Ghazzáll in fact considered the Peripatetic's view that God only knows universals and not particulars as one of the views of the philosophers which were not only erroneous but heretical. In his al-Asfar, Mullā Ṣadrā discusses and rejects seven different views of earlier thinkers

concerning this issue, [25] while in al-Shawáhid al-rubūbiyyah[26] he claims that God knows everything in a special way which was unveiled to him by God and because of its complexity and the difficulty of understanding it by the great majority of men he finds it wiser not to reveal it fully.[27] In other writings, including one of his letters to his teacher, Mir Dámád, he insists that he gained full knowledge of this great mystery through inspiration (.ilham), unveiling (kashf) and the "eye of certainty" ('ayn al-yaqin).[28]

What Mulla Sadrá does reveal of God's knowledge of the world is based on the thesis that whenever wujūd is not mixed with non-existence and not veiled by it, it is manifest to itself and never absent from itself. Therefore the essence of this wujūd knows itself and its essence is both knowledge of itself and known by itself, since the light of wujūd is one, the veil covering the reality of things being nothing but non-existence. And since the Necessary Being possesses an Essence which is beyond all composition and contingency, it is at the highest level of perceiving and being perceived, of knowing and being known. This means that since ultimately there is but one wujūd which is the wujūd of all things, therefore Flis Essence knows all beings that exist and there is not an atom that He does not know as asserted by the Qur'an. The very presence of the Divine Essence to Itself is none other than undifferentiated knowledge which is at the same time also differentiated knowledge. And God's differentiated knowledge is none other than their wujūd. God's knowledge of existents is the very cause of their existentiation.

Mullā Ṣadrā also asserts that God's knowledge of things has its own hierarchy. There is first of all the level of solicitude (al-'inayah) which is His knowledge of things on the level of

His own Essence. The second level is that of undifferentiated decree (al-qada ' al-ijmdli) which is interpreted as the Pen (al-Qalam). As for forms which subsist by the Qalam, their subsistence is subsistence by emergence (al-qiydm al-sudūñ) for the Qalam has full dominion over all forms below it. The third level is the Tablet (al-lawh), also called differentiated decree (al-qada al-tafsili), which contains the archetypes and Platonic Ideas of things, and their relation

to the forms of this world is that of principles to their reflections. The fourth level is destiny through knowledge (al-qadar al-ilml) comprising the imaginai world and that of suspended forms discussed above. The fifth level is destiny through objectification (al-qadar al- ayni), which consists of the forms of the physical world. Mullā Ṣadrā considers this last level to be below the level of direct Divine Knowledge since it marks the mixture of forms with matter. But it is indirectly the subject of Divine Knowledge since the principles of these forms belong to the worlds above which God knows in an absolute and direct sense. Moreover, every level mentioned by Mullā Saclrà possesses wujud which gives it reality and, according to the argument given above, since there is only one wujūd as asserted by the doctrine of wahdat al-wujud, God knows all existents by virtue of knowing His own Essence which is none other than absolute wujild.

Some other Principles of Sadrian Teachings

There are numerous other principles expounded by Mullā Ṣadrā and founding elements of the "transcendent

theosophy". In fact whereas Muslims inherited some two hundred topics from Greek philosophy, Mullā Ṣadrā discusses over six hundred, many of which are drawn from further encounters between philosophy and the Islamic revelation and others are philosophical and theosophical meditations upon the sayings of the Shi'ite Imāms along with the Qur'ān and Ḥadith. Here, because of the constraint of space, we shall mention only two of the best known of these principles, not already discussed above. One is the famous thesis that "the Truth in its simplicity contains all things" (basīt al-haqīqah kull al-ashyā') which is a direct consequence of the unity and principiality of wujūd. By this principle Mullā Ṣadrā means that the truth (al-haqīqah) in its state of pure simplicity and before becoming "combined" with quiddity (al-mahiyyah), that is, Pure Being, contains all things since the reality of things is their existence and Pure Being is the source of all wujūd and therefore in a sense contains the reality of all things. Mullā Ṣadrā appeals to this principle in many of his writings in solving some of the most complicated philosophical issues.

Another well-known principle is that "the soul in its unity is all of its faculties" (al-nafs fi wahdatihi kull al-quwa). This is also a consequence of his ontology as well as trans-substantial motion. It means that the various faculties of the soul are not like accidents added to the substance of the soul. Rather, the soul is each of its faculties when it identifies itself with this or that function related to a particular faculty. That is why the perfecting of any faculty affects the soul itself in its unity and the
perfection of the soul through trans-substantial motion also affects its faculties. It also emphasizes the unity of the soul

above and beyond what one finds in the faculty psychology of the Peripatetics.

Also many of the older topics of philosophy are changed completely by seeing them in the light of Sadrian metaphysics. An outstanding example is the question of cause and effect or causality (aT'illah waI- ma'lul or al-'illiyyah). Mullā Ṣadrā accepts the Aristotelian doctrine of the four causes and commentaries upon it by Ibn Sīnā and other earlier Islamic philosophers, but transforms them completely by considering the relation between cause and effect in light of the doctrine of the principiality of wujud. He thereby combines horizontal and vertical causes and his discussion of this subject in all his works[29] contain some of his most exalted gnostic ('irjani) expositions. In studying them one is presented with a knowledge which satisfies both the mind and the heart and can lead those who can understand and have sympathy for gnosis and sapience practically into a state of ecstasy. There are many other principles transformed by Sadrian metaphysics which we cannot discuss here because of the limitation of space. What has been presented here is only by way of example.

Mullā Ṣadrā'S Qur'anic Commentaries

None of the philosophers throughout the histoiy of Islamic philosophy has paid as much attention to the Qur'an as source of philosophical and theosophical knowledge and none has written as many commentaries upon the Qur'an as has Mullā

Ṣadrā, whose commentaries are the continuation of his "transcendent theosophy" and the "transcendent theosophy" an organic outgrowth of the inner meaning of the Qur'an as understood by Mullā Ṣadrā who asserts again and again the harmony between revelation (al-wahy) and intellect/reason (al-'aqi.f). He in fact asserts that the intellect, of which reason is the reflection upon the mental plane, is humanity's inner prophet which manifests itself only in those who are, in the language of the Qur'an, "firmly rooted in knowledge" (al-rdsikhun fi 7- 'Uni) .[30]

Mullā Ṣadrā wrote commentaries upon a number of chapters and verses of the Qur'an: al-Fdtihah ("The Opening"), al-Baqarah ("The Cow"), dyat al-kursi ("The Throne Verse"), dyat al-nur ("Light Verse"), Sajdah ("Prostration"), Yd Sin ("YS"), al-Wdqi'ah ("The Event"), al-Hadid ("Iron"), al-Jum'ah ("The Congregation"), al-A'la ("The Most High"), al- Tdriq ("The Morning Star") and al-Zalzdl ("The Earthquake").[31] Moreover, he wrote a number of works dealing with the science of Quranic commentary. These include Asrdr al-dydt ("Mysteries of Qur'anic Verses"), which deals especially extensively with eschatological matters to which the Qur'an refers; Mutashabih al-qur'an ("On the Metaphorical Verses of the Qur'an"), dealing with those verses of the Qur'an whose outward meaning is not clear in contrast to the muhkamat or "firm" verses whose outward meaning is clear, and Mafdtih al-ghayb ("Keys to the Invisible World"), which is one of his most important works and in which he discusses his method of Qur'anic commentary.[32]

Mullā Ṣadrā distinguishes between commentators who see only the outward meaning of the Sacred Text and who are

like those who see only the shell of a nut and disregard the fruit within, and those who pay attention only to what they consider the inner meaning while disregarding the outer form. He opposes both methods and states that, if these were to be the only choices, he would prefer the exoteric commentaries because they at least preserve the outward container of the revelation. But the best method is to deal with the inner meaning without going against the external sense of the words of the Qur'an as understood by the Islamic community. And he adds that only those whom the Qur'an calls "firm in knowledge" (al-rasikhun fil-'ilm), who have received their knowledge through divine inspiration without any spectre of doubt in their minds and hearts, have the right to carry out spiritual hermeneutics (ta'iuil) of God's Word.

Mullā Ṣadrā considers the Qur'an to be the same as Being itself. Being, like the Qur'an, possesses letters (huruf) which are the "keys to the invisible world" and from their combinations verses (dydt) are formed and from them the chapters (suwar) of the Sacred Book. Then from the combinations of the chapters, there results "the book of existence" (kitdb al-wujud) which manifests itself in two ways as al-furqdn, or discernment, and al-qur'dn, or recitation (both of these terms being names of the Qur'an). The fiirqatiT aspect of the Book is the macrocosm with all its differentiations, and the qurani aspect is the spiritual and archetypal reality of man or what is generally called universal man (al-insdn al-kdmil). Therefore, the keys (mafdtih) to the invisible world, as far as the revealed Qur'an is concerned, are also the keys to the understanding of the invisible dimension of the world of external existence and man's inner being and vice versa. The Qur'anic commentaries of Mullā Ṣadrā occupy an exalted place in the annals of Qur'anic

commentaries as well as in the philosophical hermeneutics of a sacred text, and it is a pity that so little attention has been paid to them in scholarship in Western languages.[33]

The Influence of Mullā Ṣadrā

The vast synthesis created by Mullā Ṣadrā was to have a profound influence upon later Persian thought as well as in India and Iraq. It is not
true that his thought dominated the whole philosophical scene in Persia, because it has had its detractors to this day, but it has certainly been the most important influence on the intellectual scene in Persia during the past three and a half centuries. Temporarily eclipsed after his death because of adverse political conditions, the "transcendent theosophy" was revived during the Qajar period in both Iṣfahān, the older centre of Islamic philosophy, and Tehran which was now becoming the foremost centre for the study of hikmah.[34]
Revived by the great masters of Iṣfahān, Mullà "All Nūrl and Mullà Ismà'll Khwàjuī, it was continued by later authorities in the Sadrian school such as Hājjī Mullà Hàdī Sabziwàrī in Khuràsàn and Mullà 'All Mudarris in Tehran. They continued very much in the lines of Mullā Ṣadrā although they began to write more in Persian rather than Arabic in accordance with the general tendency of the period which was witness to the revival of philosophical Persian. And this tradition has continued unbroken to this day to such an extent that the extensive group of students studying Islamic subjects in the traditional madrasahs, especially those of Qom, and who are

interested in the "intellectual sciences" (al-'ulūm al-'aqliyyah), are mostly followers of Mullà Sadrā.

In India the influence of Mullā Ṣadrā began to manifest itself from the middle of the eleventh/seventeenth century almost from the time of his death. His writings, especially the Sharh al-hidàyah ("Commentary upon the 'Guide'" of Athlr al-Dln Abharl) became widespread, and the latter book even came to be known as Sadrā-, people received distinction by saying that they had studied Sadrā. This tradition affected many later figures and has survived to this day. It is interesting to recall that Mawlānā Mawdūdî, the founder of the Jamā'at-i islàml of Pakistan and India, that is, the founder of one of the most important politico-religious movements in the Islamic world in the fourteenth/twentieth century, translated parts of the Asfār into Urdu in his youth. As for Iraq, Mullā Ṣadrā has been taught continuously during the past three centuries especially in centres of Shi'ite learning such as Najaf. One of Iraq's foremost Islamic thinkers of the fourteen th/twentieth century, Muhammad Bàqir al-Sadr, displays in a typical fashion the influence of Mullā Ṣadrā upon contemporary Iraqi religious scholars with a philosophical bent.

In conclusion it is interesting to note that the revival of Islamic philosophy in Iran during the Pahlavi period, especially from the 1950s onward even in semi-modernized circles, was primarily around the figure of Mullā Ṣadrā, many of whose works have been edited and printed during the past forty years while numerous analyses of the "transcendent theosophy" have been made in Persian as well as Arabic. At the same time Mullà Sadrā has now been introduced to the West and other parts of the non-Islamic world by such

scholars as Henry Corbin, Toshihiko Izutsu, S. H. Nasr and Mehdi Mohaghegh, with the result that there is now a
great deal of interest in his works in the West as well as in parts of the Islamic world such as the Arab countries, Turkey, Indonesia and Malaysia which did not show much interest in later Islamic philosophers in general and Mullā Ṣadrā in particular until recently. Moreover, numerous theses are being written throughout the world on him and his school. In any case Mullā Ṣadrā is not only one of the greatest intellectual figures of Islamic history, but his thought is very much a part of the contemporary Islamic world and continues to exercise great influence upon many aspects of current Islamic thought, especially the philosophical, theological and theosophical.

NOTES

1 I have dealt extensively with Mullā Ṣadrā's intellectual and philosophical background in my The Transcendent Theosophy ofSadral-Dîn Shīrāzt (Tehran, 1978): 19—29 and 69—82. See also Muhammad Khwàjawl, Lawāmi' al-'āriftn fî ahwdl Sadr al-mnta'allihin (Tehran, 1988): 39ff.

2 For a detailed discussion of this subject by one of Persia's leading contemporary philosophers and masters of the School of Mullā Ṣadrā see Mehdi Ha'iri Yazdi, The Principles of Epistemology in Islamic Philosophy - Knowledge by Presence (Albany, 1992).

3 1 also fully support the translation of this term as "transcendent theosophy" and have used it in my studies on the subject in English.

4 Such scholars as the late Fazlur Rahman in his works on Mullā Ṣadrā and Hossein Ziai in essays which appear in these volumes and elsewhere protest that the usage of such a term prevents Western philosophers from taking Mullā Ṣadrā seriously as a philosopher. The answer to this protest is that philosophy as defined by logical positivists, deconstructionists and other such modern schools which deny even the category of truth in an ultimate sense in philosophy, will disregard a person such as Mullā Ṣadrā no matter how the name of his school is translated into English. Moreover, the term "theosophy" is now regaining the respect it possessed before the Theosophical Society founded in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries began to use the term. Many of the thinkers of the West such as Jakob Bôhme and Rossmini, who have much more affinity with Mullā Ṣadrā than they do, let us say, with Voltaire, Kant, Compte or Quine, are called theosophers in an honourable way. In any case, no apology is needed in calling Mullā Ṣadrā's al-hikmat al-muta'āliyah the "transcendent theosophy" in order to distinguish it from merely rationalistic and logical philosophy and relate it to earlier strands of Western thought most akin to it in nature, strands which are now being avidly revived especially in France, Italy and Germany.

5 See my The Transcendent Theosophy. 85ff-

6 See his al-Asfàr al-arba'ah, ed. Allāmah Muhammad Husayn Tabātabā'ī (Qom, 1968) or al-Shawāhid al-rubūbiyyah, ed. Sayyid Jalāl al-Dln Ashtiyānī (Mashhad, 1967); The Wisdom of the Throne, trans. James Morris (Princeton, 1981); al-Mabda' wa'l-mdàd, ed. S. J. Ashtiyānī (Tehran, 1976): 1 Off; and Kititb al-

mdshair, Le Livre des pénétrations métaphysiques, ed. and trans. Henry Corbin (Tehran and Paris, 1964). See also Sayyid Jalàl al-Dln Ashtiyànī, Hasti az nazar- i falsafab wa 'irfān (Mashhad, 1960), which is devoted to a large extent to an analysis of Mullā Ṣadrā's metaphysics of wujūd.

7 See the introduction by Corbin to Le Livre des pénétrations métaphysiques: 62ff; also Toshihiko Izutsu, Creation and the Timeless Order of Things (Ashland, 1994): 178fF.

8 See M. Mohaghegh and T. Izutsu, The Metaphysics of Sabzavari (Delmar, 1977): 31—2. On Sabziwāri see S. H. Nasr, "Sabziwāri ", in M. M. Sharif (ed.) A History of Muslim Philosophy, 2 (Wiesbaden, 1966): 1543—56.

9 See S. H. Nasr, "Mullā Ṣadrā as a Source for the History of Islamic Philosophy", in Islamic Life and Thought (Albany, 1981): 169ff.

10 See the Asfàr, 1: 23ff.

11 On tashktk see the Asfàr, 1: 36ff., and 427ff. See also 'A I la ma h Tabātabā'î, "Sadr al-Dln Muhammad ibn Ibrāhīm Shīrāzī the Renewer of Islamic Philosophy in the 11 th/ 17th century", in S. H. Nasr (ed.) Mullā Ṣadrā Commemoration Volume (Tehran, 1962): 22ff., where one of the greatest of the contemporary masters of the school of Mullā Sadra summarizes his metaphysics and ontology.

12 See Nasr, "Existence (Wujūd) and Quiddity (Màhiyyah) in Islamic Philosophy", International Philosophical Quarterly, 29(4) (December 1989): 409—28. Mullā Ṣadrā gave an extensive discussion of màhiyyah in his al-Asfàr, 2: 2ff.

13 Mullā Ṣadrā offers numerous rational arguments for the principiality of tvujiid, arguments which have been summarized by Sabziwāri in his Sharh al-manziimah. See Mohaghegh and Izutsu, op. cit.: 32ff., and the Asfàr, 1: 38ff.

14 On transubstantial motion see the Asfàr, 3: 80ff.

15 See Izutsu, Creation and the Timeless Order of Things: 1 19ff.

16 See al-Ghazzàlī, Tahāfiit al-falàsifah, trans. Sabih Ahmad Kamali (Lahore, 1963): 13ff.

17 See S. H. Nasr, "The School of Iṣfahān", in Sharif (ed.) A History of Muslim Philosophy, 2: 916ff.

18 For an explanation of Mullā Ṣadrā's views concerning the relation of God and the world see Fazlur Rahman, "The God—World Relationship in Mullā Ṣadrā", in George Hourani (ed.) Essays on Islamic Philosophy and Science (Albany, 1975): 238–53.

19 See Mullā Ṣadrā, the Asfàr, 3: 27811. See also Fazlur Rahman, "Mullā Ṣadrā's Theory of Knowledge", Philosophical Forum, 4(1) (fall 1972): 141—52.

20 For a most profound discussion, according to the School of Mullā Ṣadrā, of the truth that knowledge ('ilm) is being and light and not merely the imprint of forms upon the tablet of the soul see Sayyid Muhammad Kàzim Assār, Tim al- hadīth (Tehran, 1352 (ah Solar)/1973) chapter 1: Iff.

21 See Mullā Ṣadrā, the Asfàr, 2: 46fE, and his al-Shawàhid al-rubūbiyyah: 159ff.

22 In one of his major works, Creative Imagination in the Siifism of Ibn Arabī, trans. Ralph Mannheim (Princeton, 1981), Henry Corbin introduced this doctrine in its full amplitude for the first time in the modern West. His exposition was so influential that a whole centre was established in France by the French philosopher Gilbert Durant for the study of the imaginai world or l'imaginaire while in England the journal Temenos was founded by Kathleen Raine to propagate art in its relation to the imagination as understood by Muslim thinkers
seen through the eyes of Corbin. For Ibn Arabî's views of the imaginai world to which he returns again and again in his works, especially al-Futūhàt al- makkiyyah, see William Chittick, The Sufi Path of Knowledge (Albany, 1989): 112ff.; and his Imaginai Worlds (Albany, 1994), especially part 2: 67ff.

23 Corbin has dealt with this theme extensively in his Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth, trans. Nancy Pearson (Princeton, 1977). See especially pp. 164—70, which contains the text of Mullā Ṣadrā from his Kitdb al-hikmat al-'arshiyyah dealing directly with this subject.

24 For a detailed analysis of Mullā Ṣadrā's views on eschatology in relation to the reality of the imaginai world see the long introduction of S. J. Ashtiyānī to his edition of al-Mabda' wa'l-ma'àd.

25 See the Asfiir, 6: 263ff.

26 See al-Shawāhid rd-rububiyyah: 39ff.

27 On this issue as a whole see Khwājawl, Lawāmi' al-'ārifīti: 79ff.

28 Mullā Ṣadrā refers often in his writings to the three degrees of certainty, 'ilm al-yaqīn (knowledge of certainty), 'ayn al-yaqin (eye of certainty), and haqq al- yaqīn (truth of certainty) which mark the hierarchy of knowledge in Sufism and correspond to hearing of fire, seeing fire and being consumed by fire. See Abu Bakr Siràj ad-Dīn, The Book of Certainty (Cambridge, 1992).

29 See for example, the Asfiir, 2: 127ff.

30 For an outline of Mullà Sadrā's method of commentary see Muhammad Khwājawl, Tarjuma-yi mafdtih al-ghayb (Tehran, 1984): 84ff.

31 A complete list of his commentaries, including verses of chapters upon which he commented, is given in Nasr, The Transcendent Theosophy. 48.

32 All of Mullā Ṣadrā's commentaries have been published together for the first time by Muhammad Khwājawī in several volumes under the title Tafsīr al- qur'ān al-karīm ta'līfSadr al-muta'allihln (Qom, 1987).

33 See L. S. Peerwani, "Qur'anic Hermeneutics: the Views of Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzl", in BR1SMES Proceedings of the 1991 International Conference on Middle Eastern Studies (Manchester, 1991): 118—27. The commentary upon the "Light Verse", which is one of the greatest masterpieces of

Islamic thought, has been translated and analysed by Muhsin Salih in a doctoral thesis at Temple University in America (1993); this has not as yet been published.

34 See S. H. Nasr, "The Metaphysics of Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī and Islamic Philosophy in Qajar Persia", in Edmund Bosworth and Carole Hillenbrand (eds) Qajar Persia (Edinburgh, 1983): 177—98.

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CHAPTER 37

Shah Walīullāh

Rahimuddin Kemal and Salim Kemal

❦

Shah Walīullāh - Quṭb al-Dln Ahmad ibn Abd ah Rahim - was born near Delhi at sunrise on 4 Shawwaal 1114 (Wednesday 21 February 1703) to a distinguished family, known for its contribution to the educational, intellectual and religious life of Delhi. On his paternal side Shah Walīullāh claimed descent from the second caliph while his mother's family claimed descent from the Prophet's grandson. His paternal grandfather, Wajlh al- Dln GhazI ShahTd, had been a commander in the army of Aurangzeb, who bestowed on him the title of ghazv, his father, Shah 'Abd al-Rahim, was an eminent savant who gave up his imperial nobility in order to devote himself to learning and mysticism.

Shah Walīullāh was educated at a school established by his father. He studied Arabic and Persian, the Qur'an, Ḥadith, tafsir, fiqh, mantiq, philosophy, mysticism, medicine, rhetoric and mathematics before graduating in 1130/1718. In that year his father initiated him into the Naqshbandi Sufi order and in the following year granted him ijazah in that order. On his father's death in 1131/1719, Shah Walīullāh took charge of

the school, remaining there for the next dozen years, guiding students and developing his own theories.

Shah Walīullāh had married in 1130/1718. He had a son and a daughter from this marriage and, following his wife's death a few years later, married again at the age of forty-three. This marriage yielded him four sons. In 1143/1731 he made his hajj. He stayed in Mecca and Medina for more than a year to study with a number of eminent scholars and mystics, including the notable Shaykh Abu Tahir al-Madani.

On returning to India he engaged with the political and social turmoil afflicting the country. His life spanned the reign of ten rulers in Delhi, who cumulatively added to the problems facing the populace. Central Muslim power had dissipated to provincial governers and nobles; other groups such as the Marathas, Sikhs, Jats and Europeans were vying for power; the economic conditions of Muslims had decayed through idleness and corruption; the Muslim community was subject to continuous internecine conflicts, especially between Shi'i and Sunni groups but also between adherents of the four schools of law and between the orthodox and the innovators.

During this period Shah Walīullāh promoted educational, social and religious reforms to unify and strengthen the Muslim community. He justified these practices philosophically, arguing for clear foundational principles for good government and a moral life, which he presented in a number of texts: more than fifty works have been attributed to his authorship, but not always rightly. He also translated the Qur'an into Persian, making it accessible to the populace.

This proved less than popular with some groups, who carried out an unsuccessful attack on his life at Masjid Fathepuri.

After Shah Walīullāh's death in 1176/1762 his sons continued his educational work and other reforms. That work is not only one of the crucial formative forces in Indian Islamic thought but it was influential both in the Hijdz, from the time he spent there, and in eastern Asia.

The need for a comprehensive identity of purpose, thought and action was vital to Shah Walīullāh. Despite being expressed in different texts and addressed to diverse issues and contexts, his ideas possess a strong structural unity. The possibility of such unity of thought and belief is an axiom of his work, determining his critical analysis of other theories of knowledge, being and theology, and giving direction to his own work. To this end he proposes principles of tatbiq – a method of reconciliation that identifies the common principles underlying various branches of knowledge and can provide a basis for ijdhad with contemporary relevance. Such principles can then serve as a critical tool for identifying non-issues or eliminating false disputations, leading participants to an awareness of the underlying interests implicated in promoting those false disputations. Shah Walīullāh can then unify all these elements through consideration of the needs of living an active moral life as a Muslim under the guidance of the Qur'an.

To explain these aspects of his thought, we may begin with his theory of knowledge. Shah Walīullāh thinks of knowledge as a relation between mind and object, such that the mind gains a complete grasp of the form of the object.[1] It is needed by the particular kind of existent that human beings are.

Knowledge has a divine source for human beings and is given to them through revelation, dreams, inspiration, intuition, etc. By contrast, God causes the existence of the objects by thinking about them. Consonantly, mystical insight into the essence of existence occurs to various messengers or prophets and is a distinctive grasp of essences because it is other and more than the complete grasp of forms.

At other times Shah Waliullah examines the different kinds of knowledge human beings can have, distinguishing a prophetic knowledge that can diagnose and remedy the ills of society from a knowledge of Shari'ah, grammar from religious science, philosophy and applied knowledge, or revealed knowledge from empirical knowledge and from intuitive insight, and so on.[2] He makes these distinctions when addressing particular problems, and though they do not seem to coincide in any obvious way, they are commensurable and complement each other.

A more interesting feature than their possible self-contradictoriness is that they result from the process of gaining knowledge. Shah Walīullāh explains this process by giving principal importance to intuition in combination with the division of faculties proposed by Greek-influenced philosophers. In al-Khayr al-kathir he distinguishes sensation, imagination, estimation and reason, then sets out the importance of intuition.[3] Like the Greeks, he finds sensation unreliable, and, like earlier Islamic philosophers such as al-Ghazzall, he ascribes to reason the power to deal with practical matters and issues relating to understanding God's purpose for human beings. Earlier, in his Kitdb al-najdt, Ibn Sīnā followed al-Farabl in giving especial importance to imagination as the epistemic faculty in which prophetic

intuition appeared as an order of images and ideas that cognitive language could not articulate completely.[4] Shah Walīullāh does not dispute this association, and explains intuition as a mysterious power that lies beyond reason and communicates its reflection of divine reality through ordered images and metaphors. Divine reality has an impact upon the soul, and intuition is our access to this effect. Accordingly, intuition gives us access to reality indirectly through its effect, which can be grasped in moments of self-realization, rather than directly.

Despite that indirect access to reality, the relation between intuition and soul is a direct and immediate one. Shah Waliullah contrasts it with the relation of mind to object, which subsists between two objects of different kinds. Intuition does not presuppose a relation between two objects so much as it is an awareness through presence – an Him al-hudiiri in which in moments of self-realization the order of the universe makes itself felt within the self.

The basis in self-realization imposes certain requirements on a self hoping for an in tui tive grasp of reality. Just as the unreliability of sensation renders its claims to knowledge questionable, similarly an unsatisfactory state of the self will interfere with its power of intuition.[5] A proper grasp of the impact of reality on the soul requires subjects to become purified of base needs that would otherwise interfere with their exposure to reality. Shah Walīullāh maintains that the soul naturally leads to divine reality, and proposes that an emphasis on the self thwarts this disposition. Humility and devotion are therefore the prime antidotes to misunderstandings.

The factors that interfere with intuition also account for contradictions among intuitions. Shah Walīullāh diagnoses the existence of disagreements about the intuited nature of reality as the result of failures in the subjects, who have been unable to rescind distorting influences. Nor are all alleged contradictions real: the complex nature of human beings allows them insights into different realms or qualitative features of their existence. Consequently, they may express insights appropriate to their rational or animal natures, their stages of development or the context to which they address their utterances. Each of these categories will determine what communication is commensurate to the context; critics may misunderstand the appropriate categories and identify as contradictions what are really their own category mistakes.

The thrust of these arguments is to affirm the unity of our knowledge and of our intuitive grasp of divine reality by explaining differences as the result of external and subjective factors. This affirmation of unity and its commensurate technique of diagnosis serves Shah Walīullāh as a critical tool that he applies not only to Islamic thought but also to other people of the Book. By contrast with numerous scholars he argued against the view that Jews and Christians made changes in their scriptures, contending that changes were made in the process of translation. He was also able to use this methodology in his study of the Traditions, writing in both Persian and Arabic about their collection, and in his Qur'anic commentary in books such as Fawz al-kablr.

The same principles are at work in his book Insaf ft baydn sabab al-ikhtilaf This history of jurisprudence and traditions counteracts a prevalent tendency. Indian scholarship had relied greatly on Hidaya and Fatwd- yi 'dlamglri. Shah

Walīullāh places these books in the context of the origins of fiqh, which he combines with an extensive study of tasawwuf contained in some fourteen books. In order to provide a deductive synthesis by returning to the origins he shows how the various schools of law emerged and developed. Identifying the basic problems on which the learned differed, he analyses the distinctive characteristics of the the four Sunni schools of law - Hanafl, Shafi'l, Malikl and Hanball – by reference to their historical situation, [6] proposes a possible synthesis and defends the latter as an instance of permissible ijtihdd. He analyses ijtihad further in 'Aqd al-jayyad fi ahkdm al-ijtihad wa'l-taqlld, adding to his distinction of explicit and implicit aspects of Islam distinctions between those who are capable of ijtihad and those who follow. The former he categorizes further as mujtahidin al mutlaq, the founders of Sunni schools of law, mujtahid fi'l mazhab, those capable of ijtihdd in a school of law, and mujtahid ji'l-fatwd, who have the required authority for examining the Shari'ah. The issue was especially important in India at that time, given the availability of all the schools and the possibility that pursuing one would preclude following another.

This search for a comprehensive and defensible unity is present also in Shah Walīullāh's account of the nature of being and in his theology. In the latter he differs little from the Ash'arites, though he insists on a criticial evaluation of the external influences that have entered its teaching, such as Greek thought and the modifications introduced by immediate needs in its history. His central contribution to questions of the nature of being and existence is to resolve the unity of consciousness wahdat al-shuhiid with the unity of being wahdat al-wujud. Divinity being one, we may expect that existence shares that singularity, and so knowledge of the

world and intuition about that divine reality will also be capable of unity. Ultimately all apparently dissonant claims will prove reconcilable.

The need for this reconciliation arose because thinkers had distinguished unity of being from unity of consciousness. Arguably God is the only being in reality, and all other beings are really manifestations of Him. Some argued that through causing things to be, the Absolute Existence descends into determined beings, [7] that Absolute Existence or God exists as a divine essense or pure being, [8] and its descent has five stages. The first stage of descent is a universal state of unity; the second of extended being; the third of spirits; the fourth of archetypes; and the fifth of particular bodies.[9] As God is the only reality, these stages and their existences are not separable from Him and the world does not have any independent reality. Existence, then, is a unity of being. By contrast, people have argued that God and creation are distinct, the latter being shadows (zildl) of Divine Attributes.[10] Since they are reflections, their existence depends on God but is not identical with Him. A failure to recognize this distinction is the result of an incomplete stage of mystical knowledge where the salik, overwhelmed by recognizing the existence of a single reality, denies all other existences. A later stage both recognizes the existence of the One and has awareness of the other possible and contingent existences. Consonantly, accepting this identity or nonidentity between God, attributes and creations has consequences for the status ascribed to the latter: if they are not identical, they cannot be eternal, or necessary, and so on.

Shah Walīullāh accepts the starting point that Divine Being lies beyond and originates extended being, and accepts that

the relation between God and the world may be described in terms of descent. However, he argues that the unity of consciousness and being signify only linguistic differences and do not grasp anything substantial. For example, the terms sometimes identify different stages of a mystical progress, which are reconcilable in the ultimate reality that consists of both the one and the many.[11] At other times the unity of being or consciousness signifies the relation of the absolute being to modes, attributes, archetypes and particular existent beings. God establishes the world in all its

possibilities, and so as eternal and one. Although in their particular determinations and our experience the objects may appear as many, their nature and possibilities are already determined by God, and their contingency is only apparent. Similarly, archetypes are related to the names of Divinity, and so are eternal with God; they are also realized or manifested in particulars, where they are "modes" of divinity. However, the distinction between archetypes as names and modes is only a conceptual one, Shah Walīullāh argues, since archetypes have no independent existence apart from God who, in turn, also determines particulars. Further, since both sides accept that the world exists only in its determinations by God, there cannot be any real difference between them about the status of modes and attributes. Certainly one group talks of God and creation as distinct, the latter being reflections or shadows of Divine Attributes whose existence depends on God but is not identical with Him. Shah Walīullāh contends that these do not denote separate kinds of existence, since they are dependent on God: the distinction between the groups is best understood in terms of the use they make of "distinct reflections" or of existence being part of God. And here he points out that in their actual arguments both groups use the concepts in similar ways. The opposition, then, is

again only apparent when understood by reference to the role and power of the Ultimate Reality.[12]

This concern to examine and reconcile diverse conceptualizations would be incomplete if it did not also indicate the place of individuals in relation to the unity of being, knowledge and action. In al-Tafhimdt and Satadt, among other texts, he sets out the process of individual development. As we may expect, given its capacity for reason, inspiration, along with feelings, and animal impulses, humanity originates as an abstract, pure intellect. Shah Waliullah ascribes to it a cyclical process in which humanity returns to that state of pure intellect after going through diverse stages of animal and spiritual life. Human beings move from a state of pure intellect at an appointed time to "the visible world from the place that is the most superior imaginative creation".[13] At that stage of similitude, the ideal picture of man appears, in which its destiny and origin are written. Next it enters into the various stages of the realm of similitudes or archetypes, following which its entry into the material world and its nexus of causes occurs. In this last realm the human being possesses a particular material form, with particular associations, situations and possibilities, and lives its mortal existence for the duration of its life. When people "die a natural death", they "still retain as great a portion of their natural spirits as could be a steed for the Soul and remain in the Intermediary world retaining the knowledge, the states and the faculties which remained imprinted upon their natural spirits".[14] Then follows an ordered ascension through the stages already traversed until the human being becomes a pure intellect again.

The narrative of this process signifies the order of being and knowledge available to human beings, whose souls thus bear significant analogies with the larger reality of which they are a part. Sat' 16 sets out the sciences appropriate to human beings, given their nature, and sat' 17 explains the kinds and modes of teaching that can become available to them. The order of human life repeats the order of the universe, and these analogies seem to be the mechanism for their interrelation, allowing Shah Walīullāh to unite ontology and epistemology by explaining knowledge as the self-awareness appropriate to a state of a being.

This unity, arguably, is again part of the syncretic thrust of Shah Walīullāh's work. He attempts to show the full and detailed richness of the whole human and spiritual compass, diagnosing disagreements as an incomplete recognition of the whole, within and by relation to which apparent anomalies may be resolved. He takes the Qur'an and central Islamic texts as his guide, expecting them to be capable of providing the answers human beings may seek, and strives for a critical synthesis of elements that respects the complexity of issues which result from a diverse and rich texture of human life. Just as he relates epistemology to ontology and consciousness to being, he also seeks to unite knowledge with belief, reason with intuition, Muslims with each other and with other people of the Book, human beings with each other and with God, and thought with action guided by the Qur'an.

NOTES

1 Al-Budur al-bdzighah, ed. Saghir Husain Ma'sumi (Hyderabad, Pakistan, 1970): 1420.

2 See al-Khayr al-kathir (Cairo, 1974) especially, but also al-Taflnmat al-ilahiyyah (Surat, 1936), 1 and Hujjat Allāh al-bdlighah (Hyderabad, Pakistan, 1979). A useful exposition of the various proposals is presented in Hafiz A. Ghaffar Khan, Shah Wali Allāh: an Analysis of his Metaphysical Thought (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Temple University, 1986).

3 But see also Sata'dt, trans. J. N. Jalbani and ed. D. B. Fry (London, 1980), sat' 17, where Shah Wallullah presents the various kinds of teaching appropriate to human beings.

4 F. Rahman, Avicenna's Psychology, an English translation of al-Najdt, Book II, Chapter VI with Historico-Philosophical Notes and Textual Improvements on the Cairo Edition (Oxford, 1952).

5 At sat' 16 of Sata'dt Shah Wallullah orders human knowledge into a hierarchy of sciences that follows from and is appropriate to understanding the nature of man. Together they constitute human nature and its possibilities.

6 His book on Izdlat al-khifd' 'an khildfdt at-kbifd', in which he deals with Islamic theories of politics and sociology, is probably unique in Islamic literature, and sets out some basis for the historical account he gives of the development of the different schools.

7
We have in mind Ibn Arab!. Like other mystics he holds that creation occurs through God's willing things to be (kun). This willing is not a causal relation and allows at least two perspectives. First, in relation to God, what He brings into being is established and therefore eternal, and is not a piecemeal experience of particulars but is the determination of all possible beings; second, from the perspective of our experience of existent things, where all the possibilities are not realized at once, the determinations are contingent. Arguably al-Ghazzall works within the same structure.

8 See Lamahdt, trans. G. N. Jalbani and ed. D. B. Fry (London, 1980), Lamha 2, for example, and Budur al-bdzighah.

9 Shah Wallullah provides an account of creation in Al-Khayr al-kathir, trans. G. N. Jalbani (Lahore, 1974): 40—4.

10 Hafiz Ghaffar Khan, cited above, finds the best source of this doctrine in Ahmad Sirhindl, Maktubdt, trans. Q. Alim al-Dln (Hyderabad, India), 1; 234. S. A. A. Rizvi, Shah Wali-Allāh and his Times (Canberra, 1980), cites the origins of this position in the work of Ala 'al-Dawlah Simnani and Mujadid Alf-i Thanl. In any case, Shah Wallullah considered this a false disputation.

11 See Taflnmdt al-ildhiyyah (Surat, 1936), 2.

12 See Tafhīmāt: 34–5, 261–71, etc. The letter is to Mandī Isma'īl ibn 'Abd Allāh Rumī, then residing in Medina.

13 Sat' 24.

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VI

The Jewish philosophical tradition in the Islamic cultural world

CHAPTER 38

Introduction

Oliver Leaman

It is difficult to overemphasize significance which Islamic philosophy had for Jewish thinkers who were working at the same time in the Islamic world, or who were influenced by such work. Many Jewish thinkers wrote in Arabic and their main philosophical authorities were Arabic authors, which is hardly surprising given the pervasiveness of Arabic culture within the Islamic Empire. It was possible then as now for Jews to maintain their religious identity while at the same time becoming an important part of the cultural exchange of ideas. A very rich corpus of science, mathematics, medical theory, astronomy and philosophy was available to any literate member of society, and it was not the sole preserve of Muslims. Jews were excited by the diversity of theoretical perspectives which existed, and enthusiastically threw themselves into contemporary intellectual life. They even adapted much of the theory connected with specifically Islamic areas of enquiry, such as law and theology, to their own legal and religious texts. This is hardly surprising. Minorities generally acquire the culture of the dominant community, or at least as much of the culture as they can adapt to their own needs and interests.

It was not only Jews who reacted in this way, of course. Christians often reacted similarly, and one thinks in particular of thinkers such as Yahya ibn 'Adi. Yet there did not develop in the Christian community within the Islamic world the same involvement with the local intellectual movement as occurred in the Jewish community. To a certain extent this may have been a reflection on the different social roles of the different ethnic groups. In Spain, for example, Jews were more likely to be in high political office and in the professions than were Christians, and hence were more open to the sorts of ideas which went around the Islamic world. Jews travelled a good deal around the Islamic Empire, and so were well acquainted with a range of views and theories. Christians often saw their spiritual centre of gravity as occurring outside of the Islamic world,

and may have regarded the frequent conflicts between the Christian powers and Islam as indicating that they should be careful about getting too close to Muslim culture. No force outside the Islamic world would intervene on behalf of the Jews, and indeed the interventions by Christian armies radically harmed the position of the Jewish community. It is hardly surprising, then, that Jews should have taken a more enthusiastic attitude towards the culture which flourished in the Islamic world, a culture in which they participated as far as they could.

This is not to say that Islamic philosophy did not have an impact on Christian thought. It certainly did, and we shall see later in these volumes how strong that influence was in the form and content of both medieval and modern philosophy. The important difference here, though, is that influence very largely took place outside of the Islamic world, and it was not so overwhelming as the influence on Jewish philosophy.

When we look at the works of thinkers such as Saadiah, Halevi, Maimonides and even Gersonides we can observe the curriculum of Islamic philosophy quite fully represented. They did not just take some of the leading ideas and try to see how far they could use them to make sense of their own philosophical concerns, as was very much the case with many of the major Christian philosophers. The Jewish philosophers went much further than this in their work, often working well within the tradition of Islamic philosophy itself, albeit just as often using it to develop points which were of specifically Jewish concern. Perhaps one of the reasons why Jewish philosophy came to rely so much on Islamic philosophy lies in the proximity of the religions. For example, one of the most common topics of discussion dealt with the relationship between the deity and his qualities. This relationship was used to determine the relationship of a subject to its predicates, clearly a key notion in philosophical logic and the theory of meaning. The fierce monotheism of both Judaism and Islam meant that the approach by Jewish and Muslim thinkers was always likely to be similar.

When we talk about one culture influencing another we should be very careful about what precisely is meant by that. There are degrees of influence, and it is not necessarily the case that the frequency with which an influence can be detected directly is a good indication of its strength. The important factor to discover is not so much the language used or the people who are mentioned but the way in which the agenda is set. For example, in the first two centuries of the translation movement from Greek via Syriac to Arabic many Greek terms were translated by Arabic terms which had quite a distinct cultural context. So secular terms from Greek culture suddenly became Arabic terms with a religious force

in Islamic philosophy. The translator and the philosopher in the Islamic world did not mean to imply by this that the Greeks had a religious motive in mind when they used such terms – they knew that this was

not the case – but they chose the terra in their own language which came closest to the original term. This is perfectly acceptable, since the alternative is to create a neologism, which did indeed take place on occasion but which has undesirable consequences. For one thing, it is difficult to relate new terms to existing theoretical problems, and so it is preferable on occasion to struggle along with a familiar term which at least embodies some of the sense of the original term. Strictly speaking, one should point out to the reader that the way in which the term is being used in Arabic is rather different from its original Greek meaning, but there were good reasons in the early years of Islamic philosophy not to do that. For one thing, it was often the thesis of the philosophers that the grammatical meaning of the words they were using was not the most important thing about them. They have a logical sense which is perfectly convertible into Arabic, so it is possible to convey logical arguments from Greek to Arabic with no loss of deep structure. Secondly, there was the political consideration that the public needed to be persuaded that there was nothing impious or suspect about the use of what were originally Greek concepts in debates which arose within Islamic culture. How better to do this, it might have been thought, than to translate secular Greek terms by Arabic terms which have non-secular associations?

If we can observe that the philosophical discussion in Arabic is very similar to that which took place in Greek, we can understand that the Arabic terms are being used divorced from their Islamic associations. This may not be at all

obvious, since it may appear on the surface that the philosophers are seeking to reconcile two systems of thought by using Islamic language to represent Greek thought. This may lead us to misunderstand the nature of the influence of the latter on the former. What we should look for is not so much the people who are quoted or the sort of language which is used but the ways in which the arguments are supposed to work. If they are supposed to work in a way which is very similar to the way in which they are taken to work in a previous cultural context, or in a different cultural atmosphere, then we can rightly say that the influence of that culture is very important for the framing of the arguments. We can say this about the links between much Islamic and Jewish philosophy. Wftat is significant about these links is that the latter reproduces much of the agenda of the former, not just the language and the individual thinkers but the agenda itself. This will become obvious when we look at the work of some of the major Jewish philosophers who are discussed here.

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CHAPTER 39

Jewish philosophy in the Islamic world

Arthur Hyman

Jewish philosophy is customarily divided into three periods: Hellenistic (second century B.C.E. to middle of first century C.E.), medieval, and modern (from the eighteenth century on). Of these, the medieval, which is the subject of the present chapter, has been, so far, the most productive and extensive, spanning some six hundred years.

Generally speaking, medieval Jewish philosophy may be described as the explication of Jewish beliefs and practices by means of philosophic concepts and norms. However, a more refined analysis discloses that it is divisible into three parts. As an interpretation of indigenous Jewish tradition, Jewish philosophy manifests an interest in such topics as the election of Israel, the uniqueness of the prophecy of Moses, the Torah (Law) and its eternity, and the Messiah and the afterlife. In the pursuit of these interests it is sharply distinguished from Islamic and Christian philosophy. As religious philosophy it investigates notions common to Judaism, Islam and Christianity, such as the existence of God, divine attributes,

creation, providence, prophecy and general principles of human conduct. Finally, as philosophy, it investigates topics of a purely philosophic nature, such as the meaning of terms, types of logical arguments, the division of being and the structure of the world. In the light of these varied interests, medieval Jewish philosophy must be seen as part of the history of philosophy at large no less than as an interpretation of the biblical—rabbinic tradition on which Judaism rests.

Medieval Jewish philosophy began in the early tenth century as part of a general cultural revival in the Islamic East and continued in Muslim countries – North Africa, Spain and Egypt – for some three hundred years. The Jews of this period spoke, read and wrote Arabic and this enabled them to participate in the general culture of their day. Although
Jews produced a rich literature on biblical and rabbinic subjects and much religious and secular poetry, they did not produce an extensive literature on purely scientific and philosophic topics. The reason was quite simple. Knowing Arabic, they had access to the scientific and philosophic literature in that language and this was adequate for their needs. Their major speculative efforts during this period were devoted to works investigating the relation of Jewish tradition to philosophic thought. Most of the philosophic works that they produced were written in Arabic.

This cultural situation is well described by Moses Maimonides (1138—1204) when in his Guide of the Perplexed he writes:

Know' that my purpose in this Treatise of mine [the Guide of the Perplexed] was not to compose something in the natural sciences, or to make an epitome of notions pertaining to the

divine science [metaphysics] according to some doctrine, or to demonstrate what has been demonstrated in them…. For the books composed concerning these matters are adequate. If, however, they should not turn out to be adequate with regard to some subject, that which I shall say concerning that subject will not be superior to everything else that has been said about it.

(Guide of the Perplexed, 2:2, Pines translation)

From Maimonides' description, it should, however, not be inferred that medieval Jewish philosophy was a branch of Islamic philosophy. For just as Muslim philosophers made use of the works of their Greek and Flellenistic predecessors (which they had in Arabic translations), adapting them to their needs, so Jewish philosophers made use of the same works together with philosophic works of Muslims, adapting them to theirs.

Towards the end of the twelfth century the geographic and, with it, the cultural setting of Jewish philosophy began to change. The Jewish communities in the Islamic world declined and communities hospitable to scientific and philosophic learning developed in Christian lands – Christian Spain, southern France and Italy. As a result of these changes, Arabic was gradually forgotten among Jews and since, with the notable exception of Italy, they had little occasion to learn Latin, they turned to Hebrew as the language of their scientific and philosophic works. Hence, whereas in Muslim countries they participated in the mainstream of the general culture, in Christian lands they had to foster a general philosophic and scientific literature of their own. Jews continued to write works probing the relation of Jewish

tradition to philosophic thought, but they now also produced an extensive literature devoted to such purely philosophic fields as logic, physics, metaphysics, ethics and politics. As a first step they translated from Arabic into Hebrew the works of such Jewish philosophers as Saadiah Gaon, Judah Halevi, Baḥyā ibn Paqudah, Abraham ibn Daud and Maimonides (for these see below) together with

much of the Arabic philosophic literature of the previous period, especially the works of the Aristotelian commentator, Averroes (Ibn Rushd) (1126—98). Once this literature became available in Hebrew, Jewish philosophers commented on it, summarized it in compendia and encyclopedias, and composed their own independent treatises and books. Since Jewish philosophy of this period was so heavily indebted to the thought of the previous period, it is appropriate to include it in the present chapter. In a seminal monograph, Shlomo Pines has argued plausibly that there are indications that Christian scholastic philosophy influenced some Jewish philosophers of this period, but by and large Jewish philosophy was a continuation of the philosophy which flourished in the Islamic world. The second period of medieval Jewish philosophy lasted until the early sixteenth century.

As Islamic philosophers, so Jewish philosophers may be classified under four headings: mutakallimūn, Neoplatonists, Aristotelians of various kinds, and critics of Aristotelian philosophy. However, this modern classification does not imply doctrinal uniformity among the adherents of each group. While the members of each group shared a certain approach to philosophy, a certain literature and a certain stock of basic ideas, each philosopher developed his philosophy in his own way.

Mutazilite Kalām

Mu'tazilite Kalām arose in the Islamic world as the result of certain issues posed by the Qur'ān, the primary ones being the "Unity of God" and "Divine Justice". The first of these arose from the observation that the Qur'ān teaches that God is one, at the same time describing him by means of many attributes; the second from the observation that God seems to be the cause of everything in the world, including human actions, yet punishes humans for the wrong they do. To solve the first problem, Mu'tazilites set out to show that a multiplicity of attributes can be predicated of God without violating his unity; to solve the second they held that God, though omnipotent, gave human beings free choice, thereby making them responsible for their own actions. Since the Mu'tazilites were primarily interested in solving scriptural problems, rather than developing an independent philosophy, their works had an eclectic complexion; that is, they used arguments from a variety of philosophic sources. Ash'arite Kalām was known to Jewish philosophers and is cited by them, but there is no evidence that there were Jewish Ash'antes.

The first major Jewish philosopher of the Middle Ages is generally held to be Saadiah Gaon (882—942), head of the rabbinical academy of Sura (near Baghdad). Influenced by the Mu'tazilites, but also using Platonic, Aristotelian and Stoic notions, he undertook to formulate a
Jewish Kalām. He presents his opinions in his commentary on the Bible, his commentary on Sefer Yeẓirah ("Book of Creation"), but his main work is the Book of Opinions and

Beliefs. Observing that many of his contemporaries had been beset by doubts, Saadiah begins by presenting arguments against their sceptical views and by analysing how trustworthy belief may be obtained. In typical Mu'tazilite fashion, Saadiah begins the book proper (treatise 1) with four proofs for the creation of the world: from the finiteness of the world, from its composition, from accidents, and from the nature of time (there are others in his other works). Typical of these proofs is that from the finiteness of the world. The finite dimension of the universe, this argument goes, requires a finite force preserving it and everything possessing a finite force must have a beginning in time. From these proofs for creation Saadiah argues that there must be a creator who is distinct from the world and who made it out of nothing. It is characteristic of Saadiah's method that he refutes opinions with which he disagrees, so that, as part of his discussion of creation, he presents arguments against twelve divergent cosmogonic and sceptical theories.

From proofs of creation which are also proofs of the existence of God, Saadiah proceeds to a discussion of divine attributes (treatise 2). Having demonstrated the unity of God, he sets out to show that the multiplicity of attributes predicated of God does not interfere with the divine unity. These attributes only serve to explicate the divine nature; they do not suggest that any multiplicity exists in God. God must be described by many attributes because human language does not have one word describing all of them. As part of his critique of divergent views, Saadiah argues against dualistic and trinitarian conceptions of God.

Saadiah next turns to philosophy of law and the related problem of prophecy (treatise 3). God, in his kindness,

provided his creatures with a law, the Torah, which guides them to earthly happiness and eternal bliss. This law contains commandments of two kinds: rational laws, such as gratitude towards a benefactor and prohibitions against murder and theft, which are intuitively self-evident to human reason, and traditional commandments, such as the Sabbath, festivals and dietary regulations, which are the result of the divine will as communicated through revelation. Being general, the rational commandments require the more particular, traditional commandments for their implementation. The promulgation of the traditional commandments is the main function of prophets. The prophecy of Moses is distinguished by its reasonableness rather than its revelational character. The Torah is unchanging and cannot be abrogated.

To solve the problem of "divine justice", Saadiah affirms the existence of free choice (treatise 4). If people are the cause of their own actions, God is just in punishing them. Saadiah offers two arguments in support of human free choice: human beings experience themselves to be free and
there is no evidence that their acts are compelled; holding people responsible for their acts requires them to be free. God's foreknowledge is compatible with human freedom, for to foreknow what a human being will do is distinct from being the cause of the action. Adopting Islamic models once more, Saadiah (treatise 5) provides a classification of different kinds of righteous and wicked men. One such is the penitent who accomplishes penitence in four steps: renunciation of sin, remorse, the quest for forgiveness and accepting the obligation not to sin again. To explain the suffering of the righteous, Saadiah invokes the doctrine of "sufferings of love" according to which suffering in this world will be rewarded in the World to Come.

The human soul originates when the body is formed and its origin is in the heart. Its substance is akin to that of the celestial sphere. The latter section of the Book of Opinions and Beliefs is devoted to eschato- logical themes, and Saadiah's discussion is based on traditional Jewish sources. He accepts the doctrine of the resurrection of the body and offers a number of arguments in its support (treatise 7). The resurrection will occur after Israel has been redeemed. The redemption may take place in one of two ways (treatise 8): if the Jews will repent, the Messiah will appear immediately; if not, the Messiah will come at an appointed time. A descendant of the house of David, the Messiah will usher in a time when Israel will return to its land and the Temple will be rebuilt. As part of his discussion, Saadiah argues against Christian messianic claims. In the World to Come the righteous will be rewarded and the wicked will be punished (treatise 9). In the World to Come the soul and body will remain together, and life in that world is eternal. Saadiah completes his book with an appendix (treatise 10) describing how human beings should conduct themselves in this world.

While Saadiah was to remain the major Jewish proponent of Mu'tazilite Kalām, other Jewish philosophers made use of Mu'tazilite teachings. In Rabbanite circles Mu'tazilite influences are found until the second half of the twelfth century when Aristotelianism became the dominant trend. Among the Karaites (those who accepted the Bible but not the teachings of the rabbis), Mutazilite Kalām remained the dominant trend throughout the Middle Ages. Among the Karaites Aaron ben Elijah of Nicomedia is the outstanding thinker. His Tree of Life (1346) is a kind of Kalām critique of Maimonides' Guide of the Perplexed. Aaron held that Kalāmic doctrines are in accord with biblical teachings, while

Aristotelianism, pagan in origin, conflicts with biblical teachings on many points.

Neoplatonism

There is little direct evidence of the sources which Jewish Neoplatonists used, but the presumptive evidence indicates that, like the Muslims, they made use of such collections as Theology of Aristotle, a work that came to be known as Liber de causis, and The Greek Sage. In their conception of God they emphasized the transcendence of God, holding that he is best described by negative attributes. They used the doctrine of emanation to explain the origin of the world, but they disagreed on whether emanation was necessary or whether it was dependent on the divine will. They also disagreed on the nature and number of spiritual, hypostatic substances existing between God and the perceptible world. In their philosophy of man, they emphasized that the good life requires control of the appetites and philosophic speculation and that the return (ascent) of the soul to the upper world from which it came is the ultimate goal of human life. Apart from the writings mentioned, Neoplatonic doctrines also reached Jewish philosophers through the writings of such Muslims as al-Fārābī and, especially, Avicenna (Ibn Sīnā).

The origin of Neoplatonism in Jewish circles was contemporaneous with that of Mu'tazilite Kalām. The first Jewish Neoplatonist was the Kairouan physician Isaac b. Solomon Israeli (c. 855—c. 955). Influenced by al-Kindī and Neoplatonic collections that circulated in the Islamic world, Israeli was the author of Book of Definitions, Book on Spirit

and Sotd, Chapter on the Elements and Book on the Elements as well as of a number of medical works. Combining biblical and philosophic notions, Israeli holds that God, the Creator, in his goodness and love, created the world in time and out of nothing. The means of creation were his power and will, which are attributes of God not separate hypostases. Two simple substances, first matter and first form (or wisdom), come directly from God and these combine to form the next hypostasis - intellect. Three distinct hypostases of soul – rational, animal and vegetative – follow and then nature, which Israeli identifies with the sphere of the heavens. The four elements are produced from the motion of this sphere. Israeli distinguishes three stages in the creation of the world: creation which produces first matter, first form and intellect; emanation which produces the four spiritual substances; and causality of nature which produces the world below the heavens. Israeli's philosophy of humanity is based on the typical Neoplatonic notion of the soul's return to the upper world from which it came. There are three stages in this process: purification accomplished by turning away from appetites and passions; illumination which produces wisdom consisting of the knowledge of eternal things; and union with or adherence to supernal wisdom (not God). Israeli sees no sharp distinction between the prophet and the philosopher; both are concerned with the ascent of the soul and with guiding mankind towards truth and justice.

Solomon ibn Gabirol (c. 1021—57) was the most important of the Jewish Neoplatonists. With him the setting of Jewish philosophy shifted to Spain. An important Hebrew poet, Ibn Gabirol presented his philosophy in Source of Life, Improvement of Moral Qualities and in a liturgical poem, "The Royal Crown" or "The Crown of the Kingdom" (see

Chapter 41). Divided into five treatises, Source of Life deals largely with different aspects of the principles of matter and form, though incidentally it also reveals other parts of Ibn Gabirol's thought. The work was influenced by Neoplatonic as well as pseudo-Empedoclean writings. With the Neoplatonists Ibn Gabirol affirms the absolute transcendence of God stating that he can only be known through negations. To explain the origin of the universe, he turns to the theory of emanation, but there is a slight difference between his descriptions in the Source of Life and in "The Royal Crown". According to the former work, from God, called First Substance, emanates the divine will or wisdom (logos)-, according to the latter, wisdom and will are successive, distinct emanations. Then follow universal matter and universal form and, next, three spiritual substances – intellect, soul and nature – and, finally, the perceptible world. There is some ambiguity about Ibn Gabirol's understanding of emanation: there are passages in which he seems to incline towards a voluntaristic interpretation, but there are others in which he seems to hold that emanation occurs by necessity. One of Ibn Gabirol's characteristic doctrines is the notion that all beings other than God, including spiritual beings, are composed of matter and form. In his philosophy of humanity, he describes as the goal of human life the ascent of the soul to the upper sphere which is accomplished through proper conduct and philosophic speculation. In his Improvement of Moral Qualities he discusses twenty moral qualities – four for each of the five senses – and tries to relate them to the four humours of the human body. In its Latin translation Source of Life was known to Christian Scholastics and extensively discussed by them. Ibn Gabirol's ideas also influence Jewish mystical (kabbalistic) thought.

The end of the eleventh century and the twelfth century saw a number of philosophers strongly influenced by Neoplatonic ideas but who also made use of other traditions. Baḥyā ibn Paqudah is the author of Guide to the Duties of the Heart, a devotional manual, which achieved great popularity among Jews. In addition to Neoplatonic ideas, Baḥyā accepts notions from Kalām, hermetic (gnostic) writings, Sufi literature, and he readily quotes sayings and stories from Jewish and Islamic sources. The work rests on a distinction between "duties of the limbs", religious commandments that require overt actions, and "duties of the heart", religious commandments requiring beliefs and attitudes. Each of the ten treatises of the work is devoted to a belief or attitude, beginning with God's unity and culminating in the love of God. The soul is a simple spiritual substance which God implanted in the body, but which wants

to free itself from the desires and pains of the body in order to attain a spiritual state, described as cleaving to his (God's) upper light. A work attributed to Baḥyā, but not by him, is On the Nature of the Soul which, influenced by Neoplatonic and hermetic teachings, describes the origin of the world by emanation and the nature of the soul. The soul is a spiritual substance coming from the upper world to which it wants to return. Return to that world is accomplished by practising the moral virtues and by acquiring knowledge.

Abraham bar Ḥiyyah (first half of the twelfth century), a mathematician, astronomer and philosopher, was the first to write philosophic works in Hebrew. Combining Neoplatonic and Aristotelian notions, he expresses his philosophic ideas in Meditation of the Sad Soul and Scroll of the Revealer. Abraham subscribes to the theory of emanation but, unlike earlier Neoplatonists, he interposes worlds of light and

dominion between God and the three spiritual substances. With Aristotle he affirms that matter and form exist only in the corporeal world, not in simple substances. He has a special interest in the fate of the soul after death, and in his Scroll of the Revealer he develops a theory of history.

Other twelfth-century Jewish philosophers who manifest Neoplatonic influences in varying degrees include Joseph ibn Zaddik, author of Book of the Microcosm, a work apparently written as a handbook for beginners. Like Ibn Gabirol he affirms that spiritual beings are composed of matter and form, though he defines matter as the genus of a species rather than as a distinct principle. He mentions the divine will, which seems to be an aspect of God rather than a distinct hypostasis. Moses ibn Ezra, distinguished mainly as a poet and critic, employs the notion of microcosm—macrocosm, affirming that everything in the upper world has its counterpart in humanity. Abraham ibn Ezra, grammarian, author of works on arithmetic and astronomy and biblical commentator, presents his opinions in somewhat enigmatic fashion. His formulations have sometimes a pantheistic ring: "God is One; He made all and He is all." He also holds that everything other than God is composed of matter and form. In speaking of creation, he affirms that the world of intelligences, the angels and the celestial sphere are co-eternal with God; only the lower world was created through emanation.

Critique of Aristotelianism

Judah Halevi (before 1075—1141), one of the important Hebrew poets of the Middle Ages, was the author of The

Book of Argument and Proof in Defence of the Despised Faith, popularly known as the Book of the Khazar (Kuzari). Like al-Ghazzāī, with whom he seems to have shared a common source, he is critical of Aristotelian rationalism, but differs
from al-Ghazzāī in that he does not present a point-by-point refutation of the claims of the philosophers. The Aristotelian philosophers, Halevi argues, have been unable to make good their claim that there are physical and metaphysical truths that can be known with certainty. By contrast, he affirms that historical experience is the source of truth and religious practices are more important than beliefs and dogmas. Halevi's book takes the form of a dialogue between a Jewish scholar and the King of the Khazars who had been converted to Judaism and it is largely an exposition and defence of Jewish beliefs and practices.

God, according to Halevi, is not the God of the philosophers who is known through philosophic demonstrations but the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who is known through miracles and revelation. Only a religion based on the experience of God's manifestation in historical events is a religion which is certain and free of doubt (Kuzari 1.29). Closely related to his conception of God is Halevi's account of prophecy and the nature of the Jewish people. Unlike the Neoplatonists and Aristotelians, who described prophecy largely as an activity of the rational faculty, or of the rational and imaginative faculty combined, Halevi views prophecy as the activity of a distinct faculty beyond the natural human faculties (1.31—4). Adam was created with this faculty, which was transmitted by heredity first to such individuals as Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, then to the twelve sons of Jacob and finally to the Jewish people as a whole (1.95).

Possession of the prophetic faculty is the distinguishing characteristic of the Jewish people. While prophecy is primarily a gift of God, it can be obtained only in the land of Israel (or it must at least be about the land of Israel) and only someone who observes the divine commandments can be a prophet (2.8—14).

In his description of human conduct, Halevi emphasizes the centrality of piety. It is not philosophic speculation that leads to closeness to God, the goal of human life, but adherence to the divine commandments. Halevi accepts the kaltirn distinction between rational and traditional commandments, but the former have only a preliminary function, while the latter are the correct guidance for the good life (2.45—8). Servants of God are like rulers; they apportion to each part of the soul and body its due (3.Iff.) Halevi advocates moderation, but not asceticism: people's joy on the Sabbath and festivals is no less pleasing to God than their affliction on fast days (2.50).

Ḥibat Allāh Abu'l-Barakāt al-Baghdādī, the author of a commentary on Ecclesiastes and of a philosophic work, subjected Aristotelian philosophy to a critical investigation and presents novel notions on physical, psychological and metaphysical topics. Nethanel al-Fayyumī (d. c. 1165) undertook to introduce Ismāʾīlī doctrines into Jewish thought in his Garden of the Intellects.Aristotelianism, as a major movement in medieval Jewish philosophy, developed in the second half of the twelfth century. It was marked by a systematic conception of philosophy and its adherents held that philosophy should be pursued on its own grounds first, and only after philosophic opinions had been established

independently should their relation to religious teachings and practices be investigated.

Aristotelianism

Aristotelianism rested on the works of Aristotle and his Hellenistic commentators. Philosophy was formally divided into theoretical and practical philosophy, the former consisting of physics, mathematics and metaphysics, the latter of ethics, economics and politics. Logic was preliminary to the study of philosophy. The medieval Aristotelians shared the analysis of such notions as terms, propositions and arguments in logic; matter and form, motion, place, time, the prime mover in physics; senses, imagination and intellect in psychology; division of being, incorporeal substances in metaphysics; the virtues and human happiness in ethics. Their political philosophy was based on Plato's Republic and Laws, which yielded such notions as a state consisting of different classes and the philosopher-king (who became identified with the prophet) as the founder of the ideal state. In spite of this common ground and particularly under the influence of commentators, a number of these notions were interpreted in different ways. Generally speaking, Aristotelianism is divisible into a more theological interpretation exemplified by Avicenna and a more naturalistic interpretation exemplified by Averroes.

While medieval Jewish philosophy contained Aristotelian elements from its beginnings, Aristotelianism as a more formal philosophic stance is generally said to begin with Abraham ibn Daud (c. 1110–80) a philosopher influenced by

al-Fārābī, Avicenna and Avempace (Ibn Bājjah). His major philosophic work, the Sublime Faith, written to explain the doctrine of free will, is, in fact, a work on a variety of philosophic and theological topics. Strongly influenced by Avicenna, the work is critical of Ibn Gabirol. Ibn Daud begins by affirming that Judaism and philosophy are identical in their essence and goes on to explain certain Aristotelian metaphysical, physical and psychological notions. To strengthen his thesis of the identity of Judaism and philosophy, he cites biblical verses which, in his opinion, allude to these notions (treatise 1). From an explanation of these notions, he proceeds to use them for a discussion of six topics: existence of God, his unity, divine attributes, God's actions (including creation), prophecy and the allegorical interpretation of terms comparing God to creatures (treatise 2). The work concludes with a brief discussion of ethical matters (treatise 3). To prove the existence of God, Ibn Daud uses the Aristotelian proof from motion as well as the Avicennian proof from necessity and contingency. The divine attributes cannot have any

positive signification, but must be understood as negations or relations. With Aristotle he holds that every change requires an underlying matter, but he also maintains that God created prime matter out of which he then created the world. To explain creation he invokes the doctrine of emanation, holding at the same time that emanation occurs by the free will of God, not by necessity. In psychology he accepts the Avicennian opinion that the human soul is a substance and it is this substance that can become immortal. Like judah Halevi, he restricts prophecy to the Jewish people and the land of Israel. To safeguard human free choice, he is ready to admit that God's knowledge is limited.

Moses Maimonides (1138—1204), renowned physician and outstanding halakhist (legal scholar), was the most prominent figure in medieval Jewish philosophy. Distinguishing between the masses whose understanding rests on the imagination and an intellectual elite who understand by means of the intellect, he presents some of his ideas in popular fashion in his legal writings, the Commentary on the Mishnah, Mishneh Torah, and in some treatises, but his technical exposition is reserved for his Guide of the Perplexed. In formulating his views he drew upon the works of Aristotle and his Hellenistic commentators and upon the writings of Muslims such as al-Fārābī, Avicenna and Avempace.

Maimonides wrote his Guide for a student, Joseph ben Judah, a believing Jew, who, having studied philosophy, had become perplexed by the literal meaning of biblical anthropomorphic and anthropopathic terms predicated of God and by parables appearing in the Bible. To this student Maimonides shows that his perplexities can be resolved by correct interpretation of the vexing terms and parables. The Bible, Maimonides argues, has an exoteric meaning available to everyone and an esoteric meaning reserved for an intellectual elite. The esoteric meaning is described by him as "the science of the Law in its true sense" or the "Secrets of the Law".

Maimonides applies the distinction between exoteric and esoteric teaching to the Guide, informing his reader that he will use contradictions to hide his true views from the masses. This imposed on his work an enigmatic style which has puzzled medieval as well as modern commentators. There were those who interpreted Maimonides as a naturalistic Aristotelian, while there were others who saw him as a

harmonistically inclined philosopher who tried to create a synthesis between religion and philosophy. Thus, for example, according to the naturalists he believed in the eternity of the world, while according to the harmonists he believed in its creation by the divine will.

In accordance with his exegetical programme, Maimonides begins his Guide with an interpretation of biblical terms, showing that even such terms as "to sit" and "to stand", when applied to God, can have a spiritual sense (Guide, 1:1—49). From exegesis, he proceeds to a technical exposition of divine attributes (1:50—60). Invoking the distinction between essential attributes, such as existence, life and wisdom, and accidental attributes, such as anger and mercy, he affirms that the former when predicated of God must be interpreted as negations, the latter as attributes of action.

Before presenting his own discussion of the existence of God, his unity and incorporeality, and of the creation of the world, Maimonides offers a summary and critique of the Kalāmic discussion of these four topics (1:71—6). The thrust of his critique is that the Kalāmic proofs are false because they are based on categories of the imagination rather than on those of the intellect. He prefaces his own proofs with a series of Aristotelian propositions which in his opinion had been demonstrated by the philosophers (2:Introduction). On the basis of these he formulates four proofs for the existence of God: from motion, from the composition of elements, from necessity and contingency, and from potentiality and actuality (causality). All these proofs start with some observable property of the world and argue, respectively, to the existence of a prime mover, a necessarily existent, a first cause – all

identified with God. These proofs of the existence of God lead, in turn, to proofs of his unity and incorporeality (2.1).

Maimonides next discusses the incorporeal intelligences which he identifies with the angels mentioned in the Bible, and, after that, the celestial spheres (2:2—12). Creation of the world is the next major topic (2:13—26). Reviewing at length Aristotelian arguments for the eternity of world, Maimonides asserts that they are not conclusive demonstrations but only dialectical arguments designed to show that the eternity of the world is more plausible than its creation. Agreeing that the question whether the world is eternal or created has only a dialectical solution, Maimonides goes on to argue that creation is the more plausible alternative. His main support comes from a certain disorder in the hierarchy of the celestial spheres and in their motions which, in his opinion, point to creation by the divine will. He finds additional support for this opinion in scriptural teachings. While the world has a beginning in time, it does not have a temporal end (2:27—9).

In his Introduction to the Guide Maimonides incidentally discusses the prophetic experience, likening it to intellectual illumination, but in his more formal presentation he is interested in the psychological processes of the prophet and in his political function (2.2—48). The attainment of prophecy is a natural function; God's role is limited to keeping someone who is qualified from becoming a prophet. To become a prophet requires, in addition to moral virtues, a well-developed intellect and a well- developed imagination. While Maimonides has, generally, a low opinion of the value of the imagination, prophets require it in their political role, namely, to communicate with the masses. Moses' prophecy is

distinguished from that of the other prophets, one distinguishing factor being that Moses brought the Torah, while the other prophets only admonished the people to observe its precepts. The Torah is distinguished from the laws of other nations in that it leads not only to moral but also to intellectual perfection. Maimonides concludes the portion of the Guide devoted to physical and metaphysical topics with an interpretation of the divine chariot described in chapters 1 and 10 of the book of Ezekiel (3:1–7).

Proceeding to practical (moral) philosophy, Maimonides discusses the problem of evil, defining it, in Neoplatonic fashion, as the absence or privation of good. There is more good than evil in the world. Of the three kinds of evil – natural, political and moral – the latter two can be controlled by human beings (3.8—12). From the problem of evil, Maimonides turns to providence. Fie rejects the opinions of the Epicureans that everything is due to chance, of the Aristotelians that there is no individual providence, of the Ash'arites that there is only individual providence, and of the Mu'tazilites that individual providence extends even to animals. His own view, which he identifies with the opinion of the Torah, is that individual providence extends only to human beings and is commensurate with the development of the human intellect. He rejects the doctrine of "sufferings of love" according to which God may afflict human beings in this world in order to reward them in the next. He applies his discussion of providence to the interpretation of the book of Job (3.22—4).

Maimonides rejects the Mu'tazilites' distinction between "rational commandments", based on reason, and "traditional commandments", based on the divine will, maintaining that

all the commandments of the Torah are derived from the wisdom of God. Judgments are distinguished from statutes in that the former are easily accessible to human reason, the latter only with difficulty. The Torah has a twofold purpose: wellbeing of the soul (intellect) and well-being of the body, which consists of the acquisition of the moral and political virtues. Reasons for the moral and political laws can easily be found, but reasons for the many ritual laws are more difficult to discover. Maimonides explains many of them as reactions to pagan practices (3: 25—50). Maimonides concludes the Guide with a discussion of the perfect worship of God and human perfection (3: 51–4).

Virtually absent from the Guide, eschatological themes are discussed by Maimonides in his legal works and in separate treatises. The Messiah, a descendant of the house of David, is an earthly king who will bring the Jews back their land, but whose main task will be to bring peace to the world. The Messiah will die of old age and will be succeeded by his descendants. No cataclysmic event will occur in Messianic times, but the world will continue in its established order. Maimonides accepts the
resurrection of the dead as an article of faith, but he also holds that those resurrected will die again. The final goal is the World to Come, a state in which the intellect exists without a body and is engaged in the contemplation of God. Important for the subsequent development of Jewish philosophy are Maimonides' "Thirteen Principles", an attempt to formulate an official creed which all Jews must accept.

Maimonides' rationalistic interpretation engendered controversies between his followers and their opponents which lasted throughout the thirteenth and early fourteenth

centuries. One of the highlights of these controversies was the ban of Rabbi Solomon ibn Adret, issued in 1305, which prohibited the study of physics and metaphysics before the age of twenty-five. The early thirteenth century saw still some philosophers active in the Islamic world. Among these was Maimonides' son Abraham (1186—1237), who defended the teachings of his father against opponents and who also advocated a Sufi-like Jewish pietism.

The philosophic climate from the thirteenth until the sixteenth century was determined by Maimonides' Guide on the one hand and the numerous writings of Averroes (which had been translated into Hebrew) on the other. Under the influence of Averroes, some Jewish philosophers turned towards a more extreme rationalism, while there were others who defended harmonistic positions of various kinds. There were also philosophers who attempted to harmonize the opinions of Maimonides and Averroes on issues on which these two philosophers differed.

During the thirteenth and the early fourteenth century there arose a number of philosophers who continued the work of the previous period. Samuel ibn Tibbon, member of a family of translators, translated Maimonides' Guide into Hebrew and wrote a number of works of his own. He favoured the allegorical interpretation of the Bible and is said to have held that the Bible was written for the masses. Jacob Anatoli, active at the court of Frederick II, wrote a philosophic commentary on the Bible in which he shows acquaintance with Christian literature and institutions. He favoured the allegorical interpretation of the Bible and preached philosophic sermons publicly, which earned him the anger of the anti-Maimonideans. Shem Tob ben Joseph Falaqera,

author of works on ethics and psychology, wrote a commentary on the Guide in which he cites parallel passages from the works of Islamic philosophers, particularly Averroes. Joseph ibn Caspi, author of biblical commentaries, lexicographic works and works on philosophy, wrote a commentary on the Guide consisting of an exoteric and an esoteric part. Fie accepts doctrines associated with those of Averroes, such as the identity of religion and philosophy, the eternity of the world and the naturalistic interpretation of miracles, but he tries to modify these doctrines in a way that distinguishes him from extreme rationalists.

Hillel ben Samuel (c. 1220—95), one of the first Jewish philosophers active in Italy, translated the Neoplatonic work Liber de causis from Latin into Hebrew and was the author of The Rewards of the Soul. Since he knew Latin, he could draw on the opinions of Christian scholastics. Following the Neoplatonists and Avicenna, he maintains that the soul is an individual substance emanating through the intermediacy of the supernal soul. Using arguments formulated by Aquinas he argues against the Averroean notion that there is only one material or potential intellect for all humans. According to Hillel, each person has his or her own material intellect. He agrees with Muslim and Jewish philosophers that the Active Intellect is the lowest of the celestial intellects. According to Hillel, only the rational part of the soul is immortal and its ultimate happiness consists in union with the Active Intellect. In its immortal state the intellect retains its individuality.

Isaac Albalag (second half of thirteenth century) translated al-Ghazzali's Intentions of the Philosophers into Hebrew and presented his own views in a commentary entitled Correction of the Intentions. A follower of Averroes, who accepted such

doctrines as the eternity of the world, he has been said to hold that there are two coexistent truths, philosophic and prophetic, which can contradict one another. However, he does not cite any instance of such contradictions. His outlook is not completely clear, but it seems to have maintained that speculative truths are the province of philosophy, moral and political guidance of the masses, the province of the Torah.

During the first half of the fourteenth century there arose a debate concerning the freedom of the human will. Abner of Burgos, who in the end converted to Christianity, followed Avicenna in holding that human acts no less than natural occurrences are causally determined. The human will has the ability to choose, but its choices are determined. The divine commandments are among the causes determining the will. Causal determination of the will is also required to safeguard God's omniscience and omnipotence; were human actions undetermined, God could not foreknow them and his power would be limited. Isaac Polgar attacked Abner's determinism, holding that there is a correlation between the human and divine wills such that at the moment that a person wills to do a certain act, God also wills that it should be accomplished. In willing that the act be accomplished, God also knows it. Though this knowledge begins in time, it does not introduce any change in God. Whatever the difficulty of this position, it is clear that Isaac defends the freedom of the will by limiting God's foreknowledge. Moses ben Joshua of Narbonne was another participant in this debate. Fie criticizes Abner, but his position is not too clear. In some passages he seems to agree with Maimonides that God's knowledge extends to particular human acts without determining them, while in other passages he maintains that God's knowledge

extends only to the species not to individuals, thereby safeguarding human freedom. He wrote commentaries on works by Averroes, al-Ghazzāī, and other Muslim philosophers and also a commentary on the Guide. He criticizes Maimonides on certain issues, embracing the stricter Aristotelianism of Averroes.

Levi ben Gerson (1288—1344), known as Gersonides, mathematician, astronomer and biblical commentator, wrote supercommentaries on a number of Averroes' commentaries on Aristotle and was the author of a philosophic work, Book of the Wars of the Lord. Influenced by Averroes, but at times critical of him, Levi discusses topics which, in his opinion, Maimonides had not discussed sufficiently or had explained incorrectly. In the six chapters of his work, Levi discusses immortality, prediction of the future, God's knowledge of individual contingent beings, providence, the celestial bodies, their movers, God, and the creation of the world.

Levi begins his discussion of immortality with an extensive review and critique of various theories concerning the intellect. The Aristotelian philosophers had distinguished between the material or passive intellect, the active intellect and the acquired intellect, but they differed in their conception of these various intellects. Levi rejects the opinions of Tbemistius and Averroes concerning the passive intellect and accepts an opinion close to that of Alexander of Aphrodisias. The passive intellect is a predisposition inhering in the sensitive soul and comes into existence with each individual human being. Under the influence of the Active Intellect, the lowest of the celestial intelligences, the passive intellect is actualized and becomes the acquired intellect. The passive intellect dies with the body, but the acquired intellect

is immortal. Levi holds that the acquired intellect is individual, differing thereby from Averroes for whom it is collective.

Prediction of the future was accepted by Levi as a scientific fact which he undertakes to explain (treatise 2). Terrestrial events, he holds, are caused by the celestial spheres and, since they are thus determined, they can be predicted. However, Levi is not a complete determinist. Holding that human beings are free, he also maintains that those who understand the laws of the celestial bodies can avoid their evil influences. In persons of the well-developed intellect, knowledge of the future results in prophecy, while in those having a well-developed imagination it results in divination and true dreams.

Taking issue with Maimonides, who held that God knows particular contingent beings, Levi maintains that God knows only the orderly processes of nature not individuals. However, he rejects the notion that God's providence extends only to the species or that it extends equally to everyone; it extends only to those human beings who have a well- developed intellect. He agrees with Maimonides that the more a person develops the intellect, the more is he or she subject to divine providence.

Levi also differs from Maimonides in his account of divine attributes (treatise 5.2, 12 and 3.5). Following Averroes, he maintained that they can have positive signification. He held that such essential attributes as existence, life, knowledge have the same meaning when applied to God and man, though they are applied to God primarily and to creatures derivatively.

Levi agrees with Maimonides that Aristotle's arguments for the eternity of the world are not decisive proofs, but they are the best offered so far. However, against Aristotle, Levi offers a number of arguments designed to show that the world was created. He differs from Maimonides and most other Jewish philosophers in holding that the world was created out of a formless matter coexistent with God, thereby denying creation ex nihilo. However, this matter is not a principle paralleling God. Levi also rejects the Neoplatonic theory of emanation. Levi concludes his book with a discussion of miracles and prophecy, which is generally rationalistic in temper.

Of Jewish anti-Aristotelians, Ḥasdai Crescas (d. 1412) was the most significant. Critical of a number of Aristotelian notions, he presents reasoned arguments against them, replacing the rejected notions with notions of his own. In his conception of Judaism, he emphasizes observance of the commandment and love of God rather than intellectual accomplishments. He presents his ideas in his Light of the Lord.

As has been noted, Maimonides formulated thirteen basic principles which, in his opinion, every Jew was obligated to believe. This Maimonidean demand gave rise to a debate lasting the remainder of the Middle Ages and beyond concerning whether there are obligatory beliefs and, if so, whether Maimonides' enumeration is authoritative. Crescas uses the Maimonidean notion of basic principles as the framework of his work, though his enumeration and content differs from that of Maimonides. According to Crescas there are three basic principles of all religions – existence, unity

and incorporeality of God (treatise 1). Next there are six principles required for a belief in the validity of the Torah

God's knowledge of existing things, providence, divine omnipotence, prophecy, human freedom and purpose in the Torah and in the world. Then there are eight true beliefs which every adherent of the Torah must accept – creation of the world, immortality of the soul, reward and punishment, resurrection of the dead, eternity of the Torah, superiority of the prophecy of Moses, efficacy of the Urim and Thummim (worn by the high priest) in predicting the future, and the coming of the Messiah (treatise 3). The book concludes with answers to thirteen questions.

Crescas' critique of Aristotle is found largely in his discussion of twenty-six physical and metaphysical propositions which appear at the beginning of the second part of Maimonides' Giude. Among the Aristotelian notions which Crescas criticizes are those of space, denial of
the existence of a vacuum and of a universe that is finite and unitary. Against these notions Crescas argues for the existence of empty space, the existence of a vacuum, the existence of space beyond the world and that there can exist more than one world. He also differed from the Aristotelians in maintaining that an actual infinite can exist.

Crescas' affirmation that an actual infinite can exist put into question those proofs of the existence of God which depended on the impossibility of the existence of an actual infinite. However, the proof from necessity and contingency does not seem to rely on the disputed principle and so Crescas accepts it. Differing from Maimonides, Crescas maintains that positive attributes can be predicated of God.

God's knowledge, according to Crescas, extends to particulars: he knows the non-existent, and he knows future contingents without removing their contingent character. Crescas' conception of divine omniscience gives a deterministic character to his human philosophy: God's omniscience requires that eveiything he foreknows must come to pass. He tries to mitigate his deterministic stance by holding that the commandments, training and other factors are among the causes influencing the human will and that, despite being determined in one respect, the human will in its own nature is contingent.

After Crescas Jewish philosophy took on a more religious colouration and became more eclectic. Simeon ben Zemah Duran followed the moderate rationalism of Maimonides, but, like Crescas, he maintained that attributes predicated of God can have a positive signification, that immortality comes through observing the divine commandments, and that divine providence extends to all men.

Joseph Albo (d. 1444) was the author of a book tellingly entitled Book of Principles. According to him there are three basic principles required for the existence of a divine law – existence of God, revelation, and reward and punishment. From these there follow eight derivative principles: God's unity, incorporeality, timelessness, and perfection; God's omniscience, prophecy, authentication of the prophet; and individual providence. Finally there are six branches: creation ex nihilo, superiority of the prophecy of Moses, immutability of the Torah, immortality through the observance of the commandments, resurrection of the dead and the coming of the Messiah. Divided into four parts, the Book of Principles begins with the general principles of laws, the three basic

principles and how a genuine divine law can be distinguished from a spurious one. Each of the remaining three parts of the work is devoted to one of the three basic principles. Albo distinguishes among three kinds of law: natural, conventional and divine. Natural law is the same for all persons, times and places; conventional law is ordered by a wise one in accordance with reason; divine law is given by God through a prophet. Only divine law can lead one to true happiness and immortality.

The tension of the age is well illustrated by the Shem Tov family. Shem Tov ben Joseph ibn Shem Tov (c. 1380—1441) attacked not only such extreme rationalists as Albalag and Levi ben Gershom but also Maimonides himself. His son, Joseph ben Shem Tov (d. c. 1480) who greatly admired Aristotle and Maimonides, tried to rehabilitate philosophy by improving its rapport with religious orthodoxy. His son, Shem Tov ben Joseph ibn Shem Tov, continued his father's philosophical interests in a commentary on Maimonides' Guide in which he defends Maimonides against the attacks of Crescas. His contemporary Abraham Shalom also defended Maimonides against the attacks of Crescas. Isaac ben Moses Arama (1420–94) wrote a philosophic-homiletical commentary on the Pentateuch.

Isaac Abrabanel (1467—1508), a statesman, was the last philosopher active in Spain, but, as a result of the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492, ended his life in Italy. Author of a commentary on the Gtiide, he admired Maimonides greatly, but, at the same time, he opposed his rationalistic interpretation of Judaism. Thus he held that prophecy was caused directly by God, not by the active intellect, and in a work devoted to Maimonides' Thirteen Principles he states

that human happiness is attained only by adherence to the commandments of the Torah. Under the influence of Renaissance Platonism, his son Judah Abrabanel, also known as Leone Ebreo, (c. 1460-after 1523) wrote a general philosophic work entitled Dialogues of Love. Earlier, Judah ben Jehiel Messer Leon, an Italian Jew, had written a work on rhetoric in which he drew on Aristotle, Cicero and Quintillian. He also wrote on logic.

Elijah Delmedigo (c. 1460—97), who lectured at the University of Padua, translated works by Averroes from Hebrew into Latin and in his Examination of Religion, which was influenced by Averroes' Decisive Treatise, examines the relation of religion and philosophy. Joseph Delmedigo (1591—1655) still accepted some medieval notions, though he was critical of a number of them; but his philosophy was already heavily influenced by the new theories of Galileo.

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Pines, S. (1967) "Scholasticism after Thomas Aquinas and the Teachings of Hasdai Crescas and his Predecessors", Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1(10): 1–101.

CHAPTER 40

Saadiah Gaon al-Fayyumi

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Born in the Fayyum region of Egypt, Saadiah (882—942C.E.) was the first philosopher of Judaism to write systematic works. He was also a pioneering exegete, grammarian, lexicographer, liturgist and chronologist. Trained in Scripture and rabbinic law, he published the earliest version of his Hebrew-Arabic lexicon, the Egrort, in 913, expanding it in phases, until by 930 it comprised over a thousand entries analysing biblical and post- biblical Hebrew usage.[1] His philosophic interests led him to open a correspondence with Isaac Israeli of Kairouan (c. 855—c. 955), the physician philosopher who, partly influenced by al-Kindl, initiated the tradition of Neoplatonic philosophy among Arabic-speaking Jews and died at over a hundred years of age.[2]

Saadiah's philological expertise led him into controversy, while still in his youth, with the Karaites, a Jewish sect who rejected the Talmud and prided themselves on their biblicism. Karaite exegesis, like Saadiah's, profited from the new, Greek-influenced, inductive methods in grammar and semantics cultivated by the Qur'ān scholars of such cities as Basrah and Kufa. But the rigour and appositeness of his

approach, and his tenacious style of debate, became sources of hardship for him. Earlier responses to the Karaites had been far milder. Saadiah's spirited polemics made him the bête noire of the movement and brought down on him a thousand years of Karaite rebuttals. But the more immediate response, it seems, was not rebuttal but reprisal. Karaite leaders apparently used their influence with the Islamic government to see to it that he was removed from Egypt'

For some seven years he lived the life of an exile in Palestine, Iraq and Syria, at least part of the time separated from his wife and children. During this period he deepened his knowledge of history, philosophy and Scripture. He studied with one Abū Kathīr Yaḥyā al-Kātib of Tiberias, absorbed the ideas of the Jewish philosopher/mutakallim David al-Muqammiṣ[3]
and mastered the techniques of the masoretes of Tiberias, who had brought traditional Jewish scriptural studies to a high pitch. In Saadiah's later writings we can see the influence of Plato, whose dialogues he would have read in Arabic summaries, paraphrases and translations. We also see the formation of his character as a philosopher, his rejection of the notion that all suffering must be deserved and the growing profundity of his recognition of a theme he found both in Plato and in Scripture: that power does not make right, although right does indeed make power.[4]

Saadiah came to prominence in a controversy with Aaron ben Meir, a Jerusalem Rabbanite, who in 921 proposed a slight modification to the conventions used in adjusting the lunar months to the solar year in the traditional Hebrew calendar. The fourteen-minute discrepancy would generate a two-day divergence from the established convention. Stirred by a

desire to restore the hegemony of Palestinian rabbinic authority, Ben Meir pressed for implementation of his view. Other Rabbanites responded with alarm. For the proposal would split the Jewish community. Those who accepted the change would celebrate the Festivals on different days from those who did not. The secular head of Diaspora Jewry, the Exilarch in Baghdad, David ben Zakkai, commissioned a detailed response from Saadiah, who had already urged Ben Meir to withdraw his dissenting view. Relying on astronomy, Scripture and rabbinic law, Saadiah successfully rebutted Ben Meir's claims and was appointed an Alluf or associate of the ancient Talmudic academy of Pumpedita - by now, like its sister academy of Sura, relocated in Baghdad.

In 928 Ben Zakkai made Saadiah head of the Sura Academy, with the traditional title of Gaon, although Saadiah was an outsider to the small circle of Baghdad Jewish leaders and apparently of humble birth. Ben Zakkai was not fazed but only piqued when warned that the young scholar seemed to fear no one. He admired Saadiah's lucid polemics against the Karaites and against the anti-biblical writer ḥīwī al-Balkhī. Clearly the energetic new Gaon would pump fresh life into the moribund academy - which Saadiah vigorously set out to do. But by 930 the two men were seriously at odds: Saadiah had refused to sign a testamentary judgment in which Ben Zakkai had awarded himself a fee from the proceeds, in contravention of what Saadiah knew to be the norms of Jewish law. Saadiah's counterpart, the Gaon of Pumpedita, undercut him by agreeing to sign. The Exilarch's son, sent to expostulate with Saadiah, lost his temper and raised his hand against him. He was promptly expelled from the Gaon's court. Saadiah was placed under a ban. He answered in kind and named Ben Zakkai's brother as the Exilarch's successor.

Factions formed, riots ensued, Saadiah himself was set upon and beaten. A jealous rival, Sarjado, offered 10, 000 dinars to the caliph to settle the matter in the Exilarch's favour. But the caliph rejected the bribe and assigned the celebrated Alī ibn ʿĪsā, "the good vizier" (859–946),
to adjudicate the case. ʿAī restored Saadiah to office and was seeking to reconcile the rival leaders when the caliph was killed in a coup d'état and ʿAlī government prorogued. When the new and impecunious Caliph al- Qāhir ascended the throne, Saadiah was deposed and his counter-Exilarch banished to the frontier province of Khurasan.

In time the divisions grew so oppressive that Sarjado's father-in-law moved to make peace, an aim consummated in a moving ceremony of reconciliation in 937. The "anti-Gaon" was pensioned off, the anathemas withdrawn and Saadiah restored to office with full approval of the new caliph al-Rāḍī and the restored vizier ʿAlī ibn ʿĪsā. Only Sarjado remained unreconciled, and even he reached the office of Gaon of Pumpedita, after Ben Zakkai's death in 940 and Saadiah's in 942.

Deprived of judicial authority for seven years, much as he pictures Job as deposed from judicial office following the slanders of a detractor, Saadiah pursued his scholarship and philosophy. In 931 he wrote a commentary on the Kabbalistic Book of Creation, adopting a cosmology grounded in science rather than Kabbalah. Like the Muslim savants of his day, he knows the earth's circumference, so he has no use for the flat-earth cosmology of the Book of Creation and refuses to find support for it in Scripture.[5] He also rejects the fanciful ascription of the work to Abraham. Philosophy and history, he urges, are the proper work of human beings; God will aid

us in these endeavours. For Scripture rightly describes God as "disclosing deep things" (Job 12: 22).

By 933 Saadiah completed his chief philosophic work, showcasing and putting to frequent use an explicit epistemology. His realism regarding nature and its Creator rests on a constructive, rationalistic empiricism. His rationalism is buttressed by a subdued Platonism like al-Kindī's. And his idea of experience is enriched by a chastened traditionalism, which relies on trustworthy ancestors for their histories and hermeneutics but does not treat tradition as a source of knowledge independent of reason, direct experience and rational inference from the two.[6] Saadiah finds as little use for the Neoplatonic Active Intellect as he does for the Kabbalistic alphabets of creation. Yet his naturalism and rationalism do not exclude all trace of mysticism. Prophets and the blessed, he learns, derive comfort and inspiration from the "created light" of God[7] By calling it created Saadiah excludes any incarnation of God's own reality and so avoids chris- tological and ḥuhūlī views. But the immanence of divine action is not excluded. Indeed, Saadiah anchors what will become a central Kabbalistic tenet, reciprocity between the human and the divine. For he makes it a practice to redirect scriptural ascriptions to God of emotions like yearning, satisfaction and joy, readily treating such predicates as transferred epithets whose logical subject is a human being.[8] Fie thus broaches a theme of intimacy well rooted in the ancient idea that one can bless God (1 Chronicles 29: 10). The theme finds consummate expression, perhaps, in

the liturgical phrase applied to Jacob, and thus to all Israel: "whom Thou didst love with thine own love and rejoice with thine own joy".[9] Some seven centuries later Spinoza still uses

the same idea in explaining how the Infinite can care for finite individuals.[10]

Saadiah's works were philological, liturgical, exegetical, juridical, historical, polemical and philosophic. Besides the Egron, there were twelve books on language, which survive only in fragmentary form; among them the earliest known Hebrew grammar.[11] A work on the hapax legomena of the Hebrew Bible is extant. In liturgy, Saadiah prepared the first scholarly Siddur or Hebrew prayerbook. Of his liturgical poetry, most is lost, since he included only the shortest items in his Siddur. His didactic poem on the Ten Commandments and his penitential and petitionary prayers found in the Cairo Genizah, the repository of disused texts stored in the Cairo synagogue, convey the flavour: learned and highly allusive writing of the philological type favoured in his day, not only in Hebrew sacred poetry but in Arabic secular verse and even prose. Poetry, it was understood, was the chief fruit of philological learning and the chief proof of literary taste and discernment. Saadiah's prose prayers are more straightforward, and his Arabic prayers and translations of Hebrew prayers reveal the range of his expressive powers. Maimonides, who generally frowns on Geonic liturgical work, recommends Saadiah's prayers. And Ibn Ezra commends Saadiah for avoiding the obscurity and the homiletic overgrowth and metaphoric excess that beset the liturgical writing of his day.

In biblical studies, Saadiah's didactic poem on the frequency of every letter in the Torah is a masoretic tour de force; its practical use is in preserving the integrity of the text. His Arabic Bible translations, accompanied with commentaries, diffused the interpreted biblical text not only among

Arabic-speaking Jews but among Muslims, who had long relied on oral testimonies (Isrāīliyyāt) to explicate the numerous Qur'ānic allusions to Biblical figures and events. Unlike many Jewish writers, who wrote Arabic in Hebrew characters, Saadiah's translations apparently used Arabic script, as testified by the textual tradition and by a manuscript preserved in the Vatican. Each book was given a thematic title and an introduction explaining its problematics and complementing Saadiah's linear commentary – allowing the higher order argument to emerge clearly from the biblical poetry and narrative. Unlike the familiar commentaries of the European exegete Rashi (1040–1105), Saadiah's are overtly philosophical and typically fight shy of midrashic embroideries.

Of his halakhic contributions, only two survive: a commentary on the thirteen Talmudic rules of juridical inference, and a work on inheritance law, one of ten Arabic monographs he wrote on rabbinic law. His lost works, of which fragments survive in the Genizah, include a methodological introduction to the study of the Talmud, Mishnaic and Talmudic
commentaries and numerous responsa. Here, as in his exegedcal work, thematic introductions and conceptual organization are trademarks that vividly display the role of philosophy in structuring Saadiah's thought and writing.

Beyond his polemics against Karaism and ḥīwī al-Balkhī, Saadiah wrote other controversial works. And, beyond his polemic on the calendar, he wrote a handbook on the calendrical rules. But his Kitāb al-Ta'rīkh, or Chronology, goes much further, summarizing the world's history from the creation, so as to set out a diachronic framework for all

historic events. As Franz Rosenthal has shown, the work was part of a movement towards the linearization of historiography ongoing in Saadiah's time and carried on afterwards by such writers as the polymath al-Bïrünl.[12]

There are three things readers will want to know about Saadiah's philosophical chef d'oeuvre, its title, how it is put together and its philosophical contents. Commonly known by the Hebrew title, Sefer Emunot ve-De'ot, loosely rendered, "The Book of Beliefs and Opinions", [13] the work is more accurately entitled Kitāb al-Mukhlār fïï-āmānāt uia'l- i'tiqādāt in Arabic, "The Book of Critically Chosen Beliefs and Convictions".[14] Like Aristotle, and indeed like Plato in the Dialogues, Saadiah surveys and critiques rival views on each of the issues he discusses, settling on a particular view to be accepted. As in Kalām, he arrays arguments, both scriptural and rational, against the rejected positions and answers objections to the view adopted. The outcome is a set of critically tested doctrines, congruent with the demands of reason and the religious canon. As in Kalām, the enterprise is not merely apologetic, since the doctrines that survive this process cannot remain unaffected by the demands of critical scrutiny. Indeed, Saadiah's book is not merely dialectical, since it seeks exhaustive typologies of options as to each issue it considers and tries to argue apodeictically for the conclusions it defends. These theses are elicited inductively, but also creatively, from a vast scriptural knowledge, and from the supporting hermeneutic of rabbinic tradition. But for that very reason, if no other, Scripture can be used here only to establish the authenticity of the conclusions reached, not their authority.[15] And the sense of Scripture is constantly open to reinterpretation if the apparent meaning cannot meet the stringent criteria of reason, experience and coherence.[16]

The Kitdb al-Mukhlār comprises ten "treatises" on the problems of theology. The Introduction lays out Saadiah's epistemological standards, ascribing our self-knowledge to God's benevolence and our knowledge of the world to that God-given consciousness. It treats doubt as a natural concomitant of our finitude[17] but advises that doubt can be overcome by subduing its causes, ignorance and impatience. It argues against subjectivism and explains that since our opinions do not determine reality, disbelief does not exempt us from our divinely imposed obligations.

Saadiah defends perceptual knowledge against scepticism and shows that the methods necessary to render perceptions worthy of trust lead us inevitably to general theories and thus to the sciences. Only the superstitious forbid speculation, fearing for the faith. But such fears are as irrational as the fantasy of the ignorant that whoever travels to India will grow rich. Saadiah, we observe, has little patience for obscurantism. In the Islamic milieu, however, with its leaven of philosophical traditions, scepticism and relativism are more serious and immediate threats to Saadiah's quest than the dogmatism that will later attack Jewish philosophy in Christian Europe. Thus Saadiah's repeated reversion to epistemology.

The first of his "treatises" defends creation as the bulwark of theism, warning against attempts to explain the ultimate Cause sought and found by reason in terms of the more familiar sensory phenomena, circularly reducing God to the very facts which creation itself has been called upon to explain. The revolution of the heavens proves the cosmos finite; and its finitude, compositeness and articulation, the temporality of all accidents in nature, the inexhaustibility of an infinite duration, the inability of finite particulars to cause

their own existence, all prove the world created. The Platonizing idea of formatio mundi is rejected. For if God merely imparted ordered motion to a pre-existent matter, the existence of that matter would remain to be explained. Only an absolute explanation is acceptable, and only creatio ex nihilo, by an absolute act of grace, the work of an infinite Creator, provides that explanation. True, nothing comes from nothing, but this precisely is the reason for ascribing the world's existence to the creative act of God. For the world has not sustained itself for ever and could not create itself. Ascription of its creation to God is the most reasonable explanation of its existence.

Neoplatonic attempts to derive the physical from the ideal bring the physical and the spiritual no closer together than does the sheer creationism of Scripture. Such efforts seem to Saadiah to explain the obscure by the more obscure, especially in view of the problems about the independent existence of Platonic "spiritual beings". The classic difficulties of dualism beset the notion that God produced bodies out of himself. Appeals to the four basic qualities, hot and cold, wet and dry, may seem more empirical and naturalistic. But we have no perceptual knowledge of these four qualities in their pure state; and, even if we knew that they are real, we would still need some way of explaining their combining and separating. Every materialistic naturalism, Saadiah argues tellingly, hides a tendency to confuse Cause with effect, the product with the Maker. Our aim, Saadiah argues, planting his staff firmly in the soil of rationalism, while keeping one eye cocked in the direction of the occasionalists, is not the denial of causality but the recognition that proximate causes are just a part of the story we pursue: we want to know

the ultimate cause behind the intermediate causes we find in the study of nature.

Turning to the Aristotelian ascription of the order of nature to the motion of the heavens, Saadiah capitalizes on his own naturalism by emphasizing that circular motion is natural to the heavenly bodies. It is thus part of what we are seeking to explain. He fires a passing shot at the strange Aristotelian doctrine that sun is not really hot, appealing, in the spirit of Philoponus, to the contrary evidence of the senses.[18] Saadiah rejects the eternity of the heavens, partly on the grounds that the requisite fifth element of Aristotelian cosmology, if it did exist, would be invisible to us, having nothing in common with our make-up and so having no way of affecting our perception. He also argues that the revolutions of the spheres could not increase or have ratios to one another (as we see that they do) if their number were already infinite.[19] Against the idea that chance is the ultimate cause, Saadiah argues not only that chance could not produce a complex and stable system, but also that the concept of chance can be defined only relative to a natural order; so it is incoherent to treat chance as the ultimate principle of the world. The idea that nature has always been as we observe it, by contrast, is an unwittingly a prioristic extrapolation of empiric experience and thus either unfounded or incoherent. Here Saadiah establishes the line of argument that Maimonides will use against Aristotelian eternalism, rejecting the projection of the familiar patterns of natural events into metaphysical necessities.

The second treatise argues for God's unity based on his incorporeality as the absolute creator, on his polar opposition to the world's multiplicity, and on the economy of

explanations: one cause is sufficient, more would be redundant, and would require proof beyond the sole proof that we have, the act of creation. Dualists and polytheists have no way of limiting the divinities they must posit, once they begin making a god of every element or principle in nature. If God needed help or co-operation to make or rule the world, he'd be powerless; and if some other god were not his aide but free to contradict him, then the two would either limit one another's power, making neither worthy of divinity, or one could overrule another, so that the same object, for example, could be given contradictory characteristics. Only with a single God do we have a coherent cosmos.

As for God's attributes, his life, power, and knowledge are known from the act of creation, as is his transcendent goodness. And these attributes, contrary to Christian attempts to derive multiple persons from the differentiation of the attributes, all represent a single reality and differ only in the varied attempts of human language to capture different aspects of what we understand by God. They no more represent different beings than do the usages of Scripture that sometimes call God Elohim and
sometimes use the Tetragrammaton. The eternal logos of Christian theology has no more basis than the Neoplatonic hypostases, and God's words in Genesis, "let us make", are no allusion to the Trinity, nor even an apostrophe to heavenly counsellors, as Midrashic homilies would make them, but simply the we of majesty, well established in Hebrew usage.

Like the soul, or fire or wind, the subtlest of things can be the most powerful, and such is the case with God, whose real nature is simplex and transcends all ten categories of Aristotle, which are his work. All assignments of diverse

attributes to him are figures, comparable to the well-known biblical anthropomorphisms, used dialectically "to build from the ground up", but not to be taken literally. Every biblical anthropomorphism can be resolved to the idea it projects; and the ascription of loves and hates to God, paradigmatically, resolves to a normative intention, expressing prescription or proscription. God's speech is a created sound, and God's "back", as seen by Moses, is his created glory.

God created the world, as Saadiah argues in the third treatise, to allow human beings to earn blessedness. For earned desert (as Kant will later argue) is far more precious than merely bestowed bliss. But this entails real risks - trials of our mettle, accountability for our choices, and sufferings that may be warnings or chastisements, or may be the "sufferings of love", whose sole purpose, although we cannot know it when we undergo them, is enhancement of our reward, through recompense for preserving our integrity in their midst. The chief vehicle of our test, for which the world was created, is the system of our obligations. The first of these are well known to reason - as in our recognition of the wrongfulness of causing bloodshed or pain, fornicating, stealing or lying. But the balance are revealed, so as to enhance the reward of those who observe them.

The rational commandments are not derivable, say from hedonism, or indeed from any merely empiric naturalism. For, Saadiah argues, hedonism will make the same act, say a theft, both good and evil, since it brings pain to the victim and pleasure to the thief. Hence the moral relativism of the moral empiricist. But if we recognize the need to differentiate ourselves from animals (and so do not fornicate), if we understand that misrepresentation is a grotesque perversion of

creation (and so do not lie) and if we see that bloodshed thwarts fulfilment of God's plan (not by blocking God's intent but by violating the potentials God imparted to be realized), then we discover the values underlying some of the precepts of the law. We can even find the rational basis for the ritual commandments, those which would have had no strict standing as obligations had they not been commanded. For reason demands a response to generosity

requital, if the giver is our peer; gratitude, if our superior. And all of the ritual commandments of the law, although they may bear with them benefits like rest (in the case of the Sabbath) or purity (in the case of the
Levitical laws), serve in the end as expressions of gratitude. The ritual laws, then, are distinguished from the rational not in the sense that they serve no rational purpose but only in that their purpose alone does not determine their material content and modalities – as indeed is the case with any law, although the thematics of such norms as those prohibiting bloodshed may seem clear enough to allow reason (at least broadly) to specify their concrete prescriptions.[20] Prophets are thus needed to spell out God's specific requirements and expectations, and to define the implementation of the norms proposed by reason itself. Miracles corroborate the claims of prophets, and tradition preserves their message, vouching for its authenticity, but also interpreting it. For, just as reason is prior to revelation, tradition is posterior to it; no one of the three can or should stand alone.

In his fourth treatise, Saadiah argues that humanity is the purpose of creation, standing at the centre of the cosmos, endowed with moral freedom. A human body may be small, but the soul is vaster than the cosmos, for human knowledge

embraces it. But the world was created in the human interest, not for human pleasure or to sate human desires. Life is short, but the choices made during the brief period when choice is possible are of absolute significance and transcendent consequence. The brevity of life itself shows this to us, since nothing can be undone when life is over. Our bodies are the best that could be given to a mortal being; but even our maladies teach us of our frailty and warn us of the retribution that is to come. For, with any growth, the dead wood must be cut and cleared away, and that is the function of capital punishment in this world and hellfire in the next, where the very light that is a comfort to the blessed becomes a torment to the damned.[21] God does not interfere with human choices, but imparts the capacity to act, which must include the capacity to choose, although our own choices may effect the diminution of our degrees of freedom. For what God forms is humanity's underlying nature. Our character is our own work, and it is only hyperbole when we read that God controls the heart, simply meaning that everyone acts as God intended - that is, freely.

We are judged, as the fifth treatise teaches, by the preponderance of our good and evil actions, whose inner moral worth, beneath all semblances of external behaviour, God knows irrefragably. Here Saadiah, anticipating Miskawayh (c. 936—1030), begins the task of reconciling the virtue ethics of the Greeks with the command ethics of Scripture. He argues, in consonance with Aristotle, that although every act is significant, one act is not our character. Thus penitence is possible, Saadiah argues, fusing the Socratic motion of the soul with the rabbinic and prophetic idea of repentance. Penitence is the fulfilment of regret, just as action in general is the fulfilment of intent. Yet the

transcendent significance of our choices does not allow redemption of every act: once our

choices have sealed our character they have sealed our destiny, and penitence itself becomes impossible. Prayer goes nowhere when it is insincere or intransigent, and, in the same way, it is bootless in one who is actively neglectful of the Torah or the poor, or mired in embezzlement or impurity. Three sins will not be expiated: slander, misleading others and retention of ill-gotten gains. Three merits are rewarded in this world, even for those who reject the service of God: filial piety (Exodus 20: 12), kindness to animals (Deuteronomy 22: 7) and honest dealing

(Deuteronomy 25: 15). Like Maimonides after him, Saadiah uses the biblical prooftexts to establish not merely the commandment (and its reward) but the generalized theme underlying each of the biblical precepts: thus, not simply releasing the mother bird, but kindness to animals; not simply fair weights and measures, but honest dealing.

The soul, Saadiah argues in the sixth treatise, is created on completion of the body with which it is united. Neither soul nor body is impure, and sin results only from our own wrong choices. Like the heavenly spheres, the soul draws its luminosity from God, gaining life and consciousness, which allow it to animate a body that would otherwise be passive and inert. Once its destiny is complete, it returns to God, who made it and allowed it to act through the intermediacy of the body. When the tally of souls God destined for existence is complete, all are reunited with their bodies and judged. Those whose lives were cut short or who suffered undeservedly are recompensed for their suffering, not excluding the slain

infants of the ancient Israelite conquest, and even any animals that suffered unduly in the cult of Temple sacrifice.[22]

The soul is not an accident – thus not a function of the body or an adjunct of the blood, not a self-moving number, an entelechy, an epiphenomenon of the body's organization or a juncture of the senses. For an accident could not be the object of creation. It is not made of fire or air, for it lacks their qualities; and it is not of two parts locatable in the head and heart, for the soul would be what enables these to interact. Nor are there three separate souls, as in the theory suggested (but later withdrawn) by Plato. Rather, appetite, ire and reason are faculties or powers of one soul, and it is called alive in virtue of the immortality to which it is heir. The demands of theodicy, Saadiah argues, may seem to give colour to the theory of metempsychosis. But understanding that God's grace and justice assure us of recompense for all unrequited sufferings (and of retribution for all unpunished wrongs, such as the sins of mass murderers), deflates the appeal of the otherwise rather implausible notion of transmigration. The resemblance of humans to the animals whose bodies they are sometimes thought to occupy is only superficial; for the soul is specific to the organic form it animates. And when Moses says that the covenant is made "not only with ye alone … but also with him that standeth present with us today before the Lord our God, and
with him that is not here with us this day" (Deuteronomy 29: 14), he does not support but undermines metempsychosis. For the verse "explicitly differentiates those who are present from those who are absent".[23]

In the seventh, eighth and ninth treatises, Saadiah differentiates resurrection, redemption and requital.

Resurrection is the reuniting of body and soul here in the world. All monotheists will share in this rebirth, along with all the righteous and repentant of Israel. But Israel will have the leading role, because of her long sufferings. God did not include resurrection in the first redemption, the exodus from Egypt, but promised it for the future, because Israel's present bondage is heavier than the slavery of Egypt. Redemption is the vindication in history of God's promises to Israel: the ingathering of her exiles, the return of prophecy, which will enliven even ordinary persons, and the restoration of the house of David. But the ultimate reward and punishment are otherworldly, as they must be, in view of the transcendent character of human goodness and suffering, sin and cruelty.

In this world, Saadiah argues, following the Epicurean doctrine of Muḥammaā ibn Zakariyya al-Rāzī, pains outweigh pleasures, [24] the wicked often triumph, and the sufferings of innocents are not requited. These facts alone suffice to show us that God's mercy will make good our losses and remedy life's defects transcendently.[25] Were it not for future recompense and requital, surely fire and brimstone would have fallen on the earth long ago, as it did on Sodom and Gomorrah. But the hereafter is not an earthly place. Only metaphorically is it called Tofet or Eden. Time itself will be transmuted in the new Heaven, of which Isaiah spoke. But the most striking transcendence will be moral. Our trials over, there will be no more need or chance for moral decisions, but the infinite consequence of the decisions we made in the temporal world will be played out to eternity, in all the varying degrees of intensity, from bliss to agony, in accordance with our deserts.

Saadiah's final treatise deals with the good life, which he defines in moral terms. For, he argues, we do not know the reward of the ritual commandments even in this life; still less in the Hereafter. His moral doctrine is pluralistic and humanistic, based on acceptance of the plurality of our nature and interests. Like Plato, Saadiah believes that the good life is the balancing of these interests. But he does not follow Plato's breakdown of our interests into those of the intellectual, appetitive and spirited aspects of the soul. Rather, using his distinctive inductive method, he elicits the list of interests from Scripture, and from his own insights into human psychology. The interests he discovers are abstinence, eating and drinking, sex, passionate or romantic love, wealth, progeny, agrarian and urban development, longevity, power, vengeance, knowledge, worship and rest. Each of these (even vengeance in its way) is in some sense a good. But none of them, as their devotees might imagine, provides a

fulfilling or satisfying life. To make any one of them the be-all and end- all of our existence is to cheat ourselves of the rest, and examination of the characters and lives of those who follow any one of these to the exclusion of the rest shows us clearly the inadequacy of each without the support and leaven of the rest.

Thus, denial is a valuable discipline, but the pure ascetic is a misanthropic and embittered anchorite, whose isolation feeds his envy and deprives him of the piety he may have sought. Food and drink sustain the body and the mind and foster reproduction, but the gourmand is bloated and unhealthy, selfish, foggy-headed and licentious. Sex is a unique delight, countering melancholy, cementing social relations, and well accepted by the prophets, who enjoyed it without shame, as when Jacob said to Laban: "Give me my wife!" (Genesis 29:

21). But the lascivious are unhealthy and typically adulterous. So the erotic lifestyle has social as well as hygienic detriments. Passionate love has its place, in marriage, sustaining the marital relationship, as suggested in the words: "a lovely deer, a graceful doe, let her breasts delight thee always; with her love be thou ever ravished" (Proverbs 5: 19); but as a way of life it is an absurd obsession, a form of slavery, often a source of regret or hatred (2 Samuel 13: 15), even when it finds its goal. Progeny perpetuate the world and give solace and joy. One cannot overlook the natalism of the prophets. But offspring are also a hardship and a source of anxiety to their parents; they are not sufficient to give meaning to our existence. Development is useful and satisfying; but taken beyond the needs it is meant to satisfy and made our overriding goal, it distracts one from the intellectual and spiritual and becomes a source of anxiety, compulsiveness and greed. Longevity too is a means to an end, allowing us to attain our spiritual as well as our worldly goals. But the valetudinarian, who has made survival his raison d'être, must know that even the vigorous often die young, and that there are higher goals than maintenance of one's body.

Power or authority, like the other aims, is not an evil but a good, necessary to the ordering of the world; but, if made all-sufficient, its tendency to promote arrogance and injustice makes it self-destructive and transforms a ruler's ebullience from overconfidence to the terror of the tyrant, the doubts, suspicions and hatred of humanity. Saadiah finds allusions to the tyrannical, in Proverbs (12: 15 and 18: 1, 26: 12) and in Isaiah (10: 12 -13), where the self-will and arrogance of the proud are shown to be the seeds of their destruction. The treatment points up Saadiah's method. For the prooftexts are

scriptural, and the theme, indeed, is authentically prophetic, voiced in the distinctive irony of the prophets, who speak of wrongdoers as intentionally working their own destruction. But the argument, if spelled out in more conceptual but no less dramatic terms, is Plato's.[26]

Vengeance is the most specious of prirna facie goods in Saadiah's estimation. True, it gives a momentary satisfaction, but the activities of scheming it engenders cause anxiety and foster ruthlessness. It begets only hatred, so it cannot be made a way of life, since universal hatred would mean universal destruction. Like our other motives, the urge for vengeance has a place in God's plan, to spur us on in the pursuit of justice; but vengeance itself is not justice. Like all other prima facie goods, it becomes an actual good only when mitigated and controlled by the rest. Knowledge is, of course, a good. But Saadiah, like Rāzī, [27] believes that even the quest for knowledge can be excessive; pursued to the exclusion of all else, our appetite for knowledge would ruin our health and even dull our mind. Worship is fitting, as an expression of our gratitude to God for the gift of existence; but, taken as an exclusive goal, it is as self-undermining as the pursuit of knowledge (which would bring to an end all knowledge if the avid scholar did not stop to propagate his kind). Saadiah takes particular aim at the pietists who idealize leaving one's fate in God's hands as a display of their absolute trust, a theme well established among Christian, Muslim and Jewish pietists. True, one should acknowledge God's infiniteness, but that requires the recognition that God acts through human efforts, which may therefore not be abandoned in quietist zeal. Even the choice of a life of worship is an act, not a submission; and the notion that one does God's will by a life of study, worship

and contemplation alone neglects those obligations which can be fulfilled only in the world

for example the commandment to keep just weights and measures. For what meaning can honest dealing have in one who eschews all social engagement and economic activity?[28] Full observance of God's commands requires life in the world. So, while the pietists' aspirations may be noble, their neglect of their God-given bodies and of their offspring is not to be condoned.

Finally, rest is needful to our nourishment and growth and is prescribed for sabbaths and holy days; but rest, Saadiah argues, is possible and valuable only through work; laziness is destructive. Rest is prescribed for us, Saadiah argues, to impart a taste of the World to Come. But – to sum up Saadiah's ethics in a sentence - our obligations are not given us for that world but for this one. Our task is to find the proper balance among all the goods pertinent to our nature as finite, rational beings in the world. The aim of the Torah is to lay out a way of life that enables us to do so, denying no good proper to our nature, but allowing none to usurp the place of reason.

Saadiah closes his account of ethics and underscores his integrative pluralism with a brief discussion of aesthetics, an area rarely explored among medieval thinkers. Blending, he argues, is the key to beauty. Tastes, colours, sounds and even smells are beautiful when duly mingled; rough, unpleasant, even injurious, when left simple. All of the goods – and he acknowledges that more prima facie goods are known than he has listed, giving further examples from Scripture - have their proper place and context. And this can be found, if one is not

simply seeking rationales for established appetites and desires but rather inquiring after the truth with humility and sincerity.

NOTES

1 See N. Allony (ed.) Sa'adya Ga'on, Ha-Egron: Kitàb usid al-shi'r al-'ibrdnt (Jerusalem, 1969).

2 See Alexander Altmann and Samuel Stern, Isaac Israeli: a Neoplatonic Philosopher of the Early Tenth Century (Oxford, 1958).

3 See Dâwüd ibn al-Muqammis, Twenty Chapters Çlshrün maqâla), ed. and trans. Sarah Stroumsa (Leiden, 1989).

4 See his comments on Job 34 in The Book of Theodicy, trans. L. E. Goodman (New Haven, 1988): 358—61.

5 See on Job 5: 10, 10: 22 and my note 15: 236–8.

6 Few medieval authors articulate systematic epistemologies; the familiar parts of philosophy are logic, physics and metaphysics. For Saadiah's epistemology, see Abraham Joshua Heschel, The Quest for Certainty in Saadia's Philosophy (New York, 1944); Georges Vajda, "Autour de la théorie de la connaissance chez Saadia", Revue des études juives, 126 (1967); and Israel Efros, Studies in Medieval Jewish Philosophy (New York, 1974): 7—36.

7 See Efros: 61–4.

8 See on Exodus 31: 17; on Job 7: 21, 14: 15, trans. Goodman: 211, 257 and 261 n. 10.

9 "She-me'ahavatkha she-ahavta oto, u-mesimhatkha she-samahta bo …", see P. Birnbaum, Ha-Siddur ha-Shalem (New York, 1949): 23.

10 Ethics,5.20, 32, 35, 36.

11 See Solomon Skoss, Saadia Gaon, the Earliest Hebreiv Grammarian (Philadelphia, 1955).

12 Franz Rosenthal, A History of Muslim Historiography (Leiden, 1968): 133—50.

13 See Samuel Rosenblatt, trans., The Book of Beliefs and Opinions (New Haven, 1948).

14 In his edition, Joseph Kafih writes: "In every manuscript of the original version of our teacher, the title is The Book of Beliefs and Convictions, and so it was translated [in 1186] by R. Judah Ibn Tibbon [the father of Samuel Ibn Tibbon], For the text he had before him was that of an early version. But in codex M [Bodleian MS Pococke 148], which is in my view the text of our teacher's final revision, the title is given as I have written it [Kitdb al-Mukhlār fi-â)nânât urn I i'tiqâdât], And rightly so. For our teacher did not set out simply to gather a compendium of beliefs and convictions, but to demonstrate which beliefs were worthy of choice and which convictions were true in his estimation." j. Kafih, ed. with modern Hebrew translation, Sefer ha-Nivhar ba-Ernunot ve-De'ot (Jerusalem, 1970): 1 n. 1; cf. preface, pp. 6—9: "I do not have any doubt that this is the title in his final

revision" (p. 9). For the rendering "beliefs and convictions", see Efros: 31–2.

15

The intellectual atmosphere of tenth-century Baghdad is vividly displayed in the account of Abu 'Umar, a Muslim visitor, who told with horror of the theological discussions he witnessed there: "At the first meeting I attended, there were present not only members of all the orthodox and unorthodox [Muslim] sects, but unbelievers - Magians, materialists, atheists, Jews, Christians - unbelievers of every sort. Each sect had its own chief, to defend the views he professed, and whenever one of these leaders entered the hall, all would rise respectfully, and none would take his seat until his chief was seated. Soon the hall was filled to overflowing, and when everyone seemed to have arrived, one of the unbelievers rose to speak: 'We are gathered to reason together, ' he said, 'and you all know the rules. You Muslims may not oppose us with arguments from your Book or on the authority of your prophet. For we do not believe in either. Each of us must therefore limit himself to arguments based on human reason.' All applauded these words. You can understand, said Abu 'Umar, that after hearing such things I did not go back to that gathering. I was invited to another, and I went, but it was the same sort of disgusting display." By then Abu 'Umar knew better than to attend theological debates. Al-Humaydi, quoted in M. Ventura, La Philosopbie de Saadia Gaon (Paris, 1934): 63–4, from Journal asiatique (1853): 93.

16 For the role of coherence in Saadiah's hermeneutical practice, see L. E. Goodman, "Saadiah Gaon's Interpretive Technique in Translating the Book of Job", in Translating

Scripture (Philadelphia, 1990), Jewish Quarterly Review supplement: 47–76.

17 Heschel is mistaken in supposing (p. 28) that Saadiah "did not accord any value to doubt ": doubt is an essential component of the authenticity of our existence. Without it, Saadiah argues, our existence would be trivialized and God's act of creation would become pointless. See Saadiah on Job 38, The Book of Theodicy. 382—4; 125—6; cf. my discussion, pp. 93—119.

18 See Aristotle, Meteorology, 1.3.340a. 1—3; cf. Ibn Tufayl, Hayy ibn Yaqzdji, trans. L. E. Goodman (Boston, 1972; repr. Los Angeles, 1984): 104. For the naturalism of Philoponus as to the heavens, see S. Sambursky, The Physical World of Late Antiquity (London, 1962): 154–75; Richard Sorabji (ed.) LHjiloponus and the Rejection of Aristotelian Science (Ithaca, 1987); and, for the argument that the heavens are indeed fiery and not "quintessential", Philoponus, Against Aristotle on the Eternity of the World, trans. Christian Wildbcrg (Ithaca, 1987), esp. fragments 58—9, pp. 73–5.

19 Saadiah writes: "You can see that the cycle of the eastern movement of the highest sphere is completed once in a day and a night, whereas the western movement of the fixed stars takes a hundred years to traverse one degree, so that it would complete its revolution in 36, 000 years." Yet if the world is eternal, both have completed the same number of revolutions! Kitdb al-Mukhlār, 1.3, trans. after Rosenblatt: 72—3; cf. al-Ghazzāī, The Incoherence of the Philosophers, = Averroes, Tahdfut al-tahdjut, ed. Bouyges (Beirut, 1930): 16, trans. Simon Van Den Bergh as The Incoherence of the Incoherence (London, 1954): 9, and Van Den Bergh's note on this

passage, 2:7, citing the argument from Philoponus, in Simplicius on Physics, Theta 1, ed. Diels, 1179: 15—27, and its use in Ibn Hazm, ShahrastanI, and others.

20 See Kitdb al-Mukhlār, 9.2; L. E. Goodman, "Rational Law/Ritual Law", in D. Frank (ed.) Ritual and Chosenness (Albany, 1993).

21
Kitdb al-Mukhlār, 9:5.

22 See Kitdb al-Mukhlār, 3:10, trans. Rosenblatt: 175.

23 Kitdb al-Mukhlār, 6:8, trans. Rosenblatt: 261 = Kafih: 216.

24 See L. E, Goodman, "Razi's Psychology", Philosophical Forum, 4 (1972): 26—48, where RazT's acceptance of metempsychosis is also discussed.

25 See L. E. Goodman, "Saadya Gaon on the Human Condition", Jewish Quarterly Review, n.s., 67 (1976): 23–9.

26 See Republic, 8.559—9.588.

27 See RazI, Philosophical Life, trans. A. J. Arberry, The Asiatic Review (1949): 703–13.

28 The same Plotinus who told his followers that they must "Cut away everything" zealously pursued his fiduciary responsibilities on behalf of the economic interests of the children entrusted to him as his wards. Does one who withdraws from the world thereby cease all economic activity, or does one only carry it on by proxy? Saadiah

reasons that one cannot fulfil the commandment to keep just weights and measures unless one actually takes responsibility for the economic dimensions of one's acts and character.

CHAPTER 41

Ibn Gabirol

Irene Lancaster

Solomon ben Judah ibn Gabirol is regarded as the father of Jewish Neoplatonic thought in Spain. Chronologically, he is the second Jewish Neoplatonic philosopher after Isaac Israeli (North Africa, 850–932 or 955). He is also regarded as the first Jewish philosopher in Spain. He was born in Malaga in 1021/2, but lived in Saragossa, where he received an extremely sound secular as well as religious education. He died in Valencia either between 1054 and 1058 or, according to some sources, in 1 070.

In addition to founding a Spanish school of philosophy he is also regarded as one of the two" greatest post-biblical Hebrew poets of all time, and certainly the supreme liturgist, his religious masterpieces being prominently featured in the Oriental Sephardi Prayer Book to this day. His greatest work, the Hebrew poem-prayer, Keter Malkhut, or "Crown of the Kingdom", a title taken from a phrase in the biblical Book of Esther, contains many of his philosophical ideas. These will be explored later.

It is generally considered that he was known by the Jewish world for his poetry, written in Hebrew, but that his philosophical work, devoid of any allusion to Judaism, and written in Arabic, was neglected by his co-religionists and interpreted by posterity as having been written by either a Muslim or a Christian. It is undoubtedly true that his purely philosophical Arabic work, fragments of which remain in a Latin translation, entitled Fons vitae, was thought to be written by a Muslim or Christian named Avicebrol, Avicebron or Avencebrol. The most widely used Latin translation of this work was the twelfth-century Toledan version of Dominicus Gundissalinus, archdeacon of Segovia. He was helped in his translation by a converted Jew, ibn Daud, known as Johannes Hispalensis, or John of Spain.

This version was used by the Christian schools. It was only in 1846 that the great French Jewish scholar, Solomon Munk, identified the
apparently Muslim or Christian philosophy of Fons vitae as having the same author as the emotional and fervent religious and love poetry of the Jew, Ibn Gabirol. Munk made his identification on the basis of his discovery of Hebrew fragments of Fons vitae, translated by Shem Tov ben Joseph Falaquera in the thirteenth century, and known as Mekor Ḧayyim.

However, there are clues that people must have known that Fons vitae was written by a Jew. As Loewe has pointed out (1989: 39—40), the book was known from the twelfth century by the title of Mekor Ḧayyim, a phrase emanating from Psalm 36: 10 (9). Various medieval commentators associated Ibn Gabirol explicitly with Mekor Ḧayyim. What is more, the work itself alludes to the Hebrew mystical text, the Sefer

Yeẓirah, a treatise extolling the supremacy of the Hebrew letters, and therefore unlikely to have been read, let alone quoted, by contemporary Muslims or Christians.

The fact that Fons vitae was originally written in Arabic does not necessarily point to non-Jewish authorship, as the vast majority of medieval Jewish philosophers living under Islam wrote in Arabic, retaining Hebrew solely for poetry. As the first Jewish philosopher in Spain, Ibn Gabirol was to set a trend in this respect in that country, but he had already been anticipated by the Jews of Babylon such as Saadiah Gaon (882—942) and of course Isaac Israeli.

Far more interesting is why Ibn Gabirol should have written two such superficially disparate works, which on closer examination bear a marked philosophical resemblance to one another. It is known that he had a turbulent life, plagued by self-loathing and self-doubt. On the other hand he displayed a certain amount of arrogance, which is often the hallmark of the insecure. It is possible that Fons vitae was an attempt on his part to purge himself, in at least one of his literary works, of all the emotional and religious fervour he felt and embodied, and indeed translated into the numerous poems and prayers he wrote and which have never been surpassed.

If this is the case, it is supremely ironic that Fons vitae quickly grew out of favour with Jewish readers, attracting instead the Christian Scholastics of later centuries. Another factor is that Neoplatonism lost popularity in Jewish circles with the rise of Aristotelianism, which reached its peak in the monumental work of Maimonides (1135–1204). However, it should be pointed out that even Maimonides' purely philosophical work, the Guide of the Perplexed, dealt with

religious, and specifically Jewish, matters of detail, despite having an Aristotelian-inspired framework.

Fons vitae appeared to be a dry, philosophical treatise. Keter Malkhut, however, was never deemed a philosophical work. It included plenty of Jewish allusions, and therefore maintained its popularity, particularly in Oriental Sephardi circles, despite positing a Neoplatonic structure which subsumes religious Judaism within it.

Having described Ibn Gabirol as a Neoplatonist, it is pertinent to point out that he was an extremely original thinker. Firstly, unlike most Neoplatonists, he assumes a universal matter which underlies all reality, and which is non-corporeal. Secondly, he does not describe multiplicity as emerging or emanating from unity, but regards matter and form as two different principles, following immediately from God. Sometimes, however, he appears to be suggesting that matter itself is God.

It might be thought that the concept of creation would account for the notion of duality, but not in Ibn Gabirol's system. Instead he talks of Divine Will. By doing this, Ibn Gabirol is attempting - not totally successfully – to inject a voluntaristic element into the inevitability or even fatalism of orthodox Neoplatonism. However, he does not make it clear exactly what relation matter and form have with Divine Will. He usually speaks of Will's relationship to form, without mentioning its relationship to matter. Sometimes he appears to conflate the idea of Will and matter! However, as part of the Godhead, Will must surely precede both matter and form in Ibn Gabirol's hierarchy, although he does at times speak of Will as being a created entity. What is difficult to reconcile is

the idea that matter can be both the essence of things whilst also constituting mere potentiality.

The relationship of the Divine Will to the Divine Essence poses a particular problem to Jewish, as opposed to Christian, thought. It is impossible, from a purely religious Jewish viewpoint, that there should be an entity, such as the Divine Will, which is simultaneously identical with God as well as a mediator between Him and his creation. Ibn Gabirol tries to solve this difficulty by positing two aspects of Divine Will, one equated with God, and the other a functional entity, separate from Him. It is highly likely that Christians were attracted to Ibn Gabirol's idea of the Will as mediator between God and creation just as they were influenced by Philo's term, logos, which was interpreted by the Church as the second person in the Trinity.

For Jews, and presumably Muslims, it was far more tricky adequately to bridge the gap between Creator and created. Ultimately the only satisfactory solution to this problem was expressed by the Jewish mystics, many of whom were greatly influenced by Ibn Gabirol. They found a language capable of expressing the "stages" in the descent from the divine to the human, without offending the religious orthodoxy which saw God as "one" in every aspect: that is, unique, indivisible and perfect.

Let us now try and analyse a core verse of Ibn Gabirol's masterpiece, Keter Malkhut, in order to understand his philosophical thought in more detail. Verse 9 (my translation) states of God that:

Thou art wise; and wisdom, the fount of life, flows from Thee.

It is Thy particular wisdom which all humanity is too brutish to know.

Thou art wise, prior to all priority, and wisdom was by Thy side, a nurseling.

Thou art wise and did not learn from any beside Thyself; nor didst Thou acquire wisdom save from Thyself.

Thou art wise; and from Thy wisdom Thou emanated an appointed Will, and made it like a worker and a craftsman.

To draw out the dimension of existence from the void, just as light is drawn out which comes from the eye.

And to pump from the source of light without a bucket, and to achieve everything without a vessel.

To hew, engrave, purify and refine.

It called to the void, which was then split asunder; to existence, and it became engrossed; to the universe, and it was hammered out.

And it measured the heavens with a span, its hand coupling the tent of the spheres;

With loops of potentiality it ties the curtains of the created;

Its power reaching the very hem of the last and least of creation.

"The uttermost edge of the curtain in the coupling."

The first line of this verse immediately points to a relationship between Keter Malkhut and Forts vitae. Ibn Gabirol calls Wisdom, an aspect of God, "the fount of life". The phrase is an allusion to Psalm 36: 10 (9). The biblical verse states: "For with Thee is the fountain of life: in Thy light shall we see light." The "light" analogy appears again later on in the stanza.

Ibn Gabirol considers the Godhead as separate from the Wisdom which flows from it. We cannot "know" the Godhead itself. It is transcendent. Neither, however, can we "know" God's Wisdom per se, because of our animal nature. Ibn Gabirol is at pains to stress the utter priority of God, and the self-sufficiency of Flis "Wisdom".

Flowever God allowed the Will to emanate through his Wisdom. Note that this verb is active, implying positive volition on God's part. The Will did not just "emerge"; it was activated by God Himself through His Wisdom. Loewe (1989: 124, 180, n. 40) translates the Hebrew word ḥayfeẓ as "prime matter", equating it with the idea of "object of delight". It is true that ḥayfeẓ has many meanings, including desire, will, pleasure, delight, matter and object. If this interpretation is correct, it becomes even more difficult to differentiate between Will and matter, as was discussed at the beginning of the chapter.

Will is then described as the agent which brings being or reality into existence from the void. A comparison is made with light coming from the eye, reminding us of the allusion to Psalm 36: 10 (9) mentioned above. It must be stressed however that Ibn Gabirol is not referring to the transcendent God, when mentioning the "eye", but to forces emanating from Him.

The Will is supposed to mediate directly between Wisdom and the world, "without a vessel". Reference is then made indirectly to a passage from the mystical Sefer Yeẓirah, in which six modes of operation are described through which the world is finally created by permutation and combination of the Hebrew letters. Ibn Gabirol mentions four modes: hewing, engraving, purifying and refining. The Will appears to take the role of God Himself in our present text, and the letters are not mentioned at all. Will then "calls to" the void, existence and the universe in turn. By "calling to" (or "naming"?), the cosmos is finally set in motion.

More biblical references are made, specifically to Isaiah 40: 12 and Exodus 26: 4. With sublime poetic imagination Ibn Gabirol uses a metaphor based on the construction of the Tabernacle, known in Hebrew as mishkan, or "indwelling". The Tabernacle was used as a meeting-point of spiritual significance to the Children of Israel in the wilderness. Ibn Gabirol employs vocabulary similar to that used in Exodus to describe the construction of the mishkan in order to demonstrate how the "hand" or "power" of the Will arranges, through linkage, the series of emanations from Prime Supernal Matter down to the lowest form of matter in our world.

The choice of imagery is no mere poetic embellishment however. By choosing the Tabernacle or "indwelling" as his focus, he implies that God has a part in the whole process of creation, from Will downwards. The word mishkan comes from the same root as the word shekhinah, usually translated as the female presence of God. It is this presence which accompanies the Children of Israel in their exile outside the Promised Land. In this poem, however, the exile is not only a journey from our home to another and alien land, but also a descent from our spiritual home, the soul, to our animal nature. For Ibn Gabirol, as for many Jewish poet-philosophers, exile was a spiritual journey, as well as a physical one. Few, if any, have expressed this supreme predicament as powerfully and beautifully as Ibn Gabirol, or attempted so masterfully to embark on the return journey.

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CHAPTER 42

Judah Halevi

Barry Kogan

❦

The spread of Aristotelian texts and ideas into Islamic Spain during the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries was generally greeted with serious and sympathetic interest by Jewish intellectuals associated with the courtier class. Although Judah ben Samuel Halevi (c. 1075—1141 C.E.) probably shared this attitude at first, he eventually distinguished himself as one of the earliest and most perceptive critics of both philosophic and religious forms of rationalism in an effort to defend the claims of traditional Judaism.

Born in Tudela to a wealthy and learned family, Halevi was educated as most others in his class in biblical and rabbinic sources, Arabic poetry, philosophy and medicine. Already in his youth, he displayed remarkable poetic gifts, and his travels throughout Andalusia afforded him the opportunity to enjoy the pleasures of courtly life, close friendships with Jewish notables and patronage. But following renewed Christian efforts to reconquer southern Spain and the Almoravid invasion, designed to consolidate Muslim control of the area (1090), Halevi became increasingly alarmed at the

disruption that these events brought to Jewish communities in Andalusia. While his poetry continued to address all of the conventional secular and religious themes of his day – the pleasures of friendship and courtly life, passionate love, loss and bereavement, the grandeur of creation, the significance of the Holy Days, and the quest for communion with God – he now began to create a new genre, the songs of Zion. These express both his own and his people's yearning for renewal in their ancestral homeland. It is clear that this yearning intensified with the upheavals that Jewish communities suffered both in Spain and in Palestine, in the wake of the First Crusade.

Sensing that the external threat to Spanish Jewish life in particular was matched by growing internal disarray, which he traced to the waning of religious commitment and adherence to rabbinic authority, he began
to question ever more strongly some of the main cultural preoccupations of the courtier class, particularly the prestige of philosophical speculation and rational accounts of religion. Subsequently, the quest for personal religious experience and communion with God became one of the principal themes of both his poetry and his theology, while full observance of traditional rabbinic norms in their natural setting, the Land of Israel, is depicted as the one sure way to achieve it.

Hlalevi's only theological work, The Book of the Khazars or Kuzari, develops these and related themes in a five-part dialogue between a pagan Khazar king, who converts to Judaism, and the Jewish sage who persuades and then instructs him. Although the story is based on historical facts (Dunlop (1967): 89—170), Halevi reworked it to answer contemporary critics of Judaism, "the despised religion",

among the adherents of philosophy, Christianity, Islam and Karaism. Investigation of Halevi's correspondence confirms that he drafted an early version of the book in response to the questions of a Karaite scholar in Christian Spain, but he later repudiated it. Thus, it is unclear whether any part of the original draft appears in the present version (Goitein (1974): 337—9).

The story opens as the king dreams that an angel tells him that his intention is pleasing to God but that his behaviour is not. His initial response is to observe the rites of his pagan religion with greater zeal, but the recurrence of the dream convinces him that a thoroughgoing inquiry is necessary to identify and ultimately adopt the one way of life that is pleasing to God. Accordingly, he invites a philosopher and then representatives of Christianity and Islam to instruct him.

The philosopher responds by denying the presuppositions of the king's dream. God, as the perfect and changeless First Cause, feels neither satisfaction nor dissatisfaction with the king's behaviour. Indeed, he has no knowledge of it, since knowledge of this kind and affective responses would introduce mutability and imperfection into God. For the same reason, God is not to be regarded as the Creator of either the universe or the individuals in it, except in a metaphorical way, as the ultimate cause of everything that arises in the world through natural causation. Nevertheless, he adds that people may successfully perfect themselves by extending their knowledge of the eternal system of necessary causes and effects emanating from God and ultimately attain union with the Active Intellect, the source of all things knowable in the sublunar world. The outcome of such union would be to live the most rational life possible and even receive prophecy and

true dreams. The main prerequisite is to purify one's soul by cultivating the moral virtues and knowledge of the sciences. But it makes no difference to reason what regimen of worship and action one adopts. The king should either accept one of the rational nomoi of the philosophers or fashion one of his own. The traditional religions are pointedly omitted (Kuzari, 1.1). While most of the philosopher's

views were conventional for any Aristotelian, the emphasis on the real possibility of union with the Active Intellect was distinctive of Ibn Bajjah (d. 1138), who was Halevi's contemporary and the principal exponent of Aristotelianism in Spain at the time (Altmann (1969): 73—107; Pines (1980): 210–17).

The king finds the philosopher's speech persuasive but unsatisfying because it offers no specific praxis and does not demonstrably produce even what it promises. Hence, he turns to the Christian and Muslim scholars. While their presentations directly address his practical concerns, he finds the evidence they offer either logically or empirically faulty. Relying on the analogy of natural scientists trying to explain extraordinary phenomena, the king indicates that he regards only public, empirical and direct evidence as conclusive. Once experience is well attested, however unlikely or contrary to expectation, it must be accepted. Theory has the secondary role of showing how what seemed unlikely is actually plausible (Kuzari, 1.4–6).

Because both scholars had admitted that their beliefs were based on God's well-attested revelation to Israel, the king finally turns to a Jewish scholar. The rabbi declares his faith in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who led the Israelites out of Egypt with miracles and gave them His law.

He also carefully distinguishes this belief from that of political religions, which appeal to God as the Creator of the universe known to all men. Overcoming his initial scepticism, the king eventually finds the rabbi's account of the public, empirical character of the Sinaitic revelation and of the Jewish tradition which embodies it superior to the claims of both the Christian and Muslim scholars and the philosophers. As the rabbi notes, philosophers infer the existence and nature of God from some aspect of the world-order, as if one could determine whether India had a king by studying the virtues of its people. Such speculation is tenuous and inconclusive at best and certainly evokes no reverence for its object. However, the arrival of the king's own envoy with gifts and medicines procurable only in India and a letter signed by the king not only establishes his existence and character but actually makes the recipient beholden to him. This is precisely what the miracles of Moses and his bringing of the Torah represent. If reliable and unbroken tradition is equivalent to experience, which the rabbi twice insists it is (Kuzari, 1.19–25, 5.14—end), it is neither tenuous nor inconclusive, even if it is confined to the Children of Israel. For, were it not for their preferred status, there would have been no Torah (Kuzari, 2.56).

To account for the facts of Israel's prophetic experience, the sage introduces a theory that draws upon Shi'ite and especially Isma ill views (Pines (1980): 167—210). He argues that above the traditional hierarchy of inorganic matter, plants, animals and human beings distinguished by reason, there is an elect core of humanity (safioah, lubb), who constitute
an essentially separate order endowed with prophetic and even miraculous powers (Kuzari, 1.31—43; 2.14, 24). This

group belongs to the amr ilahi, Halevi's multivalent term for diverse aspects of divine immanence. Depending on the context, the term signifies (1) a supra-rational order or dispensation of things in which God's will directly operates, (2) an endowment or gift conferred on the elect and transmitted by heredity, like providence, prophecy and the inner capacity to apprehend them, and (3) the orders or commandments, which constitute the divine way of life that God enjoins upon the elect. Once the king is convinced that there is no access to the divine order except by adhering to the commandments, he prepares for conversion (Kuzari, 1.98, 2.1).

For Halevi, whatever belongs to this divine order is ultimately superior to the domain of the intellect and beyond the capacity of reason to explain adequately. In this respect, his defence of Judaism agrees in broad outline with the first of the two methods by which dialectical theology defends religion according to al-Fārābī, namely, that religion provides knowledge of divine mysteries which only divine intellects rather than human intellects can comprehend (Lerner and Mahdi (1963): 27—9). Halevi diverges from this method by denying that revealed knowledge must be rejected by the intellect to be considered divine and also by giving primacy to actions over opinions. For example, he contends that the arguments for the eternity of the universe and for its temporal creation are evenly balanced (and thus rationally inconclusive). Aristotle opted for eternity only because the Greeks lacked a reliable divine tradition about the beginning and because he (and presumably Greeks generally) preferred the abstract speculations pointing to eternity. Here Halevi hints that all philosophers are influenced to a greater or lesser extent by their national cultures. Had Aristotle possessed a

reliable tradition like Israel's, he would have employed his arguments on behalf of creation. It is axiomatic that the Torah teaches nothing contrary to sense experience or demonstration, even in upholding creation. If objective reason eventually proved that matter and other worlds existed before this one, it would still not undermine the divine teaching that this world had a temporal beginning (Kuzari, 1.62—7).

With respect to actions, it is the pious of Israel who truly conform to the highest order of reality because they possess the one law deriving from the divine order. Accordingly, they observe both the rational commandments (like honouring parents and doing justice) and the divine, traditional commandments (governing distinctly religious observance) heard only through revelation. The former precede the latter both in nature and in time and also serve as preambles for them. Still, the rational laws constitute at most a moral minimum for any group to survive, even a band of thieves. The divine laws, by contrast, perfect the rational ones, by determining their proper applications and producing
spiritual effects in the soul that reason cannot explain or replicate (Kuzari, 2.48; 3.7, 11).

Functionally, the divine order of things assumes most of the tasks the philosophers ascribe to the Active Intellect. It is always on the lookout for whoever or whatever is capable of receiving its emanation. It wisely determines the forms of all sublunar particulars and likewise bestows prophecy on those who are suitably disposed (Davidson 1972). The requisite disposition depends upon (1) possession of the prophetic faculty, or inner eye, a notion which Halevi adapts from Shi'ite sources and al- Ghazzali (Pines (1980): 172—92; Baneth (1981): 192—5; Watt (1953): 63—8); (2) dwelling in

the Land of Israel, the most temperate of the seven climates, a notion which Halevi appropriates from Arabiyyah propaganda for his own purposes (Altmann (1944); Aloni (1980)); and (3) full observance of the Torah's commandments, which cultivates the capacity to receive revelation (Kuzari, 4.3; 2.9–24). Those who receive it enjoy a more accurate and comprehensive picture of reality than those who merely actualize their intellect as an instrument of apprehension. Interestingly, Halevi twice quotes the Platonic Socrates with obvious approval when he admits to the limits of philosophical knowledge. "O fellow citizens, I do not deny this divine wisdom of yours. 1 say rather that I do not understand it. I am wise only with respect to human wisdom" (Kuzari, 4.13; 5.14; cf. Apology, 20d—e).

In the final treatise of the Kuzari, the rabbi displays a Socratic scepticism in his exposition and critique of both dialectical theology (Kalām) and Aristotelian (now Avicennian) philosophy. He depicts Kalām as primarily an apologetic technique that seeks to instil by argument the kind of faith which the pious have naturally, but it usually leads only to more doubt and difference of opinion (Kuzari, 5.15—18). As for philosophy, what has been conclusively proved belongs mainly to logic and mathematics. In other fields, its claims are largely undemonstrated and often not even tenable. In physics, for example, the philosopher's account of the elements goes far beyond what empirical evidence warrants and is sometimes directly at odds with it. The evidence supports only the four primary qualities of hotness, coldness, wetness and dryness. In psychology and epistemology, the theory of the actualized intellect as a separate substance is beset by unresolvable problems concerning personal identity, the effect of material factors on thought and the prerequisites

for conjunction or union with the Active Intellect. In metaphysics, philosophic accounts of the causes of celestial motion and the theory of emanation are so hopelessly weak and riddled with doubts that no two philosophers agree on such questions. He concludes that the most we can know regarding metaphysics is that God governs material things by determining their natural forms (Kuzari, 5.2—14, 19—21). Because the philosophers have such little wisdom to offer about these great questions,

and virtually no wisdom at all to offer about the particulars of living everyday life, what is called for is a return to the divine wisdom embodied in Israel's ancestral tradition, the Torah. But as the rabbi recognizes, a wholehearted turn towards that tradition can be made complete only by a return to Israel's ancestral homeland as well. Accordingly, as the dialogue closes, the rabbi prepares to follow the logic of his position and departs for the Holy Land.

Halevi was clearly the first medieval Jewish thinker to appreciate fully the challenge posed to Judaism by Aristotelian rationalism and to address it in a philosophically literate way. The concluding portions of the Kuzari make clear that he was increasingly sceptical about the pretensions of philosophy in general and those of Aristotelianism in particular, although he admired and practised the kind of critical scepticism associated with Socrates in the early Platonic dialogues. He wrote as a non-philosophic mutakallim, arguing in largely empirical terms, to defend both the opinions and practices of his ancestral faith. In doing so, he produced what has become the classic theological defence of Judaism as a religion of revealed practice which is superior to reason but none the less compatible with it, once reason's limits have been recognized.

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CHAPTER 43

Maimonides

Alexander Broadie

✦❖✦

Rabbi Moses ben Maimon, known as Maimonides, was born in Cordoba in 1135 or 1138[1].' In 1148 the town was captured by the AJmohads and the Maimon family fled. It is unclear where they spent the following twelve years, but in 1160 they arrived in the Moroccan town of Fez, an Almohad centre and therefore a strange choice for the family. Some four or five years later they journeyed to the land of Israel where they stayed for six months, before travelling on to Fustat in Egypt where the family finally settled. Maimonides was the greatest rabbinic leader of his era, and his influence on current Jewish philosophy and theology is pervasive. His writings include a large body of rabbinic responsa, many medical treatises and three major works. They are the Commentary on the Mishnah (written in Arabic), the Mishneh Torah (in Hebrew), and The Guide of the Perplexed (in Arabic). The first two of these are primarily concerned with legal matters, though both contain philosophical material. The third work, however, is mainly philosophical, and set the agenda for practically all subsequent Jewish philosophy.

Nevertheless Maimonides fits into the history of Islamic philosophy, for he was steeped in Islamic philosophy and was taken up and studied by later Islamic philosophers.[2] The depth of the Islamic influence is clearly expressed in a letter he wrote to Samuel ibn Tibbon, who translated the Guide into Hebrew.[3] After stating that one must study the Aristotelian commentaries of Alexander of Aphrodisias, Themistius and Ibn Rushd (Averroes), he goes on: "I tell you: as for works on logic, one should only study the writings of Abu Nasr al-Fārābī. All his writings are faultlessly excellent. One ought to study and understand them. For he is a great man. Though the works of Avicenna may give rise to objections and are not as [good] as those of AbuNasr [al-Fārābī], AbuBakr al-Sa igh [Ibn Bajjah] was also a great philosopher, and all his writings are of a high standard." Of course this is not to imply that Maimonides was not a Jewish philosopher,

any more than Aquinas' profound dependence upon Jewish and Islamic sources implies that Aquinas was not in the fullest sense a Christian philosopher. The vast array of rabbinic prooftexts quoted in the Guide prevent it being anything other than a specifically Jewish book.[4]

The Guide, which deals with a wide range of issues in the philosophy of religion, has the appearance of disorder, which is strange since the Mishneh Torah shows Maimonides to have been one of the great systematizes of the Middle Ages.[5] There are several partial explanations for this appearance, one of which is that the lack of order adopted by Maimonides was due to his concern to hinder certain people grasping the sense that he sought to convey to those for whom the Guide was written, namely devout Jews who were also sophisticated philosophers. It is therefore possible to see the Guide as both exoteric and esoteric, its covert message being the one that

represents Maimonides' real position. This view has been much in vogue recently, due to the influence of Leo Strauss, [6] and there is no doubt that there is textual warrant for it. But it is only part of a much larger story, and perhaps not even a part that gets to the heart of the matter.

The Guide is centrally concerned with our knowledge of God. In that area there is no need to obfuscate in order to conceal the truth from the vulgar. On the contrary, the problem is to understand anything. The awesomeness of this task was to the front of Maimonides' mind when writing the introduction to the Guide. He makes frequent reference to the sheer difficulty of being intelligible; and the problem of intelligibility is rooted in his difficulty in understanding what he is trying to expound. Thus he writes: "You should not think that these great secrets are fully and completely known to anyone among us. They are not. But sometimes truth flashes out to us so that we think that it is day, and then matter and habit in their various forms conceal it so that we find ourselves again in an obscure night almost as we were at first." [7] He returns to this point:

Know that whenever one of the perfect wishes to mention, either orally or in writing, something that he understands of these secrets, according to the degree of his perfection, he is unable to explain with complete clarity and coherence even the portion that he has apprehended, as he could with the other sciences whose teaching is generally recognized. Rather there will befall him when teaching another that which he has undergone when learning himself. I mean to say that the subject matter will appear, flash, and then be hidden again, as though this were the nature of this subject matter. [8]

It is in this light that we have to understand him when he lists seven kinds of cause of contradiction or contrariety, and states that examples of two of these kinds are to be found in the Guide. In both cases it

is the obscurity of the topic that forces him to adopt contradiction and contrariety as a technique of exposition. Thus he describes the seventh cause in these terms: "In speaking about very obscure matters it is necessary to conceal some parts and to disclose others. Sometimes in the case of certain dicta this necessity requires that the discussion proceed on the basis of a certain premiss, whereas in another place necessity requires that the discussion proceed on the basis of another premiss contradicting the first one."[9] These are the words of a man prepared to use any device in an attempt to come as close as he can to understanding what we have no right to think we ever could understand.

The verse "The Lord our God, the Lord is one" is central to Maimonides' thought. He holds that there are two senses in which God is one. He is one, firstly, in the sense that there is no other God, and, secondly, in the sense that He is not a many-in-one; there is no multiplicity in Him. The two senses are expressed here: "God is one, neither two nor more, but a unity, unlike other unities in the universe which may have many parts or like a body which is divided into parts."[10] These two senses are linked, for if God had many attributes, each of course being divine, each would have to be regarded as a distinct God. Thus multiplicity of divine attributes implies polytheism. Indeed, on Maimonides' view there cannot be even one divine attribute, for if God had an attribute it would be possible to distinguish between God who had the attribute and the attribute possessed by Him. Hence if God has just one attribute He is not one, but two. Even less

can we think of God as having many attributes. But if so, how can we say anything of Him?

Nevertheless the Bible tells us many things about God, that He is good, powerful and so on, which surely implies that He has many attributes. Maimonides' reply, in line with a long philosophical tradition, is that these terms are not to be understood literally of God. Their signification is of the negative kind. To say that God is good is to deny that He is bad; to say that He is alive is to deny that He is dead. The Bible, therefore, does not after all ascribe many attributes to God. For if to say that God is wise is to say only that He is not ignorant, then ascribing wisdom to God is in effect a way of not ascribing anything to Him, any more than we ascribe anything to Him by denying that He is foolish or weak.

Maimonides is not reporting what ordinary people mean when they ascribe attributes to God – he is telling us what affirmative terms actually do mean when predicated of God in the Bible. Of course, if no affirmative terms, literally understood, are truly predicable of God, a question arises concerning why some affirmative terms, and not others, are predicated of Him. If literally God is no more good than He is bad, why is it more appropriate to say that He is good? Maimonides' answer is that the multitude must be taught that God has attributes which the
multitude believe to be the highest perfections. Otherwise they would come to believe that there are deficiencies in God.

If we can know only what God is not, then what counts as knowledge of God? We cannot know God literally to be good, since He is not, nor literally to be wise, since He is not, and so on. Surely there is nothing we can know Him literally

to be; in which case we know nothing about Him. If so, even a person of the deepest religious insight must be totally ignorant of God. In one sense this is accepted by Maimonides, in another not. If to be ignorant of something is to know nothing of what it is, then on Maimonides' view we are all equally ignorant of God. Nevertheless the person who thinks that God is corporeal knows less about God than does the person who knows that God is incorporeal, and to think that God's wisdom is the same sort of thing as human wisdom is to know less about God than does the person who knows that God is not wise in the way in which humans are.

Thus everyone is ignorant of God and also there are degrees of knowledge of Him. Maimonides affirms: "You come nearer to an apprehension of Him, may He be exalted, with every increase in the negations regarding Him; and you come nearer that apprehension than he who does not negate with regard to Him that which, according to what has been demonstrated to you, ought to be negated."[11]

Maimonides applies his negative theology to the concept of divine existence. Following Avicenna closely, he held that the existence of a thing whose existence has a cause is an accident attaching to the existent.[12] Thus it is a contingent fact regarding any created thing that it exists. It does not exist by its very nature for if its nature is to exist then it could not not exist. But God's existence cannot be contingent. Since Fie has no attribute He has no accidental attribute, and hence His existence cannot be an accident. But though we understand the existence of created things we do not understand God's. Therefore in the way in which we understand the term "exist" it is more accurate to deny God's existence than to affirm it: "the term 'existence' can only be applied equivocally to His

existence and to that of things other than He".[13] A prooftext is provided: "In this sense it is also said: 'But My face shall not be seen' (Exodus 33: 23), meaning that the true reality of My existence as it veritably is cannot be grasped."[14]

But on the basis of twenty-five propositions[15] which Maimonides takes to have been demonstrated by Aristotle and the Peripatetic school, he proves that an unmoved first mover, which he identifies with God, exists. We know, or think we do, what it is for ordinary physical objects to exist. In expounding that knowledge we refer characteristically to spatial, temporal and various sensible properties of the objects. But how is God's existence to be characterized? Part of Maimonides' answer is that in God existence is not an accident superadded to His essence for

otherwise God would be a contingent being – which He cannot be, for since His essence and existence are identical with each other it is His nature to be.

The term Maimonides uses to describe the kind of existence here at issue is "necessary". The difference between necessary and contingent existence is such that they have the name "existence" in common and nothing else. Maimonides believed that we can have no insight into the nature of necessary existence. Our knowledge of it is purely negative, for what we know of it is that, whatever contingent existence is, necessary existence is not like that.

Within Maimonides' system the conceptual point at which necessary and contingent existence meet is creation. There are notorious problems concerning Maimonides' doctrine on God's creation of the world, [16] one of which concerns the identification of the position, among several that he sets out,

that he actually holds. He describes three positions, those of (1) the Law of Moses, (2) Plato and (3) Aristotle. The first of these is:

that the world as a whole – I mean to say, every existent other than God, may He be exalted – was brought into existence by God after having been purely and absolutely nonexistent, and that God, may He be exalted, had existed alone, and nothing else - neither an angel nor a sphere nor what subsists within the sphere. Afterwards, through His will and His volition, He brought into existence out of nothing all the beings as they are, time itself being one of the created things.[17]'

That there was no time before the creation of the world is proved by the fact that time depends for its existence upon the existence of motion (for it is the measure of motion), and there is no motion unless there is something in motion. And ex hypothec before the creation nothing was in motion, lime therefore is consequent upon what is moved. Hence it is only by misunderstanding the nature of time that those who subscribe to the foregoing view of creation believe that God existed before the creation and then created.

According to the second view, God created the world from an antecedent matter co-eternal with Himself. The relation is similar to that between the potter and the clay, except that we have to think here of an eternal potter moulding at will eternal clay so that the clay has, at His will, first one form and then another. Among the things subject in this way to generation and passing-away are heaven and earth. The similarity between this position and the one presented in Plato's Tinmens is evident.

The third view, which is Aristotelian, affirms, as does the second, that matter is eternal. But the third view includes this doctrine: "it would be an impossibility that will should change in God or a new volition arise in Him".[18] This position contradicts the one ascribed to Plato; Aristotle's God does not resemble a potter forming things at will from the available matter. In particular Aristotle held that heaven will not cease, nor will time or motion. Not motion, for any motion is preceded by its passage to actuality, and that passage must itself be produced by some other motion. And not time, for every motion occurs in time.

Maimonides believed that the chief threat to the Mosaic teaching on the creation is provided by Aristotle, and his tactic is to defuse this threat by showing that it has been misunderstood, for, though Aristotle argued for the eternity of the world, he knew those arguments not to be demonstrations.

Aristotle employs proofs based upon the nature of what exists, "a nature that has attained stability, is perfect, and has achieved actuality". The reason these proofs are not demonstrations is that they assume that this nature resembles the state it was in while in the state of being generated.[19] Given the system of natural laws, each thing is generated and then passes away by the process of matter sloughing off one form and acquiring another; there is no natural generation and passing away except by this means. But Maimonides held that the natural world as a whole, including its mechanism for generation and passing away, may not have been generated in accordance with that same mechanism. The fact that things in the natural order are thus generated is irrelevant to the question of how the order itself came to be. It leaves open the possibility that God created the world ex nihilo, a doctrine

proclaimed by the prophets, and formulated by Maimonides as follows: "it [the world] is not subject to generation as are the things generated from it, nor to passing-away as are the things that pass away into it, but is created from nothing. And its Creator may, if He wishes to do so, render it entirely and absolutely nonexistent."[20]

Yet if God created the world ex nihilo in time, this surely implies that in God there was a passage from potency to act, and yet we cannot suppose God to have potency, for He is pure act.[21] But Maimonides rejects this argument, for it is based upon the false premiss that God is composed of matter and form. Whenever such a composite being acts there is within it a transition from potency to act. But this account of what it is to act cannot apply to an absolutely simple being, one containing no substrate of matter taking on one form and then another. A divine act therefore cannot involve a transition from potency. It is in precisely this way, as involving no transition from potency, that the Active Intellect acts, according to al-Fārābī.[22] It has to be concluded that the term "act" is predicated equivocally of God's acts and of human acts.

Maimonides' case on behalf of the doctrine of creation ex nihilo is not merely that the case for the eternity of the natural order has not been demonstrated. For he discusses the evidence in the light of Aristotelian
celestial physics, which he believes to have failed in its attempt to explain the motions of the spheres and the fixity of the stars within the spheres, and finds in those celestial phenomena strong proof of purposiveness in the world. Since there are many doubts attaching to the Aristotelian model, and since the doctrine of creation ex nihilo is in addition the

teaching of Abraham and Moses, this latter is the doctrine Maimonides endorses.

Maimonides' account of creation casts a long shadow across his discussion on prophecy, for he begins the latter discussion by referring to a resemblance between opinions concerning prophecy and the opinions, just discussed, concerning cosmogony.[23] I should like now to enquire into the nature of the resemblance he has in mind. He speaks of three opinions concerning prophecy, and ascribes them, respectively, to (1) the pagans who considered prophecy as true and some of the common people professing our Law, (2) "the philosophers" and (3) "our Law".[24] According to the first opinion God chooses any morally sound person He wishes, turns him or her into a prophet, and sends him or her on a mission. The chosen person can be wise or ignorant, old or young. The second opinion is almost the opposite: "When, in the case of a superior individual who is perfect with respect to his rational and moral qualities, his imaginative faculty is in its most perfect state and when he has been prepared in the way you will hear, he will necessarily become a prophet inasmuch as this is a perfection that belongs to us by nature."[25]

Whereas according to the first opinion it is by God's will that a person becomes a prophet and the person makes little contribution personally, the second opinion places all the emphasis upon the will of the human being and upon the way nature, not God, co-operates with the person's will. The third opinion combines elements from the previous two. According to it the second opinion is correct, with this proviso, that a person may be fit for prophecy and prepared for it, and yet not attain it because God has willed against it. When he introduces the third opinion Maimonides describes God's role

in the negative way I have just employed; that is, it is not that God makes someone a prophet who could not become one by his own powers, instead He can prevent someone becoming a prophet who would otherwise become one by his own powers. However, in the course of subsequent elaboration of the third opinion Maimonides refers to the "fundamental principle that God turns whom He wills, whenever He wills, into a prophet - but only someone perfect and superior to the utmost degree"[26] and this is, at least verbally, a much more positive description. However, the tenor of Maimonides' discussion supports the view that he saw "our Law", that is, the third opinion, as holding that God plays a purely negative role in the making of a prophet. And it may be best to interpret the phrase "God turns
whom He wills … into a prophet" as saying no more than is said by the expressly negative formula.

Maimonides opens his discussion on prophecy with these much disputed words:

The opinions of people concerning prophecy are like their opinions concerning the eternity of the world or its creation in time. I mean by this that just as the people to whose mind the existence of the deity is firmly established, have, as we have set forth, three opinions concerning the eternity of the world or its creation in time, so are there also three opinions concerning prophecy.[27]

Does he mean merely that the two sets of opinions are alike in that each set has three members? Perhaps, more substantially, he means that each member of the first set resembles a member of the second. The opinions concerning cosmogony were the Mosaic, the Platonic and the Aristotelian. Let us call

them C_y C, and C_y Let us call the three opinions concerning prophetology, in order of exposition, P), 1\ and P).

Which prophetological doctrine matches Cj? If we attend to Maimonides' identification of those who hold the various doctrines, it is clear that C_t is matched by P_y for these two, and none of the others, are said to be part of "our Law". It is true that P_t is said to be held by "some of the common people professing our Law", but this does not imply that the doctrine is part of our Law. On the contrary we are clearly being alerted to the fact that it is not.

But if we attend not to the identity of the holders but to the content of the doctrines then the obvious thing to say is that C. is matched by P_y For in each case what is under discussion, the fact that the world exists and the fact that a person is a prophet, is accounted for simply in terms of the divine will. No one could become a prophet without God's willing them to become one, and the world could not exist without God's willing that it should. In each case something comes out of nothing by divine will. In seeking resemblances, therefore, we must specify the principle of resemblance at issue, for there is a resemblance in respect of source of sanction, and a resemblance in respect of content. And indeed, in the light of the common view that the Guide contains not only an overt but also a secret doctrine, we need to ask which doctrine resembles which in respect of being believed, secretly, by Maimonides. Similar difficulties beset any attempt to match C_1 and C (with the doctrines concerning prophetology.

A doctrine developed by Maimonides where it is natural to distinguish between what he said explicitly and what he really

believed concerns the concept of God's knowledge. The doctrine is central to the Guide, and I must therefore indicate what 1 see to be the core issue.

In the Guide the chief discussion of divine knowledge occurs within an investigation into divine providence for, in the eyes of some, God's governance of the world is problematic in view of the fact that people's goodness does not guarantee them protection and people's wickedness may not prevent their prospering. How is this mismatch of merit and circumstance possible? Since God surely knows about the goodness of the good and the wickedness of the wicked, either He is powerless to prevent this mismatch or He does not object to it and perhaps does not see it as one. Since these alternatives are intolerable, as implying powerlessness or evil in God, we must look elsewhere. Maimonides reports an "aberrant opinion of the philosophers" that God does not know the circumstances of human beings.[28] But he cannot accept this solution.

Admittedly there are philosophical arguments to support the claim that God is ignorant of His creatures. For example, particular sensory objects are known by means of the senses as contrasted with universals which are known by means of the intellect. And since sensory receptors are corporeal, God lacks senses. Therefore He cannot know His creatures[29].

However, Maimonides is guided by the argument that since ignorance is a deficiency it cannot be predicated truly of God. And his principal argument against the aberrant opinion of the philosophers is this: God is our Creator, making us, including our receptors by which we gain sensory knowledge of the world. Like any maker of an instrument, He must have a

conception of the work done by the instruments He has made. Hence, He knows what it is to see and hear. Therefore, that God does not have corporeal sensory receptors does not imply that He cannot have knowledge of individual things.

In discussing the kind of knowledge that God has, Maimonides emphasizes God's role as Creator. As Creator, He has practical knowledge of the world, knowledge of a kind into which we have some insight for we also make things - we form a conception and then make something embodying the conception. The thing comes to be in virtue of our knowledge - we do not have to consult the world in order to know the thing.[30] Everything in the created world stands in the relation of artefact to divine artificer. Maimonides continues: "the things in question follow upon His knowledge, which preceded and established them as they are".[31]

It is difficult to make sense of the chapter in which Maimonides discusses these matters, except on the assumption that he is using our insight into the practical knowledge of the artificer as a means of giving us insight into the kind of knowledge that God has of our world. Here, then, is a resemblance between God and ourselves. But this teaching sits uneasily with the doctrine that any term predicable truly of God and creatures is predicated of God and creatures in a purely equivocal way.

Thus His knowledge and ours have in common the word only. For His knowledge is not even an attribute of His though our knowledge is an attribute of us humans. Hence God's knowledge comes under no metaphysical category whatever under which human knowledge can truly be brought.

A question arises therefore as to whether we are not faced here with an application of the expository method of contradiction or contrariety described in the Introduction to the Guide. If so, and if it is the seventh cause of contradiction or contrariety that is at issue, it follows that for the sake of exposition Maimonides has made contradictory assumptions. When, in part 1, he first expounds the concept of divine knowledge, he assumes that such knowledge is not an attribute for it is on the contrary identical with God's essence. When in part 3 he returns to a fuller exposition of that same concept he assumes that divine knowledge is sufficiently like an attribute to bear serious comparison with the kind of knowledge that we exercise in our role as artificer. Maimonides is speaking here about "very obscure matters", and perhaps he should have heeded the words of Psalm 65, which he quotes: "Silence is praise to Thee". But Maimonides was not prepared to abandon the attempt to probe as far as he could into the metaphysical depths and to give what help he could to those who would be helped.

Finally we turn to Maimonides' moral philosophy, [32] and in particular to his accounts of virtue and vice. It is widely held that in this area Maimonides is Aristotelian, and while this interpretation is defensible his teaching on virtue and vice is not Aristotelian in all respects. I should like here to defend the claim that though Maimonides follows Aristotle in employing a doctrine of the mean in his discussion of moral states, he has a different perspective upon that doctrine. That Maimonides at least employs terminology highly suggestive of Aristotle's doctrine is not at issue, but the terminology has to be handled carefully, for there is at first sight something surprising in a rabbi being Aristotelian in his moral philosophy. We should expect him to have a rabbinic account

of virtue and vice, one based upon the concepts of divine commandments and of imitatio dei, not upon the concept of a virtuous state of character intermediate between two other states of character, one excessive and the other deficient, and both to be classed as vices. On the other hand this expectation is based on the assumption that the Aristotelian doctrine of the mean is incompatible with rabbinic teaching and, as we shall see, Maimonides would reject that assumption.

Central to the Maimonidean ethic is the concept of imitatio deh we are to imitate God's ways:

Just as He is called gracious, you too be gracious; just as Fie is called merciful, you too be merciful; just as He is called holy,
you too be holy … In like manner the prophets applied all these terms to God: slow to anger and abundant in loving kindness, just and righteous, perfect, powerful, strong, and the like. They did so to proclaim that these ways are good and right, and a man is obliged to train himself to follow them and imitate them according to his strength.[33]

Maimonides immediately adds: "Since these terms applied to the Creator refer to the middle way that we are obliged to follow, this way is called the way of the Lord." This suggests that the way of the Lord is the way of Aristotle; whoever fails to imitate God's ways suffers from either an excess or a deficiency of character.

However, Maimonides appears to deny that every virtuous state is a mean between extremes. In particular, following the description of Moses as very meek (Numbers 12: 3), Maimonides states that in respect of some character traits we

are forbidden to follow in the middle way, and he instances pride: "for the good way is not that a man be merely humble, but that he have a lowly spirit".[34] ' His objection to pride is that "all pride denies the existence of God". What he has in mind here is this: we should be humble when we stand before our superiors, the degree of humility required being proportional to the degree of our inferiority; and we always stand before God. However, it can be argued that this is not an exception to the doctrine of the mean. Aristotle would no doubt agree that our attitude to a person should depend upon whether we are superior or inferior to, or on the same level as, the other. The proper attitude is intermediate between the too much and the too little. But since we are in the presence of God, anything other than extreme humility is a too little in respect of our humility. Hence Maimonides is not rejecting the doctrine of the mean; instead he is applying it in the context of a world view deeply alien to Aristotle.

In his application of the doctrine of the mean, Maimonides makes use of parallels between ethics and medical practice:

Should [a man's] soul become sick, he must follow the same course in treating it as in the medical treatment of bodies. For when the body gets out of equilibrium we look to which side it inclines in becoming unbalanced, and then oppose it with its contrary until it returns to equilibrium. When it is in equilibrium we remove that counterbalance and revert to that which keeps the body in equilibrium. We act in a similar manner with regard to moral habits.[35]

His example is the moral vice of miserliness: "If we wanted to give medical treatment to this sick person we would not

order him to be liberal. That would be like using a balanced
course for treating someone whose fever
is excessive. This would not cure him of his sickness." The
advice Maimonides gives to those who have fallen into vice is
this: "Let them go to the wise men – who are physicians of
the soul – and they will cure their disease by means of the
character traits that they will teach them, until they make
them return to the middle way."[36]

These and similar passages point to a crucial difference
between Aristotle and Maimonides in respect of their teaching
on the mean. Within the doctrine, considered as a conceptual
framework, Aristotle presents a programme of upbringing for
the young. They are to be trained to be good citizens; and no
mistake dare be made, for the result of the training is a
character trait so fixed as to be barely alterable. For
Maimonides, on the other hand, conceptualizing virtue as a
mean implies a perspective from which virtue presents itself
as achievable by therapeutic methods. Thus a large part of
Maimonides' thinking about moral matters deals with the
problem of moral rehabilitation, that is, with the curing of
vice. His writings on this topic reveal him to have been
deeply aware of the fragility of virtue, and of the
corresponding need never to relent in the battle for one's
virtue. Each victory is a holding operation: "the perfect man
needs to inspect his moral habits continually, weigh his
actions, and reflect upon the state of his soul every single
day".[37] Aristotle on the contrary pays very little attention to
the curing of vice, and a very great deal to the training for
virtue. To maintain the medical metaphor, Aristotle is
primarily concerned with preventive moral medicine,
Maimonides with restorative. The contrast here is sharp, but
in Maimonides' judgment Aristotle's intellect was as fully

developed as was possible by purely natural means. Specific points of difference between the two men should not be allowed to mask the overwhelming influence that Aristotle exerted, directly and also through his Greek and Islamic commentators, upon Maimonides.

NOTES

1 The year 1135 is generally quoted as Maimonides' year of birth, but there is strong evidence in support of the later date. See S. D. Goitein, "Moses Maimonides, Man of Action: a Revision of the Master's Biography in Light of the Geniza Documents", in Hommage a Georges Vajda: Etudes d'histoire et de pensée juives (Louvain, 1980): 155—67.

2 For discussion of Maimonides as part ol the Islamic philosophical tradition see O. Leaman, Moses Maimonides (London, 1990): chapter 1. See also "Translator's Introduction" by Shlomo Pines in Moses Maimonides, The Guide of the Perplexed (Chicago, 1963), trans. S. Pines (hereinafter cited as Guide)-. Ixxviii—cxxxii. This is a translation of the Arabic text, ed. S. Munk in Le Guide des Egarés, 1–3 (Paris, 1856—66); reprinted with notes and variants, Jerusalem, 1931.

3 For texts of two Hebrew versions edited by Alexander Marx see Jewish Quarterly
Review, new series, 25: 374ff. For excerpts and commentary see Shlomo Pines, op. citr. lix—lx.

4 I am grateful to Irene Lancaster for helpful discussion of this matter.

5 The most detailed account of the structure of the Mishneh Torah is in Isadore Twersky, Introduction to the Code of Maimonides (Mishneh Torah) (London and New Haven, 1980), esp. chapter 4.

6 See e.g. Leo Strauss, "The Literary Character of the Guide for the Perplexed", in Salo Baron (ed.) Essays on Maimonides: an Octocentennial Volume (New York, 1941): 37–91; and the abridged version in J. A. Buijs (ed.), Maimonides: a Collection of Critical Essays (Notre Dame, 1988): 30—58. Also Leo Strauss, "How to Begin to Study The Guide of the Perplexed" in Guide: xi—lvi. See also Marvin Fox, Interpreting Maimonides: Studies in Methodology, Metaphysics, and Moral Philosophy (Chicago, 1990): chapter 3.

7 Guide, Introduction: 7.

8 I hid.: 8. Problems concerning Maimonides on the limits of human knowledge are aired illuminatingly in S. Pines, "The Limitations of Human Knowledge according to al-Fārābī, ibn Bajja, and Maimonides", in I. Twersky (ed.) Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature (Cambridge, Mass., 1979): 82—109; reprinted in J. A. Buijs (ed.) op. cit. 91—121.

9 Guide, Introduction: 18.

10 Sefer ha-Mada ("The Book of Knowledge"), treatise 1, chapter 1, in Mishneh Torah, Hebrew text ed. S. T. Rubenstein, M. D. Rabinowitz et al. (Jerusalem, 1967–73).

11 Guide, 1.59: 138.

12 Ibid., 1.57: 132. See A. Altmann's influential article "Essence and Existence in Maimonides", in A. Altmann, Studies in Religious Philosophy and Mysticism (London, 1969): 108–27-

13 Guide, 1.35: 80; cf. 1.56: 131.

14 Ibid., 1.37: 86.

15 Ibid., 2, Introduction: 235–9.

16 See O. Leaman, op. cit.: chapter 4 for a discussion of many of the issues concerning Maimonides on creation. See also O. Leaman, An Introduction to Medieval Islamic Philosophy (Cambridge, 1985): 59—74. Also Sara Klein-Braslavy, "The Creation of the World and Maimonides' Interpretation of Gen. i—v", in S. Pines and Y. Yovel (eds), Maimonides and Philosophy (Dordrecht, 1986): 65—78. Also Marvin Fox, op. cit.: chapter 10.

17 Guide, 2.13: 281.

18 Ibid., 2.13: 284.

19 Ibid., 2.17: 296.

20 Ibid., 2.17: 297.

21 Ibid., 2.14: 287.

22 Ibid., 2.18: 299.

23 See L. Kaplan, "Maimonides on the Miraculous Element in Prophecy", Harvard Theological Revieiv, 70 (1977): 233—56. Also H. Davidson, "Maimonides' Secret Position on Creation", in I. Twersky (ed.), op. cit.: 16–40. Also W. Z. Harvey, "A Third Approach to Maimonides' Cosmogony—Prophetology Puzzle", Harvard Theological Review, 74 (1981): 287—301; reprinted in J. A. Buijs (ed.), op. cit.: 71–88.

24
Guide, 2.32: 360.

25 Ibid., 2.32: 361.

26 Ibid., 2.32: 362.

27 Ibid., 2.32: 360.

28 Ibid., 3.16: 461—2.

29 Ibid., 3.16: 463.

30 Ibid., 3.21: 484.

31 Ibid., 3.21: 485.

32 For detailed discussion of Maimonides' moral philosophy (though not containing the conclusion drawn here) see M. Fox, op. cit.: part 2. See also L. V. Berman, "The Ethical

Views of Maimonides within the Context of Islamicate Civilization", in J. L. Kraemer, Perspectives on Maimonides: Philosophical and Historical Studies (Oxford, 1991): 13—32.

33 Hilkhot De'oP. chapter 1; for translation see R. L. Weiss and C. E. Butterworth (trans., Ethical Writings of Maimonides) (New York, 1975): 30.

34 Hilkhot De'oP. chapter 2; for translation see Weiss and Butterworth, op. cit.: 31.

35 Eight Chapters, chapter 4, in Commentary on the Mislmah, Introduction to Tractate Aboth, known as 35 "Eight Chapters". For translation see Weiss and Butterworth, op. cit.: 68.

36 Hilkhot De'oP. chapter 2; for translation see Weiss and Butterworth, op. cit.: 31.

37 "Eight Chapters", chapter 4; ibid.: 73.

CHAPTER 44

Gersonides: Levi ben Gershom

Gad Freudenthal

Introduction

Rabbi Levi ben Gershom, or Gersonides (1288—1344), is one of the most original medieval Jewish thinkers, whose interests and writings spanned philosophy, biblical exegesis, astronomy, mathematics, natural science, logic and medicine. Like most contemporary Jewish philosophers in southern France, Gersonides wrote in Hebrew and drew almost solely on sources available to him in that language. But since most of these were translations from Arabic, Gersonides can be viewed as an innovative continuer of the Arabic philosophical tradition that had culminated in Ibn Rushd (Averroes), indeed as someone who developed his own philosophical ideas through a critical dialogue mainly with two major thinkers who had written in Arabic: Maimonides and Ibn Rushd, as well as, to a lesser extent, the astronomer al-Bitrujl.

Although Gersonides greatly admired Maimonides and embraced the latter's programme of creating a synthesis of Judaism and Peripat- eticism (in one of its versions), he was yet in sharp opposition to cardinal Maimonidean positions. In a nutshell, Gersonides upheld, contra Maimonides, that (I) it can be demonstrated that God purposefully created the world in time; that (2) God has designed the world so as to suit perfectly the sublunar creatures living in it, particularly humans; that (3) humans are capable of knowing the world and indeed human perfection consists in acquiring such knowledge; and that (4) knowledge about the created world in fact bears upon the Creator, who therefore to some extent is knowable by man. Thus, Maimonides' uncompromising an ti-an th ropocen trism, his epistemological scepticism and the associated negative theology, as well as his elitism and esoterism, are all emphatically rejected by Gersonides: on both the cosmological and the epistemological planes, Gersonides' world-view is decidedly optimistic. Gersonides' commitment to the idea of scientific progress and his lifelong scientific practice are the consequences of this confidence in the privileged position of humankind in God's world.

Life and Works[1]

Our knowledge of Gersonides' life is very scanty. He was born in 1288 and lived most of his life in Orange in southern France, which had a middle-size Jewish community.[2] We do not know anything definite about the course of his studies or about who his teachers were, although a few references in his writings to opinions held by his father suggest that the latter was a scholar too.[3] Gersonides' knowledge of Arabic and

Latin has been the subject of some controversy. In his writings Gersonides mentions only works available in Hebrew, although on a few occasions he remarks that he checked the Arabic version of a problematic passage;[4] it seems certain however that he could not read entire works in Arabic.[5] The same presumably holds with respect to Latin: although, as the late Shlomo Pines has shown, Gersonides' doctrine of divine attributes reveals similarities to contemporary Scholastic doctrines, this possible influence was presumably oral.[6]

When Gersonides was eighteen years old (1306), Philippe the Fair expelled all Jews from the Kingdom of France. Yet this historic catastrophe (which did not hit Orange) left no definite traces in Gersonides' writings, although it may perhaps be accountable for the fact that Gersonides began writing relatively late in his life. He set on writing his major philosophic work, the Sefer Milhamot ha-Shem[7] ("The Wars of the Lord"), in 1317, at the age of twenty-nine, and was to pursue it during the following twelve years. In parallel, however, he composed two series of works. The first series, written between c. 1319 and 1324, consists of specialized scientific treatises: an innovative work on logic, The Book of the Correct Syllogism (1319); a treatise in arithmetic comprising an original chapter on combinatorial theory (1321); and a set of supercommentaries on many of Ibn Rushd's epitomes of, or middle commentaries on, Aristotle's treatises in natural philosophy (1321–4).[8] Subsequently, Gersonides set out to write a series of commentaries on various biblical books: Job (1325); Song of Songs (1326); Ecclesiastes (1328); Esther (1329); Ruth (1329); Genesis (1329); Exodus (1330); most of Leviticus (1332). After an

interruption of a few years, Gersonides pursued the series with commentaries on Isaiah; the remaining books of
the Torah (Pentateuch; completed 1338); the First Prophets (1338); Daniel (1338); Ezra, Nehemiah and the Books of Chronicles (1338); and the Proverbs (1338).[9]

Concomitantly with these philosophic—theological writings, Gerson- ides most intensively pursued an astronomical research programme. In fact, book 5, part 1 of the Wars of the Lord (which comprises six books) is a fully fledged technical astronomical treatise, whose 136 chapters (mostly still in manuscript[10]) are about equal in length to the rest of the Wars. This work, often considered as independent and referred to as Gersonides' Astronomy, contains the results of Gersonides' own astronomical observations (begun at least in 1320 and continued throughout his life), tables, an incisive criticism of Ptolemy's astronomy and the descriptions of Gersonides' own astronomical models for the different planets.

Gersonides' accomplishments in astronomy and mathematics made him into a highly respected figure, even outside the Jewish community. Whereas most surprisingly we know next to nothing about contacts (intellectual or other) Gersonides presumably had with Jewish contemporaries, [11] we have some information about his continued connections with high-ranking Christians. Early in his career he composed his astronomical tables "at the request of many great and noble Christians"[12] and in 1342 the influential Philippe de Vitry, the future Bishop of Meaux, asked him for advice on a mathematical theorem connected with his own ars nova in musical theory.[13] Also in 1342, Gersonides dedicated to Pope Clement VI the Latin version of a trigonometrical treatise,

drawn from his Astronomy, since, as has recently been shown, this translation is a part of the (incomplete) Latin translation of Gersonides' astronomical work, presumably the translation (in which Gersonides collaborated actively) was done at the behest and under the patronage of the Papal court.[14]' Lastly, Gersonides on at least two occasions composed astrological predictions at the request of two popes. The last of them, a prognostication for the great conjunction of 1345, was composed by Gersonides on his deathbed, and through this circumstance we know the time of his decease with unusual precision: the Latin translator of the Prognostication informs us that "Master Leo, prevented by death in the year of Christ 1344 on the 20th day of April about noon, put nothing more in order concerning this conjunction".[15]

Gersonides' Views on Human Knowledge, God, Creation and the Immortality of the Soul

The bedrock on which rests Gersonides' entire philosophic and scientific endeavour is perhaps his unlimited confidence in the power of human
reason to attain ever more knowledge of the world and, hence, of God. Maimonides had argued for sceptical positions on a series of questions, not the least important being the question of the createdness or eternity of the world. Gersonides

unambiguously rejects Maimonides' stance at the very beginning of the Wars:

Many people will deem it to be arrogance and audacity on our part that we inquire into [the question of] the eternity or createdness [of the world]. For they may perhaps think that the intellect of the wise man is wanting of means to attain the truth on this problem, except if he be a prophet. All the more so since they see that the earlier perfect [men] of our nation, and among them the crown of the glory of the sages of the Torah, our Master Rav Moshe ben Maimon, may he rest in peace, did not pursue an inquiry on such a topic. They may conclude that it is impossible to attain [knowledge] on this question through the means of [philosophical] inquiry. For if this were possible, it would not have escaped the earlier [sages].

Yet this is a very weak argument. For that which had escaped the early [sages] need not necessarily escape their successors as well. For time suffices to bring forth the truth, as the Philosopher said in Book Two of the Physics.[16] Indeed, were it otherwise, then there would be no one who, investigating one of the sciences, would know anything but what he had learnt from others. But, should this be assumed to be the case, then there would be no science at all, and this is patently false.[17]'

Attaining new knowledge of the world by means of rational, scientific inquiry is possible, Gersonides holds. This confidence in man's capability to know the world has momentous consequences also for Gersonides' view of man's knowledge of God. Gersonides construes the Active Intellect as comprising the nomos – in fact the entire natural order

of the created world. This implies that every bit of knowledge about the world is at the same time knowledge of the Active Intellect and hence (as will be seen) of the divine plan of creation. Consequently, if one apprehends an empirical fact or even a mathematical theorem, one has thereby apprehended an intelligible that is a constitutive part of the Active Intellect: one can therefore attain an adequate, if partial, knowledge of the Active Intellect. Now the nomos of the created world, which makes up the Active Intellect, is the object of God's thought: it is in fact through God's thinking the nomos that it has come into existence, an idea Gersonides borrowed from Themistius.[18] It follows that God's knowledge and man's have the same object, viz. the nomos, and that they differ only by degree: "it is clear that the sole and only difference between the knowledge of God, may He be blessed, and our knowledge is that His

knowledge is exceedingly more perfect".[19] One can thus attain some positive knowledge of God: Gersonides in fact rejects the Maimonidean thesis that predicating attributes of God would introduce in Him a multiplicity.

Gersonides' optimistic epistemology provides the basis for his heartening theory of the immortality of the soul. To the commonplace view that one's perfection and afterlife depend on the knowledge one had acquired during one's lifetime Gersonides gives a personal twist. Contrary to Maimonides, he holds that the knowledge that is conducive to felicity is not only, and not even mainly, metaphysical, bearing on the separate entities, but rather knowledge of the material world (being in fact knowledge of the Active Intellect).[20] Further, Gersonides shares the received view that eternal felicity belongs to the acquired intellect - to that part of the rational soul that has been actualized by apprehending intelligibles.

But whereas most Jewish philosophers, apparently including Maimonides, followed Ibn Bajjah and Ibn Rushd in holding that after death the acquired intellect loses its individuality by being fused into the Active Intellect, [21] Gersonides upholds the survival of the individual acquired intellect[22]: acquiring knowledge, specifically empirical knowledge, thus is the supreme good in life. This view gave Gersonides both a theological legitimation for his scientific research and a forceful motivation to invest himself in it. On the question of one's route to eternal felicity too, then, Gersonides and Maimonides parted company.

One cardinal question that can be submitted to scientific inquiry is whether the world is created or eternal. Gersonides, as already noted, believes, pace Maimonides, that he can adduce proofs for the createdness of the world. These proofs are largely based on what Gersonides takes to be empirical evidence, namely to the effect that the entire cosmos is perfectly designed. For instance:

in the foregoing it has been conclusively established that whatever is found in the substance of the heaven is of the utmost possible perfection with a view to perfecting these [sublunar] beings. Indeed, were that [heavenly] order corrupted even slightly, these beings would be corrupted [i.e. destroyed] too.[23] '

Heavens which are so perfectly designed with a view to endowing sublunar existence with the utmost possible perfection cannot but be intentionally, and hence "newly", created, whence it follows that the entire world was created by the volition of a wise Creator.[24]

Gersonides' original cosmogony seeks to give a scientifically sound explanation of creation which is in conformity with the account given in the Torah, reconciling at the same time the thesis of creation in time with the impossibility, postulated by Aristotelian science, of any coming- to-be ex nihilo[25]. Gersonides posits a pre-existing "body devoid of all forms", and affirms that the act of creation consisted in God's imprinting upon it the elemental forms: thus ensued the four sublunar elements and the heavenly bodies.[26] The Creator, Gersonides further maintains, conceived these supra- and sublunar forms in such a way that through their influences the celestial bodies would continually control the generation and corruption in the sublunar realm. This is of primary importance. Gersonides gave great prominence to the received medieval physical theory on which the sublunar world is not a closed system: the forms of substances (the vegetative souls of plants and animals, notably, but also the specific forms of some minerals such as the magnet) would not come to be, nor would they subsist, without the informing and sustaining influences continuously issuing from the heavenly bodies. Gersonides repeatedly stresses, drawing on Aristotle's Meteorologica, 4, that the equilibrium of the opposite qualities (hot/cold; dry/humid) constituting any sublunar substance is inherently unstable and precarious: left to itself, any substance would soon perish, because one of the qualities would overpower the others:[27]' the fact that sublunar substances usually persist over certain periods of time is thus due to the "preserving" influences of the heavenly bodies. (These "influences" were held to consist of "efficient causes" transmitted by the stars' rays, and of "formal causes" emanating from the separate intellects moving the stars.[28]) Gersonides sees the perfection of the world as a whole as

consisting precisely in the fact that these celestial influences are faultlessly conceived so as to endow sublunar substances

particularly humanity, the most perfect among them - with maximal perfection and perseverance, a sure indication of a divine plan. Gersonides is here in diametrical opposition to Maimonides' radical anti-anthro- pocentric stance.[29]

The combination of the influences of the heavenly bodies with the aptitude of the sublunar matter to be suitably affected by them, all "programmed" at the creation, constitute the natural order: once the formless quasi-matter received its forms, the universe became autonomous, functioning solely according to the nomos resulting from the interactions of the natures which God has given to its different parts. (More precisely: each separate intellect controls the influences – formal and efficient – emanating from "its" planet; the synthesis of the partial knowledges of all the intellects is the Active Intellect and is in fact the nomos ol the world.[30]) The consequence is that all events and processes which have taken place after the first act of creation, including the sequel of creation and the events reputed to be miracles, are subsumable under naturalistic explanations. Here, as in most of his natural science, Gersonides is obviously a rigorous follower of Ibn Rushd.

Gersonides saw no contradiction whatsoever between his belief that the natural order was autonomous and his commitment to the authoritative texts of Judaism: he rather saw them as fundamentally compatible
and complementary. To him, truth could be attained either through scientific inquiry or through a hermeneutic inquiry into the Torah – but both routes were equivalent, necessarily

leading to the same single truth. Thus, Gersonides stresses that it is not the case that religious belief constrained him to accept the traditional view of temporal creation as found in the Torah: rather, since the Torah is "a nomos perfected to the utmost" guiding one to one's ultimate felicity, its statements are necessarily true and in fact directed him in his scientific inquiry.[31] Gersonides would certainly have endorsed the later metaphor according to which Scripture and the book of nature were written by the same hand: revelation and reason are perforce equivalent.

As postulated by Gersonides, the celestial bodies' control over all generation and corruption "down here" naturally encompasses living beings, including humankind. This doctrine, however, does not imply determinism. Gersonides holds each of the celestial bodies to exert its influences only on one general aspect of the sublunar physical reality (e.g. the sun "fortifying" the quality of heat, the moon that of humidity, etc.). Consequently, even the Active Intellect, and God too, can have no knowledge of singular events. Specifically, while at any time the astral influences give one a disposition to act in a certain way (as when one's "heat" is increased and one tends to behave hot-headedly), one can, by following one's intellect rather than one's passions, extricate oneself from the effect of these influences. Gersonides, indeed, forcefully upheld human free will.

The theory of astral influences upon sublunar processes to some extent opens the door for astrology: this is recognized even by Maimonides.[32] Gersonides in fact accords astrology a role, albeit a limited one, in keeping with his view that only general aspects of sublunar occurrences are determined by the heavenly bodies, and with the associated notion of human free

will. Unlike Maimonides, who mainly for religious reasons opposed astrology vehemently, Gersonides believed that by being able to predict dispositions to certain types of behaviour, astrologers occasionally succeed in their forecasts of singular events, a feat that is all the more remarkable if one considers that the knowledge of the celestial movements and of astral influences are both (still) wanting.[33] But astrologers cannot, in Gersonides' view, possibly foresee with certainty singular events concerning a given individual. Indeed, Gersonides' only preserved prognostication predicts events involving entire nations, i.e. a great number of individuals: in a large mass, only a few individuals extract themselves from natural determination by following reason using their intellects; the great majority continue to belong to the realm of nature, and so their conduct is largely predictable. Therefore, great upheavals in history (natural and human) can be foreseen by astrologers, although the final and crucial upheaval, namely the establishing of the eternal messianic Kingdom, will be due to God's special providence and His intervention in the course of history, not to natural necessity.[34] Gersonides ascribes foreknowledge of singular events not to astrologers but notably to prophets, who receive "revelations" from the active intellect: the latter communicates to the prophet "information" pertaining to the general order of reality, which the prophet then applies to the concrete reality, thereby arriving at concrete true predictions.

Traditionalist thinkers of later generations castigated Gersonides for his naturalism, which seemed to belittle miracles. Similarly, his view that God has no knowledge of individuals (because the pre-programmed celestial influences determine only general aspects of the occurrences in the sublunar world and the associated doctrine of free will)

implied a denial of individual providence and seemed to leave God no place within human, specifically Jewish, history: this was another stance for which later Jewish thinkers were to disparage him. Within the history of Jewish thought Gersonides' image is that of an audacious freethinker.[35]

Gersonides' Empiricism: Natural Science and Astronomy

The foregoing will have made clear that for Gersonides empirical knowledge of the material world is of crucial importance. It is therefore not surprising that Gersonides himself engaged in science. In natural science his main theoretical paradigms are borrowed from Ibn Rushd: Gersonides' supercommentaries on Ibn Rushd's epitomes and commentaries reveal a profound agreement, although Gersonides very often interjects personal statements to dissent on specific points.

The most remarkable feature of Gersonides' science, of both the sub- and the supralunar realms, is the pronounced empirical attitude it displays. Gersonides apparently conducted botanical experiments: on the occasion of a statement by Ibn Rushd concerning the relationship between the germination of seeds and the type of the soil, Gersonides remarks briefly: "we have tested this [affirmation] for all the [kinds of] seeds and found that the matter is always as stated by Ibn Rushd".[36] Gersonides also envisaged the use of a

parabolic mirror as a sort of microscope in order to examine the parts of animals which are too small to be observed with the naked eye: this very impressive idea, which presumably remained unrealized, apparently has no parallel at the time, at least in Europe.[37] Indeed, lor Gersonides even the most humble empirical fact was an intelligible, a component of the world's divine nomos continuously thought by God, so that by apprehending whatever component of it one shares in His knowledge; apprehending whatever fact was conducive to the immortality of one's soul.

Yet it is the celestial bodies that were at the focus of Gersonides' scientific research programme. God exerts His providence over the created world through the celestial bodies: therefore, by studying their design one can gauge the perfection of the Creator. What counts for Gersonides and what he finds so remarkable is not only the perfection of the celestial realm per se - the constancy and regularity of the heavenly motions - but above all the supposed fact that the heavenly realm is perfected so as to bring about and constantly maintain the (relative) perfection of the sublunar realm as well. Gersonides in fact holds that the most tiny details of each and every of the heavenly motions and of the influences emanating from them are indispensable for the preservation of the ordered world: this is why their study reveals God's divine plan, bearing witness to the Creator's wisdom and goodness. Astronomy therefore emerges as the divine science par excellence:

The prophets and those who spoke by virtue of the Holy Spirit made us aware that it is appropriate to expand this [astronomical] investigation because from it we are led to understand God, as will become evident in this study. Indeed,

the orbs and the stars were created by the word of God, as will become clear from our treatise, God willing, by making evident the ampleness of God's wisdom and the ampleness of His power [as manifest] in His bringing into existence these noble bodies in this wondrously wise way and in His endowing them with heterogeneous emanations - even though [the heavenly bodies] are all of one single nature, devoid of the qualities that emanate from them – by virtue of which this lowly [sublunar] existence is perfected.[38]

Gersonides' motivation to study the heavens was thus theological and philosophical; indeed he accorded little value to knowledge whose finality is practical, and on one occasion even adduces astronomy as an example of a science devoid of practical utility.[39] This outlook profoundly shaped the astronomical theory he was to elaborate. Many, presumably most, medieval astronomers approached the study of the heavenly motions with an "instrumentalist", or "fictionalist", image of science: they took their job to consist in "saving the phenomena", i.e. in devising mathematical models and in calculating tables from which stellar positions could be determined with sufficient accuracy; it did not matter to them that the models they used were incompatible with the received (Aristotelian) physics.[40] But Gersonides obviously could not accept this position: his immodest aim was to uncover the blueprint of creation, not to tinker with merely useful computational models. Necessarily, therefore, his epistemology was bound to be realist. Consequently, since he wanted to know the configuration of the supralunar realm as it really was, he set out to construct a theory of the heavens that would accord both with
calculation and with physical theory, explicitly rejecting the instrumentalist construal of astronomy.[41]

The awareness of the problem posed by the incompatibility of (Aristotelian) physics and mathematical (Ptolemaic) astronomy was not new: Gersonides is an heir to an Andalusian tradition which goes back at least to Ibn Bajjah and Ibn Tufayl and is echoed by Ibn Rushd and by Maimonides;[42] the latter indeed qualified the problem as "the true perplexity", whose resolution was presumably beyond human ken, but which must not preoccupy the astronomer, who should confine himself to calculations.[43] In rejecting the received instrumentalism of the astronomers, Gersonides in fact walked in the footsteps of the astronomer al-Bitruji, whose astronomical treatise had been translated into Hebrew in 1259.[44] Yet, although sympathetic to al-Bitruji's goal, Gersonides found that the latter's system was unsatisfactory: it was refuted by observation and, in addition, was incompatible with the principles of physics and metaphysics.

Gersonides' goal in studying astronomy – to achieve immortality by acquiring some knowledge of the nomos of the world - implied that precision was of the highest value: every error in apprehending an intelligible would be fatal to the soul's survival. This is what presumably incited Gersonides to undertake astronomical observations, which he used to test the planetary models – both very rare procedures in the Middle Ages.[45] In order to ensure precision, Gersonides devised two instruments. One, called "Jacob's Staff', allows the determination of the angular distance between planets. The second combines the Jacob's Staff with a camera obscura and is used to determine the apparent sizes of the planets.[46] The invention of this instrument depended on Gersonides' philosophical concerns, because the apparent sizes of planets were a relevant parameter for astronomical theory only from a realist stance. (From an instrumentalist

perspective only the positions of the planets are of fundamental importance.) Thus, underlying Gersonides' astronomical innovations is his astronomical realism, which in turn depends on his global philosophy.

Conclusion

Looming behind Gersonides' variegated cognitive quests was a threefold confidence: firstly, that knowledge of the world was also knowledge of God; secondly, that such knowledge was attainable; and thirdly that knowledge was the guarantor of the immortality of the individual soul. On all these pivotal points Gersonides' views are antithetic to those of Maimonides, just as, generally, Gersonides opposes Maimonides on most crucial issues, while at the same time he follows globally the Maimonidean programme of creating a synthesis of Torah and philosophy.

The distinctive quality of Gersonides' intellectual endeavour seems to be its quest for consistency and coherence: Torah and philosophy, mathematical astronomy and physical theory, theory and observation, all had to match. Knowledge had different, equally valid sources – sense experience, theory and revelation (transmitted through tradition) - and, if properly understood, they could not but lead up to identical results. "It is the hallmark of truth that it agrees with itself from all aspects", Gersonides repeats time and again after having shown that different methods of inquiry yielded one and the same conclusion.

This search for coherence (again the converse of Maimonides) had different consequences in philosophy and in science. Gersonides' philosophical positions are constructed from materials he found in the writings available to him, most notably those of Ibn Rushd: in philosophy Gersonides' drive for consistency results in an "instinct for originality [that] expresses itself in manoeuvring among the texts at his disposal".[47] Gersonides' philosophy indeed remained thoroughly medieval. By contrast, in his scientific work, the quest for coherence resulted in a scientific practice which is entirely modern in outlook (although, to be sure, not in content): Gersonides made his own astronomical observations and criticized and revised mathematical models in their light. It is here, in his science which is wholly out of tune with the norms of the age, that Gersonides' originality bore its best fruits.

NOTES

1 In what follows only few indications about editions of Gersonides' writings, translations and secondary literature are given. Full information can be found in Kellner (1992).

2 The fact that Gersonides was referred to in Latin as "magister Leo de Balneolis" gave rise to the persistent error that he lived in Bagnols-sur-Ceze in the Departement du Card. In point of fact, "de Balneolis" was the name of an extended family living in Orange. Cf. Shatzmiller (1972).

3 It has been repeatedly conjectured that Gersonides' father was Gershom ben Shlomo, the author of the well-known

encyclopedic work Sba'ar ha-Shamayim\ cf. Shatzmiller (1992).

4 Cf. Levy (1992).

5 Touati (1973): 38f.; Feldman (1984): 5ff.

6 Pines (1967): 31ff.; Touati (1973): 38; Pines (1986a).

7 There are two editions of the Hebrew text: Gersonides (1560); Gersonides (1866).

8 Ibn Rushd's works on which Gersonides wrote supercommentaries are notably the following: the Epitome of, and the Middle Commentary on the Physics (1321); the Epitome of De generatione et corruptione (1321); the Epitome of De caelo (1321); the Epitome of the Meteorologica (1322); the Epitome of books
11 to 19 of the so-called Book of Atiimals (= The Parts of Animals and The Generation of Animals', 1323); the Middle Commentary on the first seven books of the Organon (1323); the Epitome of the De anima (1323); the Epitome of the Parva naturalia (1324); the Middle Commentary on the Metaphysics (written before 1328; lost).

9 For the works and their dates cf. Touati (1973): 49—82; Feldman (1984): 8—30; the works are chronologically arranged in Weil-Gueny (1992).

10 Only chapters 1—20 have been published (with an English translation) in Goldstein (1985).

11 Only very recently it has been discovered that Gersonides taught philosophy to a group of students, none of whom however rose to any distinction. Cf. Glasner (1995).

12 Goldstein (1974): 20.

13 Cf. Chemla and Pahaut (1992) for a study of this work.

14 Mancha (1992).

15 Goldstein and Pingree (1990): 34.

16 For references cf. Touati (1973): 87—8, including note 28.

17 Wars, Introduction; Gersonides (1560): 2va; Gersonides (1866): 4.

18 Gersonides knew Themistius' Commentary on book Lambda of Aristotle's Metaphysics, which had been translated into Hebrew in 1255. Cf. Pines (1987): 199f.; Davidson (1992).

19 Wars, 3–3; Gersonides (1560): 22vb; Gersonides (1866): 133.

20 For Maimonides, not the apprehension of natural entities, composed of matter and form, but rather the intellection of separate – divine – entities, results in the survival of the soul. Man's true perfection is in studying metaphysics, not physics. Cf. the famous parable in Guide of the Perplexed, 3.51 and Harvey (1977). Yet, as is well known, Maimonides in fact paradoxically holds that the separate entities, whose knowledge alone he holds to lead to salvation, are in fact

unknowable, with the consequence that finally happiness is to be sought in the practical-political realm; cf. e.g Pines (1979); Stern (1995). The late Shlomo Pines suggestively argued that this contradiction is the result of a dramatic change of mind on Maimonides' part: cf. Pines (1986b).

21 Pines (1963b): ciiif. For an overview of the background cf. Leaman (1985): 87–107.

22 Cf. Feldman (1978).

23 Wars 6.1.7; Gersonides (1560): 51va, Gersonides (1866): 310.

24 Cf. also Feldman (1967); Davidson (1987): 209—12.

25 Cf. Freudenthal (1986).

26 Gersonides believed he could empirically confirm the existence of the primeval quasi-matter. Medieval physical astronomy postulated the existence of rotating spheres carrying the planets; these spheres had to turn independently, so as not to perturb one another's motion. To "isolate" the motions of the spheres, Gersonides argued, there must be a fluid matter filling the inter-spherical spaces, and this is none other than the rest of the "formless" quasi-matter, out of which all celestial and sublunar matter was created.

27 Cf. Freudenthal (1995).

28 Cf. Freudenthal (1993).

29 Maimonides holds that the stars "do not exist for our sake and so that good
should come to us from them"; cf. Guide, 3.15. His unbending anti-anthro- pocentrism has forcefully and repeatedly been highlighted by the late Yeshaiahu Leibowitz; cf. notably Leibowitz (1987): chapter 3. Gersonides, by contrast, maintains that the "stars are in the spheres not for their own sake, but in order to exert influence on this sublunar existence" so as to perfect it to the utmost; Wars, 5.2.3; Gersonides (1560): 32; (1866): 196.

30 The notion that the Active Intellect is a "synthesis" of the other intellects is one of the few innovative points in Gersonides' theory of the intellect. For an exhaustive comparison of Gersonides' views with his sources cf. Davidson (1992).

31 Cf. Wars, 6.2.1; Gersonides (1560): 69; Gersonides (1866): 419.

32 Cf. Maimonides, Guide, 2.12; Freudenthal (1993).

33 Wars, 2.2; Gersonides (1560): 17; Gersonides (1866): 95.

34 Cf. Goldstein and Pingree (1990); Freudenthal (1990).

35 Touati (1973): 54l£F.; Kellner (1976).

36 Gersonides, Supercommentary on [Ibn Rushd's] Epitome to the "Book of Animals", MS Vatican Urb. 42, tol. 44; quoted after Freudenthal (1989): 62.

37 Ibid., fol. 9f.; quoted after Freudenthal (1989): 62.

38 Astronomy, chapter 2 (= Wars, 5.1.2); quoted (with modifications) after Goldstein (1985): 24 (English), 303 (Hebrew).

39 For what follows cf. Freudenthal (1989); Freudenthal (1992b); Freudenthal (1992c).

40 Cf. Duhem (1908); Jardine (1984): 225–57; Hugonnard-Roche (1992).

41 Astronomy, chapter 1 (= Wars, 5.1.1), Goldstein (1985): 305 (Hebrew), 22 (English); cf. also Goldstein's introductory remarks in ibid.: 2—9.

42 Cf. Gauthier (1909); Sabra (1984).

43 Maimonides, Guide, 2.24. For a different interpretation of Maimonides' views cf. Langermann (1991).

44 Goldstein (1971).

45 Gersonides recorded forty-five observations of planetary longitudes and latitudes; cf. Goldstein (1988).

46 Cf. Goldstein (1991).

47 Davidson (1992): 195.

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CHAPTER 45

Judaism and Sufism

Paul B. Fenton

❧

Beginnings in the East

Within the wider framework of the influence of Islamic thought and spirituality, the study of the interaction between Israel and Ismael in the domain of mysticism is one of the most fascinating chapters of comparative religion. From a strictly chronological point of view, it was Judaism that initially influenced Sufism in its formative period in Baghdad. Surprisingly, while scholars have recognized the influence of Oriental Neoplatonism and Christian pietism on the evolution of Muslim asceticism at this time, they have failed to point out the profound mark left on Sufism by the ambient Jewish milieu. Indeed, Mesopotamia, cradle of the Babylonian Talmud, was at the very centre of the world of Jewish learning, which, moreover, readily underwent the process of Arabization after the Muslim conquest. Among the great personalities attached to the Talmudic academies of Baghdad were to be found certain charismatic figures who embodied the ancient rabbinic pietistic ideals of simplicity and saintliness, virtues cherished by nascent Sufism. Moreover,

Sufi hagiography has preserved a number of edifying tales of "the pious men from among the Children of Israel", known as isrd'iliyyat. Many of these tales are traceable to rabbinic sources such as the Chapters of the Fathers, one of the main well-springs of Jewish pietism.

One particularly important concept undoubtedly originating in Talmudic literature which was assimilated at this time and which was to play a fundamental role in Islamic mysticism was the belief in a hidden hierarchy of saints, whose blessings sustained the world. Supposedly these elements had been transmitted through interreligious contacts or Jewish converts to Islam. However, once Sufism had asserted itself as a spiritual force, it began to exert a compelling attraction for Jews. A certain number of conversions took place precisely in Sufi circles in Baghdad, where we find Jews attending the lectures of the first mystical masters. Indeed, Sufi historiographers like to relate accounts of the miraculous conversion of Jews to Islam through the action of Muslim mystics, such as Ibrahim al-Khawwas. These kinds of contacts were no doubt facilitated by the relative openness of certain Sufi masters towards members of other religious persuasions. Though traces of Sufi beliefs concerning the ascetic ideal and the vanity of the lower world may be detected in the works of tenth-century Jewish authors in Baghdad, such as Sa'adyah Ga'on (Saadiah Gaon) (d. 940), it is, however, only during the Judaeo-Arabic cultural symbiosis in Spain in the following century that definite evidence of literary influence can be pinpointed.

The Golden Age of Spain

Indeed, it is well known that the Iberian peninsula was a fertile terrain of intercultural exchange between Jew, Christian and Muslim. From a much later period we have evidence of theological discussions between the great Muslim mystic Muhyi al-Dln ibn 'Arab! (d. 1240) and a Jewish rabbi on the nature of the letters of the Holy Scriptures. It can be assumed that such contacts also took place in previous times. Now there had been an early flowering of Sufism in Andalusia, mainly owing to the teachings of the Muslim mystical master Ibn Masarrah (886—931). While overestimating the latter's influence on Muslim and Jewish Neoplatonism in Andalusia, scholars have overlooked the significant fact that Ibn Masarrah, as well as his spiritual heir, Sahl al-Tustarl, laid great emphasis on the mystical role of the Arabic alphabet, as demonstrated by their recently published writings. This discipline is also a fundamental aspect of the theosophical system of Ibn Arabl, and a subject which, as just pointed out, he would discuss with Jews. From Talmudic times (third to fourth centuries C.E.) and later in the Kabbalah, these arithmological speculations, known as gematriyah, were a central part of Jewish exegesis and esotericism. The striking similarities between the development of these mystical conceptions in both religions leaves no doubt as to an initial Jewish influence on the Muslim "science of letters" and their later interaction.

Although definite literary traces of Islamic mysticism are already present in the religious poetry of the great Andalusian Hebrew poets such as Solomon ibn Gabirol (d. c. 1057) and

Judah Halevi (1075—1141), the first Jewish medieval prose work to exhibit a profound appreciation of Sufi doctrine was the Faraid al-qulub ("Duties of the Hearts"), a treatise on ascetic theology composed in Arabic by Rabbi Baḥyā ibn Paqudah (c. 1080). In an effort to remedy the ritual formalism and religious desiccation of his fellow Jews, Baḥyā devised an individualistic, inward itinerary, guiding the soul through contemplation and love to union with the

"supernal Light", based on the progressive spiritual stages of the Path as set out in Sufi pietistic manuals. Bahyá's use of Sufi sources was not altogether indiscriminate; he notably rejects forms of extreme asceticism and self-mortification prcached by certain contemplative Sufis and he adopts a reserved line on the question of union with God. Despite the pains he takes to camouflage material of a too ostensibly Islamic character by replacing the Qur'ánic quotations of his sources with Biblical ones, his words in the introduction to the book betray his apprehension at introducing a novel kind of devotion into the Jewish fold. He preempts the disapproval of his co-religionists by justifying himself with the Talmudic adage "Whoso pronounces a word of Wisdom, even a Gentile, is to be called a wise man." The Duties of the Hearts was one of the first classics of Judaeo-Arabic literature to be translated into the holy tongue. The Hebrew version, which greatly attenuated its Islamic stamp, was to have an abiding influence on Jewish spirituality right down to present times, infusing generations of Jewish readers with Sufi notions. After having influenced the Spanish and thereafter the Palestinian Kabbalists, who were particularly interested in Bahyá's reflections on solitary meditation, the Duties of the Hearts was avidly read in the eighteenth century by the Polish Hasidim, who borrowed from it some of their basic ethical concepts, such as quietism, the distinction between external

and internal solitude and that between physical and spiritual warfare. Thus we find in the writings of one of the first Hasidic proponents, Jacob Joseph of Polonnoy, the famous quotation: "Ye have returned from the lesser war, now prepare for the greater war (with one's nature)". Now Bahyá cites this saying in the name of the "Sage", but in reality the Muslim sources upon which he drew attribute it to the Prophet Muhammad!

The works of some later Andalusian authors likewise betray familiarity with Muslim mystical writings. The allegorical commentary on the Song of Songs composed in Arabic by Joseph ibn AqnTn (twelfth century) takes on the character of a Sufi treatise on Divine love. Even more remarkable is the fact that in this book the author provides definitions of love which are culled from al-Qushayri's Risdlah ("Epistle"), one of Sufism's basic textbooks. Furthermore in his Tibb al-nufüs ("Hygiene of the Souls"), Ibn AqnTn does not hesitate to quote the Sufi mystics such as al-Junayd (d. 910) and Ibn Adham, referring to them by their Sufi epithets: shaykh al-ta'ifah, "the elder of the community", and al-ruhdm al-akmal, "the perfect spirit".

These examples, of great interest for the historian of Andalusian Sufism, remained, however, isolated and sporadic, no doubt on account of the waning influence of Sufism itself, relentlessly persecuted on Spanish soil by Malikite intolerance. There is no evidence that even Bahyá's book, notwithstanding its popularity, gave rise to a sizeable movement of a Sufi brand of Jewish pietists. However, elsewhere, the following centuries were
to witness the growth and spread of Sufism in other lands and its sustained influence on Jewish spirituality.

The Jewish Pietist Movement in Egypt

Egypt had long been a hotbed of mysticism. Long after the Therapeuts and the Christian anchorites, the country produced some of the foremost Muslim mystics, such as Dhü al-Nün al-Misrí (796—861) and the greatest Sufi poet, 'Umar ibn al-Farid (d. 1235). Here flourished the great charismatic figures such as Abu'l-Hasan al-Shadhili (d. 1258), Ahmad al-BadawT (d. 1276), AbuTAbbás al-MursI (d. 1287) and Ibn At! Allah (d. 1309), whose influence certainly extended beyond the Islamic community. Under their influence Sufism became progressively institutionalized, and important brotherhoods flourished in the urban centres. No doubt their increasing spiritual fervour had repercussions on the local Jewish populations. Moreover, Egypt had become a haven for the Jewish masses fleeing Almohad persecution in the West and Crusader wars in the East. Such social upheavals accompanied by messianic expectations probably heightened mystical sensitivity. Dissatisfied with the excessive rationalism of Peripatetic philosophy, certain individual Jews in search of deeper religious expression looked towards their immediate spiritual model, the Sufis.

Though the exact period and the personalities involved in the emergence of this tendency remain uncertain, it seems that at the time of the great scholar and leader Moses Maimonides (1135—1204) a number of Jews had already begun to adopt the Sufi way of life. Indeed several documents have survived from this period bearing personal names qualified by the

epithet he-hásid, "the pious". This was no mere honorific title, but designated an individual who followed a spiritual regime akin to that of the Sufis. The interest Sufi literature held for Jews during this period is well attested by the multiple documents brought to light in the Cairo Genizah. The latter, a lumber-room attached to an ancient synagogue, has preserved thousands of sacred writings dating from the medieval period, which were discovered at the end of the nineteenth century. They included numerous texts of a Sufi character, testifying to the popularity of this kind of literature amongst Jewish readers. These manuscripts are basically of two sorts: on the one hand, Muslim Sufi writings either in Arabic characters or copied into Hebrew letters for the convenience of Jewish readers, or, on the other, pietist writings of Sufi inspiration written by Jewish authors.

Amongst the first category are to be found all the tendencies of Sufi literature from the early masters of Baghdad right down to the Illuminationist Isbrdqi school founded by Suhrawardl in the twelfth
century. There are texts by al-Junayd, pages from al-Qushayri's Risdlah, poems by al-Hallaj, the Mahdsin al-majalis by the Andalusian mystic Ibn al-Arif, the Munqidh min al-dalal, al-Ghazzāī,'s spiritual autobiography, al-Shaydhalah's Treatise on Divine Love, Suhrawardl's Kalimdt al-tasawiuuf and his Haydkil al-niir, to name just a few. In addition to these are to be found various texts containing quotations, tales, anecdotes and even songs by Sufi masters.

The second category is made up of the Jewish pietists' own compositions. These include ethical manuals and theological treatises, definitions of mystical states as well as exegetical

works. Though these writings are based on traditional rabbinic themes, they show an attempt to reinterpret the scriptural narrative in harmony with Sufi doctrine, often portraying biblical figures as masters of the Sufi path. They are not however simple judaized adaptations of Muslim texts but original compositions, dextrously transposed in the biblical and rabbinic texture.

The most outstanding author about whom anything substantial is known was none other than Rabbi Abraham (1186—1237), son of the great rationalist Jewish philosopher Moses Maimonides. At the death of his father Abraham became the spiritual leader of Egyptian Jewry and later acceded to a position of political eminence as nagid, "Head of the Jews". Not only was he virtually the supreme religious and political figure of his time but he was also an ardent protagonist of the Sufi form of Jewish pietism henceforth known as hasidiit. It is unknown when he embraced this tendency but it is thought that he was already dedicated to the pietist way of life when he succeeded his illustrious father in 1205. Abraham Maimonides composed a commentary on the Pentateuch wherein he often depicts the ancient biblical characters as pietists in the same way as Sufi literature clothes the Prophet and his companions in the garb of the early Sufis. However Abraham's magnum opus was the Kifdyat al-'abidm ("Compendium for the Servants of God"), a monumental legal and ethical treatise, which, though in many respects similar to his father's Mishneh Torah ("Code of Laws"), is distinctive in the strong propensity he displays therein for mysticism of a manifestly Muslim type. Indeed, far from sharing Baḥyā's misgivings about using Muslim sources, Abraham Maimonides overtly expresses his admiration for the Sufis in whom he sees the heirs of ancient

Israelite traditions. At one point, after having claimed that the true dress of the ancient prophets of Israel was similar to the ragged garments (muraqqa'dt) worn by the Sufis, he declares: "Do not regard as unseemly our comparison of that [the true dress of the prophets] to the conduct of the Sufis, for the latter imitate the prophets [of Israel] and walk in their footsteps, not the prophets in theirs" (Rosenblatt (1927—38), 2: 320). Similarly, the Sufi initiation ritual, consisting in the investiture of the master's cloak (khirqah) was originally practised by the prophets of Israel, according to the author of the Kifdyah:

By casting his cloak over [Elisha], Elijah hinted to him, as if in joyful annunciation, that his garments and dress as well as the rest of his conduct would be like his. Thus he announced to him the fact that Elijah's spiritual perfection would be transferred to him and that he [Elisha] would attain the degree which he himself had attained. Thou art aware of the ways of the ancient saints [awliyd'l of Israel, which are not or but little practised among our contemporaries, that have now become the practice of the Sufis of Islam, "on account of the iniquities of Israel", namely that the master invests the novice [murul\ with a cloak [khirqah] as the latter is about to enter upon the mystical path [tariq]. "They have taken up thine own words" (Deuteronomy 33: 3). This is why we moreover take over from them and emulate them in the wearing of sleeveless tunics and the like.

(Rosenblatt (1927–38), 1: 153)

The idea that Sufi practices are of Jewish origin is repeated by Abraham elsewhere when he deals with the Sufi ascetic discipline:

We see also the Sufis of Islam practise self-mortification by combating sleep and perhaps that practice is derived from the words of [king] David…. Observe then these wonderful traditions and sigh with regret over how they have been transferred from us and appeared amongst a nation other than ours whereas they have disappeared in our midst. My soul shall weep in secret … because of the pride of Israel that was taken from them and bestowed upon the nations of the world.

(Rosenblatt (1927–38), 2: 266)

Unlike his father who had written a purely legal code, Abraham Maimonides emphasized the spiritual significance of the precepts and discussed the "mysteries" they conceal, in a similar manner to the Muslim mystics, such as al-Ghazzal! in his Ihya 'ulum a I-dm. The author of the Kifdyah believed that he had rediscovered some of these mysteries in the traditions preserved by the Sufis, which had been forgotten by the Jews on account of the multiple tribulations of the Exile. This belief provides a key as to the reason why the pietists adopted manifestly Muslim customs. Furthermore, it seems that the pietists, who called themselves "the disciples of the prophets", were profoundly convinced of the imminent renewal of prophecy in Israel. They believed that the Sufi practices were not only originally ancient Jewish traditions but also an integral part of a "prophetic discipline". Thus their restoration to the Jewish fold was meant to accelerate the prophetic process.

These "reforms" included a number of devotional practices, clearly inspired by Muslim models, whose purpose was to enhance the decorum

and purport of synagogue worship. As a preliminary to prayer, the ndgid insisted on the ritual ablution of hands and feet, though not strictly required by Jewish law. On the other hand, this rite was obligatory in Muslim custom and especially emphasized in Sufi literature as being meritorious. Abraham instituted the arrangement of worshippers in rows, as in mosques, facing Jerusalem at all times during the synagogue services. He prescribed different positions during certain prayers, such as standing, kneeling and frequent bowing, as well as the spreading of the hands and weeping in supplication. In addition to canonical prayers, he recommended nightly vigils and daily fasts. However the most telling ritual adopted by the pietists was that of solitary meditation, a characteristic Sufi practice known as khalwah. Here the devotee would retire from society for protracted periods in an isolated and dark place in order to devote himself to worship and meditation. Abraham Maimonides also considered this practice of Jewish origin:

Also do the Sufis of Islam practise solitude in dark places and isolate themselves in them until the sensitive part of the soul becomes atrophied so that it is not even able to see the light. This however requires strong inner illumination wherewith the soul will be preoccupied so as not to be pained over the external darkness. Now Rabbi Abraham he-Hasid used to be of the opinion that solitude in darkness was the thing alluded to in the statement of Isaiah: "Who is among you that feareth the Lord that obeyeth the voice of His servant, who walketh in darkness and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God" (Isaiah 50: 10).

(Rosenblatt (1927–38), 2: 418)

As is known, one of the most typical aspects of the Sufi path is the necessity of spiritual development under the guidance of a master. Abraham Maimonides sees the origin of this principle in the discipline of the ancient prophets:

Know that generally in order lor the Way to attain successfully its true goal \wu$ui\, it must be pursued under the guidance [laslik\ of a person who has already attained this goal, as it is said in the tradition: "Acquire a master" (Abot 1:6). The biblical accounts concerning masters and their disciples are well known; Joshua the servant of Moses was one of his disciples, who, having attained the goal, succeeded him. The prophets adopted the same conduct. Samuel's guide [musallik] was Eli, Elijah was that of Elisha, and Jeremiah that of Barukh son of Neriah. Moreover the "disciples of the prophets" were thus called because the prophets were their spiritual guides. This practice was adopted by other nations (the Sufis), who instituted in imitation of Jewish custom the relation between shaykh and servant, master and disciple … If the wayfarer is capable and remains faithful to instructions, he will attain his goal through the guidance of an accomplished master.

(Rosenblatt (1927–38), 2: 422)

Certain Jewish pietist texts also mention the typical Sufi practice of dhikr, or "spiritual recollection", but so far no details have been discovered on how this specific ritual was carried out. Because of their protracted devotions the pietists established special prayer-halls; it is known, for instance, that Abraham Maimonides possessed his own private synagogue.

In addition to the foregoing practices, other aspects of the pietist discipline of an ascetic nature are to be found in the writings of other members of the pietist circle. Notably, contrary to traditional Jewish ethics, the Jewish pietists, like certain Sufis, advocated celibacy and considered marriage and family responsibilities an impediment to spiritual fulfilment. 'Obadyah Maimonides, Abraham's son, says the following about marriage: "Know that the true mystics of this path strived to perfect their souls before marriage in the knowledge that after begetting spouse and offspring there would be little opportunity for spiritual achievement" (Fenton (1981b): 94). The same author also shunned all material superfluities and taught a regime of extreme austerity:

Cover thy head, let fall thy tears, and let purity follow in thy wake, spend thy days in fasting throughout the day. Delight not in the joys of the vulgar and be not dismayed at that which grieves them. In a word be not sad with their sadness and rejoice not with their merriment. Despise frivolity and laughter, rather observe silence and speak not except out of necessity. Eat not except out of compulsion and sleep not unless overcome, and all the while thy heart should contemplate this pursuit and thy thoughts be engaged therein.

(Fenton (1981b): 116)

The figure of Abraham Maimonides inaugurates a long association of the celebrated Maimonides family with pietism of a Sufi type, lasting, no doubt with some interruptions, for nearly two centuries. Indeed, Abraham's own son, just mentioned, 'Obadyah Maimonides (1228—65), had strong leanings towards Sufism, as can be gathered from his composition al-Maqdlah al-hawdiyyah ("The Treatise of the

Pool"). The latter is an ethical vade-mecum and a mystical manual for the spiritual wayfarer upon the path leading to God through union with the intelligible realm. It is based on the typically Sufi comparison of the heart to a pool which must be cleansed before it can be filled with the vivifying waters of gnosis. Couched in an allusive style, the treatise is replete with Sufi technical terms. Also worthy of note is 'Obadyah's tendency to project Sufi stereotypes into the patriarchal past. Thus Abraham, Isaac and Jacob become wandering hermits practising solitary meditation in the wilderness.

David ben Joshua (c. 1335–1415), the last of the Maimonideans of whom history has kept track, was also interested in Sufism. His work al- Murshid ila t-tafarriid ("The Guide to Detachment"), one of the last creations of neoclassical Judaeo-Arabic literature, represents the most far-reaching synthesis between traditional rabbinical ethics and the spiritual states of the Sufi path. Following the tradition of Sufi manuals which begin with a definition of Sufism, the author first proposes a definition of hasidut. The body of the work is based on an ethical formula taught by the rabbis which David develops as the central motive of a spiritual programme largely construed in the light of the spiritual stations of the Sufi path and the Illuminationist philosophy of Suhrawardl. Thus he derives the initial virtue, zehirilt, normally signifying "precaution", from the root zhr "to shine", associating it with the Illuminationist notion of ishrdq, since the first step on the path to perfection is motivated by the quest for light.

The centrality of the Maimonidean family is further indicated by the fact that a certain number of personalities associated

with the pietist circle were also related to this prestigious dynasty. Abraham Abu Rabi'ah he-Hasld was one of the leaders of the Jewish Sufis in Egypt. He was the author of a mystical commentary on the Song of Songs which is conceived of as an allegorical dialogue between the mystic intoxicated with Divine love and the object of his desire, the beatific vision. Another noteworthy adept of the pietist circle was Rabbi Hanan'el ben Samuel, who was not only a member of Abraham Maimonides' rabbinical court but also his father-in-law. Several Genizah documents refer to him as he-hdsid, the "pietist". He is now known to have been the author of a considerable exegetical work which reflects his stature not only as a philosopher but also as a mystic in so far as his explanations resound with Sufi technical terms. Moreover, Rabbi Hanan'el was a committed pietist activist, for a certain document portrays him alongside his son-in-law defending the movement. Indeed the introduction of these novel practices did not go unchallenged, and the pietists, like many revivalist movements in religious history, met with virulent opposition. Despite Abraham Maimonides' political and religious prestige, which immensely contributed to the furtherance of the pietist movement, he had to face fierce opponents, who even went as far as to denounce him to the Muslim authorities, accusing the pietists of introducing "false ideas", "unlawful changes" and "gentile (Sufi) customs" into the synagogue. Opposition continued during the office as nagid of Abraham's son David Maimonides (1222—1300), whose synagogue was closed down, and who, at one point, was compelled to leave Egypt, seeking refuge in Akko.

This opposition, coupled with the fact that access to the "pietist way" was reserved from its very inception for the select few, may explain why the movement did not gain

universal approval but, with the general decline of Oriental Jewry, gradually disappeared into total oblivion.

Later Influences

Elowever, Sufism continued sporadically to be a source of fascination for individual Jews in ensuing centuries. Mention has already been made of the fact that Rabbi David II Maimonides (c. 1335—1415) showed interest in Sufism. A complaint addressed to him by a Jewish housewife has been preserved in the Genizah, informing him that her husband, infatuated with Sufism, had abandoned her in order to go and live in a Sufi convent under the guidance of the famous Sufi al-Kurani in the Muqattam mountains outside Cairo. As late as the sixteenth century the great Egyptian mystic al-Sha'arani relates in his autobiography the reputation he enjoyed amongst his Jewish admirers who would attend his lectures and request him to write amulets to protect their children. Jews also maintained contacts with Sufis in other localities. According to information provided by the Arab biographer al-Kutubl, the Jews of Damascus would assemble in the house of the Sufi al-Hasan ibn Hud (thirteenth century) in order to study with him Maimonides' Guide of the Perplexed. Did this mean that they sought to interpret the Guide in the light of Sufism? Traces of Sufism are also to be found in the writings of fifteenth-century Yemenite Jews who freely use Sufi concepts and quote verses from the mystical poetry of the Sufi martyr al-Hallaj. In Spain, during the great movement of translation, many Sufi concepts percolated into Jewish literature through the intermediary of Hebrew translations, especially those of the works of the al-Ghazzāī,

brothers. Similarly, but in a completely different part of the Islamic world, the copying into Hebrew characters of Persian Sufi poetry, such as that of Rum! and Sa'di, no doubt contributed to the diffusion of Sufi ideas amongst Persian Jews. It is worthwhile recalling in this context the remarkable figure of Sarmad (d. 1661), the Persian Jew who became a wandering dervish in India.

The Early Kabbalists

Another place of contact which was to produce an abiding influence was the Holy Land, where in Jerusalem and even Safed in the thirteenth century thriving centres of Muslim culture were to be found. The
thirteenth-century Palestinian Kabbalists close to the circle of Rabbi Abraham Abu'l-'Afiyyah (d. after 1291) not only betray a certain number of Sufi practices in their esoteric discipline but also testify to their having directly observed the Sufi dhikr ritual. Abu'l-Afiyyah may himself have encountered Sufis during his brief visit to Akko (Acre) around 1260 or elsewhere in the course of his wide travels. The focal point of his ecstatic method is the practice of hazkdrdh, a term itself strikingly reminiscent of the Arabic dhikr. Independently of canonical prayer, the purpose of this activity was to prepare the devotee for prophetic inspiration. The meditative ritual, practised in an isolated and dark place, as set out in Abu'l-Afiyyah's writings, obviously involves Sufi techniques. After preliminary preparations, the devotee, arrayed in white, adopts a special posture and proceeds to pronounce the Divine name accompanied with respiratory control and movements of the head.

Abu'l-Afiyyah's doctrines were propagated in the East. The Kabbalists of the Holy Land, such as Isaac of Akko, Shem Tob ibn Ga'on and the anonymous author of Shaarey zedeq, adopted the meditative method of his prophetic Kabbalah, further enriching it with elements of Sufi provenance. Isaac of Akko (c. 1270—1340) in particular seemed to have had direct knowledge of Sufi techniques, including solitary meditation (khalwah in Arabic, hitbodedut in Hebrew) and the visualization of letters. Isaac is also an important link in the transmission of these methods to the later Kabbalists of Safed. He himself may have had personal contacts with Sufis, for he had a good knowledge of Arabic. Alternatively, he may have made the acquaintance of David Maimonides and his pietist companions during the latter's exile in Akko (Acre) which lasted until 1289.

The Kabbalists of Safed

The historians of the extraordinary Kabbalistic school of Safed have insufficiently taken into account the influence of the Islamic environment when dealing with the novel practices introduced by the disciples of Rabbi Isaac Lurya (1534–72), himself a native of Egypt. The Turkish traveller Evliya Chelebi testifies that in the sixteenth century, i.e. during the very flowering of Luryanic Kabbalah, Safed was a thriving Sufi centre which possessed its tekkiye, or Sufi convent. It is not unreasonable therefore to suppose that behind some of the mystical rituals initiated by the Kabbalists lie Sufi models. Among the most significant, mention can be made of saint worship and pilgrimages to the tombs of saints and their invocation, which are similar to Muslim practices

connected with the ziydrat rite, the gathering of spiritual brotherhoods (haburot) around the person of the saint, and spiritual concerts (baqashshdt), vigils consisting in the singing of devotional poems, similar to the Sufi sama' ceremony.

However, the most important ritual was that of hitbodediit, "solitary meditation". After a hiatus of more than a century, contemplative elements of a Sufi character resurge in the writings of the sixteenth-century Spanish exiles established in the Holy Land. Though this phenomenon is to be seen largely as a continuation of AbuT'Afiyyah's school, the possibility that elements deriving from the doctrine of the Jewish Sufis may have survived is not to be excluded. Among the first authors to evoke anew this discipline were Judah al-Butin! (d. 1519) in his Sullam ha-'aliyyah ("Ladder of Ascension", a title in itself smacking of Sufism) and Moses Cordovero (d. 1570) in his Pardes rimmonim ("Orchard of Pomegranates"). Meditation and breath control continued to be practised in dark places in order to bring about an internal illumination of the soul. Other techniques observed during the periodic retreats also betray Sufi influence: ritual purity, complete silence, fasting, restriction of sleep and food, confidence in God and, above all, the repetition of Divine names as a route to ecstasy.

The Shabbatians

The last significant contact between Jewish and Muslim mystics took place during the religious turmoil brought about by the mystical messiah Shabbatay Zevi (d. 1675), whose tragic destiny led him to conversion to Islam. During his confinement in Adrianople, while still inwardly practising

Judaism, Shabbatay Zevi would attend dhikr seances in the Bektashi convent at Hizirlik and, it seems, established contacts with the famous khahvatii mystic, Muhammad al-Niyazi. His apostate followers, known as the Doenme, continued to maintain close relations with the mystical brotherhoods in Turkey and in particular with the syncretistic Bektashis, from whom they borrowed a certain number of rituals and liturgical poems in Turkish which were included in their ceremonies.

It is well known that the eighteenth-century East European Hasidic movement took root and first grew in the southern Polish province of Podolia, which had once been under Turkish rule and was a hotbed of Shabbatian activities. The sectarians in this area continued to maintain close ties with their brethren under Ottoman rule in Salonika. It is interesting to speculate to what extent Sufi ideas percolated into Podolia and influenced the nascent Hasidic movement. The veneration of the zaddiq (Hasidic saint), visiting the tombs of saints, the importance of music and dance as forms of worship provide very striking and thought-provoking analogies to Sufi models. Finally, the phenomenon of hitbodediit, sometimes also accompanied with the visualization of letters composing the Divine name, also occupied an important place in certain Hasidic courts, such as that of Braslav. Although, as we have seen, this practice was
probably of Islamic origin, its presence in Hasidism can be traced back through Jewish channels to kabbalistic circles, which had in their time been influenced by Sufi practices.

Conclusion

The bilateral influence of Jewish and Islamic mysticism entails one of the most intimate chapters of their constructive interaction. As such it provides a precious testimony of their reciprocal receptivity in the esoteric domain even though in the exoteric one they remained mutually exclusive. Furthermore, with what concerns the Jewish pietist movement in Egypt and the Kabbalistic school in the Holy Land, it is noteworthy that this cross-fertilization came about during one of the most fecund and intense periods in the formation of Jewish spirituality. These crossroads, of great significance for the history of religion, undoubtedly open up new and far-reaching perspectives of interfaith exchange, whose contours are yet to be explored.

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CHAPTER 46

Jewish Averroism

Oliver Leaman

Averroes (Ibn Rushd) is a philosopher who came to hold far greater sway among Jews and Christians than he ever exercised over Muslims. The sort of philosophy which he advocated, broadly modelled on Peripateticism with the leading role being given to Aristotle, ceased to flourish after his death as far as the West of the Islamic world was concerned. It continued to a degree in the East, often being thoroughly merged into broader and more mystical forms of philosophical expression, but it is true to say that there is not much evidence of a continuing interest in Averroes to any persistent degree for long after his death. Historians of Islamic philosophy often claim that while Averroes may have thought that he had won the argument with al-Ghazzali and had established the desirability of the study of philosophy within a Muslim environment, yet it was al-GhazzalT who had the last laugh, since the thought of Averroes seems to have failed to gain any particularly significant grip on the imagination of subsequent Muslim thinkers. It is only really in the twentieth century that Muslim writers have discovered the interest which his thought possesses on a number of

topics, and especially where the relationship between religion and philosophy is concerned.

Averroes came to have a very different career in the cultural world of J ews and Christians, though, and among the latter he was important both in the medieval period and in the Renaissance. In the Jewish world he stimulated a lot of philosophical work, ranging from the thirteenth century up to the Renaissance, and many translations were made of his works. Interestingly, the translation into Hebrew of Averroes took in his more popular works such as his Decisive Treatise (Fasl al-maqdl) which came to have quite an impact on the Jewish world. This work is brief, very clear and requires no previous knowledge, and seems to have formed part of the arguments in the Jewish world concerning
the respective merits of religion and philosophy. Averroes' more technical works, and especially his commentaries on Aristotle, were also much studied, but primarily by those with a fairly extensive background in philosophy. Averroes was regarded as the best commentator on Aristotle, and the latter as by far the greatest of the philosophers, so anyone who wished to enter into the Aristotelian debates which were so common in the Middle Ages had to engage also with Averroes and his interpretation. In the Jewish world many of the leading thinkers such as Gersonides, Hasdai Crescas and Abravanel came inevitably to use Averroes as their path to Aristotle, although they were quite capable also of distinguishing between the views of the Stagirite and his commentator on occasions. Given the terseness and abstraction of Aristotle's style, he seemed to call for an interpreter, and Averroes fitted the bill neatly with his extensive set of commentaries, in a variety of forms, on Aristotle's works.

Although many of the major Jewish philosophers wrote about Averroes, it would be wrong to call them Averroists. The Averroists had a particular view of the relationship between philosophical and religious language, and this view has its roots in the thought of Averroes. Aristotelian thought seemed to throw up some propositions which had to be accepted as true, and yet which also seem to be contrary to Judaism as it is traditionally regarded. For example, Aristotle produced what seemed to be strong arguments for the eternity of the world, which are difficult to reconcile with the creation ex nihilo doctrine as it appears to figure in Genesis. Aristotle's God sets the processes of the world into motion without appearing to take any interest in what goes on subsequently, and notions such as prophecy and miracle are given a naturalistic interpretation. How can this be reconciled with the idea of a personal God rewarding and punishing his creatures for their behaviour in the world, and so knowing what takes place, and not being limited by anything in his construction of the world? How can this be reconciled with the accounts in the Bible of the communication between God and his people through the prophets, and God's creation of miracles to guide his people in particular ways? Those Jewish philosophers who were impressed with the sort of answer which Averroes gave to the Islamic version of this dilemma are those who are properly called Averroists.

It is always an interesting question to wonder how closely those thinkers who are called Averroists are to the ideas of Averroes himself. The answer is often that they are not that close. After all, the environment within which Averroes was writing was quite different from that of the Jewish and Christian worlds. In Judaism there did not exist a theology in the same way as the systems of Kalām operated, and much of

Averroes' work is on the links between philosophy and theology, understood as a rival approach to the interpretation of religious texts. That is, the muta- kallimun argued that they were the right people to interpret difficult

scriptural texts, and that they had a way of doing it which is entirely independent of the methodology of philosophy. Averroes argued that it is only really the philosophers who can understand all the features of such texts, since the theologians are limited to dialectic (jadal) and more limited forms of reasoning as compared with the philosophers and their access to demonstrative reasoning (burhdn) which is capable of coming to a determinate answer to the question set by the text. Despite the superiority of philosophy in this respect, he insisted that the philosophical approach should not be widely broadcast, since it will only succeed in confusing the ordinary believer, who will either come to doubt that the normal interpretation of the text is valid or will end up by wondering about the orthodoxy and acceptability of philosophy. Both of these consequences are undesirable, and it is unnecessary according to Averroes to bother ordinary believers with the sort of subtlety of interpretation of which either philosophy or theology are capable. Such believers have no problems in applying their understanding of the text to their lives, which is what the text is there for, and there is no point in threatening their understanding of its meaning.

Is there, then, a religious truth and a philosophical truth which can be contrary to each other? Not according to Averroes. There is just one truth, and there are a number of ways in which that truth can be expressed. It can be expressed in a philosophically sophisticated way which will explain precisely the logical and rational features of the truth, and which will appeal only to that limited proportion of the

community which is capable of understanding that approach. It might be expressed theologically or legally, using dialectical reasoning, which employs as premisses statements which are only justified within a particular system such as a religion or a legal system. It might even be expressed rhetorically, sophis- tically or poetically, where the object is to broadcast the meaning of the truth to the widest possible constituency, since one needs in such a case to be able to use language which is going to be effective for an audience which is not given to much conceptual complexity. Although there are a number of different approaches to transmitting a truth, it is important to grasp that for Averroes there is no more than one truth which is being communicated, albeit via a variety of techniques. The description of Averroists as advocates of a "double-truth'' theory is only valid if it is borne in mind that what is at issue here is just one truth with two (or more) forms of description. Were Averroists really to have argued that there could be two propositions which are contrary and which are both true, their theory would hardly be worth considering except as an example of an influential error.

But the Jewish Averroists were far from slavish followers of Averroes himself. They combined their interpretation of Averroes with generous helpings of Maimonides, and often bits of Abraham ibn Ezra. Maimonides
was just as fascinated as Averroes with the link between religion and philosophy, and shared the latter's enormous respect for Aristotle. Although there are marked similarities between their work in many places, Averroes came to be seen as the more radical thinker, perhaps because he was not prepared to criticize Aristotle on any account, whereas there are issues like the eternity of the world over which Maimonides held that Aristotle had not really presented a

demonstrative proof. Abraham ibn Ezra is a very different thinker from either Averroes or Maimonides, with his leanings towards mysticism and emphasis upon the "secret" aspect of religious texts. As one might expect, a philosophy which borrowed from aspects of all these thinkers proved to be interesting and controversial.

Perhaps the first clear Jewish Averroist is Isaac Albalag, who came from the Pyrenees region in the second half of the thirteenth century. He held Averroes in far greater respect than even Maimonides, and certainly compared with his Islamic predecessors. Albalag translated al- GhazzAlī Intentions of the Philosophers into Hebrew, and suggested that this book was a genuine representation of al-Ghazzali's views, a mistake which was made in Christian Europe also when it was translated into Latin. In this book al-Ghazzali sets out as clearly as he can the main arguments of the philosophers whom he later on was to attempt to demolish, and he would have been shocked to have discovered that his description of his opponents' theories was taken to be his own view. Albalag agrees with al-Ghazzāī, that there are definitely particular principles of religion which have to be accepted, like the existence of reward and punishment for our actions, the survival of the soul after death and the nature of providence which allows God to observe our behaviour. In his Sefer Tikkun ha-Deot ("Book of Setting Doctrines Right") he appreciates that Averroes both criticizes the normal interpretation of these very important notions while also insisting that they must be accepted by ordinary people who are not accustomed or able to do philosophy. By following the ordinary beliefs of their faith ordinary believers will be able to attain a level of happiness which is appropriate to them, and, as one would expect, any religion will make

provision for unsophisticated adherents' ultimate well-being and happiness. There is a different level of happiness which is available to those more intellectually gifted, that which is appropriate to those who can understand more of the reality of the world and the nature of that reality. Only philosophers can operate successfully with demonstrative reasoning, reasoning which uses as its premises propositions which are certainly true and which works from them syllogistically to conclusions which are valid and which describe aspects of the structure of reality. Philosophers are the only people who really understand how the world is organized, and for them this knowledge is part of their happiness. The implication is that the philosophers enjoy not just a different version of happiness from the ordinary
believers but also a higher level of happiness, which they might be thought to deserve as a result of their greater intellectual efforts and natural qualities.

Averroes attacked the right of the mutakallimun to interpret difficult religious texts. He claimed that they had no certain methodology which is capable of producing a determinate and final answer to such issues, and the result is that the faith of the ordinary believer might be challenged, in that the latter would come to doubt the veracity of the religion whose theology was incapable of coming to a clear and single answer to an interpretative problem. When it is a matter of trying to understand what a prophet means by his statement, one needs to investigate the demonstrative basis of the statement, and then observe how the prophet framed the statement in such a way as to get the truth over to the greatest variety of mentalities in the community. Albalag tends to diverge from Averroes when it comes to understanding prophecy, and he replaces the latter's critique of theology

(which of course did not really exist in the same sense in Judaism) with a similar critique of Kabbalistic explanation. The Jewish mystical tradition was all too ready to provide interpretations of difficult prophetic passages, but Albalag was unimpressed by the variety of answers which were provided, and thought that this indicated a looseness in methodology which compares markedly with the determinacy of the demonstrative approach. If it appears to be difficult to reconcile a prophetic passage with a philosophical reading of the prophetic passage, we have to accept both the literal and the philosophical interpretations, but we have to accept them in different ways. The literal sense is something which we believe we should understand completely were we only to be in the position of the prophets who had originally produced the text or the events which the text described, and we have to assume that the meaning of that text is not incompatible with its philosophical rationale.

This might seem to miss the point, which surely is to show how two apparently very different understandings of a text can both be true at the same time. The example which Albalag uses frequently is that of the creation of the world, which in the Bible is not expressed clearly in terms of an eternal creation, the position which Aristotle seems to have held on the Neoplatonic version so popular in Islamic and Jewish philosophy. Albalag criticizes Maimonides for insisting that Aristotle was not sure whether the world is eternal or not, and Albalag has no doubt both that Aristotle thought that the world is eternal and that Maimonides agreed with him. If Maimonides claimed that Aristotle went too far in thinking that there was a demonstrative answer to this question then he was saying that because he did not want to go against the beliefs of the ordinary believers in the

community, whose faith might be threatened if they thought that the world was eternal. His motives are acceptable here, Albalag claims, and there is no need to attack the beliefs of the simple believer by widely disseminating philosophical views, but it is important for the integrity of philosophy that one acknowledges the truth of the position at least among those who are capable of understanding it. One would then have to accept the createdness of the world through faith and its eternity through reason, and also accept that these can be reconciled, even though one cannot see how.

This might seem to be a serious evasion. What reason have we to believe that the truth which the prophet expresses is in fact precisely the same truth as the philosopher understands? Should we not require some proof which establishes the congruity between these two truths? Albalag would reply that this is unnecessary. We know the philosophical truth through our ability to derive it in an appropriately demonstrative manner. We know the religious truth through its coming down to us via an approved method, in this case, where prophecy is concerned, through oral tradition. We get two different answers to the same question, and we know that they must both be true, since we know, as philosophers and as Jews, that the sources of the truth are valid. Since these sources are valid, they can refer only to one truth, even though we may not completely understand how they can be reconciled. In the same way as we come to trust reason, so we are also entitled to trust religion. There is no point in using reason as a corrective to religion, since there can be no basic incompatibility between them. They are just talking in different ways about the same thing.

The next major Jewish Averroist was Joseph ibn Caspi, born in 1279 in Provence and the author of many philosophical and theological texts. His main philosophical influences were Averroes, Maimonides and Abraham ibn Ezra. Maimonides had argued that many of the accounts of what happened in the Bible were in fact prophetic allegories and required interpretation in a more subtle and complex way. Caspi suggested by contrast that these were often quite literally true, and an accurate guide to what took place. He criticizes Maimonides' approach using Averroes' theory according to which miracles are explicable in principle as natural events. Caspi argues that to understand a miracle we need to grasp the precise context in which the event described by the miracle took place. He makes a similar point about prophecy. We have to think in terms of what sort of audience the prophet set out to impress, and what they would know at the time which we now do not know any longer. One of the talents of prophets lies in predicting the future, and they are able to do this because they are skilled at working from their present knowledge to the future - they understand how the present develops into the future. There is nothing especially mysterious in this, it is as though they understand natural laws when others do not, and so they are able to tell what is going to happen. Caspi implies that we would not be so surprised at the success of prophecy if we lived at the time of the prophet, and could observe the truth of their predictions, but, since we cannot put ourselves in such a position, we just have to accept that there is a natural explanation for the success of prophecy and so come to accept its veracity.

Caspi emphasizes in a very Averroistic way the distinction which exists between religious and philosophical statements. One point which he makes is that many of the former are not

supposed to be descriptive anyway, but are there to move us to action, and the important aspect of religion is its ability to direct us practically. What is important about prophecy and miracles is that they inspire people to behave in the right sort of way – the truth of what they claim is of secondary importance. Since prophetic and scientific statements are so distinct, it is hardly surprising that they do not always agree. Part of Caspi's approach to this issue stems from Abraham ibn Ezra, who argued that one of the tasks of religious philosophy was to get back to the original meanings of the biblical text, since only then could we really understand what the text is about. If we had access to these original meanings then we would understand how the philosophical and the religious meanings cohere, but we know enough now to understand that they must cohere even though we do not understand precisely how they cohere. Caspi does not think that the secrets of interpretation have to be restricted to the intellectual elite, which certainly sets him apart from both Averroes and Maimonides. The secrets have to remain secrets because we are all too far removed in both time and place from the original events. We no longer know the way in which the account of the event is to be taken, so all that we are left with is either a philosophically acceptable version of that account or an interpretation which comes to us through religion. That is why for Caspi a literal interpretation can be accepted even by the sophisticated believer, because he or she will realize that wondering in detail about the meaning of the literal interpretation is not going to get one much further on in understanding what the text is about. Where the literal interpretation differs from the philosophical, we can be confident that were we able to return to the time and place of the biblical event we would understand how to reconcile these two interpretations.

The Jewish thinker who was the most "orthodox" Averroist is Moses Narboni, born in Perpignan around 1300, who lived for about sixty-two years. Among the many works he wrote were several important commentaries on Averroes, and he was one of the few philosophers who managed to use Averroes against Maimonides, recognizing that the former would have been very critical of the Neoplatonic metaphysics of the latter. His discussion of the active intellect in Averroes' thought is particularly interesting. The active intellect played a crucial role in Averroes' thought, as it did in the whole of medieval philosophy, and it was taken to be the principle of rational thought. As our thinking becomes increasingly

perfected, it becomes gradually more abstract and identical with the active or agent intellect. We move from thinking using our imagination, which inevitably involves the material images of the sense faculty, to using progressively intelligible ideas, and so getting further away from the material part of us. The more perfect our thought becomes, the less material it is, and the more our ability to think rationally controls our thought as a whole the better developed we are as thinking beings.

This model of thinking plays a useful part in Narboni's description of prophecy and miracles. The prophet, through the relative perfection of his thinking, is able to understand how the future will turn out, but this is not only a formal kind of knowledge. He has the ability, as a prophet, to present his views of the future in ways which are capable of moving the community to action. That is, his intellectual thought has a material effect, and this effect is his ability to translate his knowledge into language which will move the community to practical action. It is called "material" precisely because it relates to the emotional and physical side of human life. The

prophet may need to call upon examples and stories which can resonate with the community, and help them understand imaginatively what he understands intellectually. The imagination is in the language of medieval psychology inevitably a material faculty, in the sense that it uses as its mechanisms ideas and experiences derived from our experience of the external world. It is clear that.Narboni is using a kind of Neoplatonic language here, since he talks in terms of a hierarchy of existents where each intellect is linked with an existent, the latter instantiating the former. The ideas of the prophet give rise to the existence of the material phenomenon of prophecy, which is expressed in terms of the effectiveness of the prophet's language in inspiring the community.

The value of this theory is not entirely dependent upon Neoplatonism, however. The sort of connection which that doctrine established between intellects and existents can be represented as a connection between religious principles and actions. The notion of what should be done from a religious point of view results in the creation of that state of affairs, as religious doctrines have as their material aspect a certain kind of practice. The link between theory and practice is a particularly Averroistic idea, following the unified approach which Averroes sought to take to those dichotomies such as mind and body, religion and philosophy, and the Active Intellect and individual thinkers. The Torah, which is perfect, is a system of doctrines which are true and which have as their material aspects those practices which are capable of bringing about a valuable kind of life. The doctrines and the practices are just two sides of the same coin, as it were. To understand how the Torah does this, to grasp the system as a

whole, is clearly possible only for an extraordinarily gifted individual, and here Narboni's Moses replaces Averroes' Muhammad. Must there be such an individual? Narboni, like Averroes, thinks that there must, since they both adhere to the principle of plenitude. According to this principle, if something is possible then in an eternal universe it must be actual at some time. Moses seems to fit the description adequately of the human being whose intellect was so finely developed that it could grasp the point of the whole of the Torah. More limited thinkers are unable to carry out this sort of intellectual feat, and their adherence to the Torah should be on the basis of faith alone, with the assurance that there is a rational basis, albeit not one which is entirely available to them. We see here the approach of Averroes yet again. Ordinary believers need not worry about the basis of their faith, they should be confident that it is well founded and not seek to discover the reasons for it where they are incapable of understanding those reasons. Only those capable of doing philosophy, and this represents a very small minority, should concern themselves about the rationale for the Torah, while the majority of the community should accept the language of the prophets as representing the plain truth. If ordinary people come to see the prophets are intent on representing philosophical truths in imaginative language in order to impress the masses and keep them to their duty, they will come to wonder why they should observe the law and what the point of their observance is. It is far better to leave them content with the literal meaning of religious texts, for then at least they grasp the practical aspect of the truth.

The last major Jewish Averroist was Elijah Delmedigo, who lived around 1460—93, and who had a major influence on Jewish intellectual life in the Renaissance. He wrote in both

Hebrew and Latin, largely on the works of Averroes, but his most celebrated work is undoubtedly his Behinat ha-Dat or "Examination of Religion". This is largely based on Averroes' Fasl al-maqdl, and to start with follows the doctrine of that work, sharply differentiating the roles of religious and philosophical writing. Where Delmedigo disagrees with Averroes is in the latter's discussion of the apparent contradictions between aspects of the Torah and philosophically respectable theses. These do not have to coincide, and when one considers that the laws specified by the Torah have as their aim a political end one can see that there is no problem in accepting religious laws for political reasons and philosophical truths for intellectual reasons. The point of the Torah is to help the masses find a route to happiness, but they need not bother themselves about the point of their religion if they have not the intellectual equipment to make sense of that question. Are not the principles of religion and the principles of philosophy basically the same, as Averroes argued? Not for Delmedigo. He seems to be opposed to the main Averroistic project, the reconciliation of religion and philosophy, and not just for ordinary believers. The basis of his argument is that religion and philosophy are very distinct

enterprises and it should not be expected that they can be translated into each other's terms. It might be argued that this represents Renaissance rather than medieval thinking, for it brings with it the assertion that the realms of discourse of religion and philosophy are quite distinct. Clearly we are approaching modernity here, and it is hardly surprising that Averroes comes to be seen as a less important thinker. In fact, the intellectual effort came to take the form of translating religious language using the Kabbalah as opposed to

philosophy, which shows how distinct from philosophy that language was taken to be.

There were naturally far more Jewish Averroists than we have considered here, and it is worth mentioning in particular Joseph ibn Waqar and Moses ibn Crispin. Many thinkers in the Jewish intellectual world felt that they had to engage with Averroes at some level or other, but this was never a slavish reproduction of the actual writings of the Muslim thinker. Jewish Averroism is clearly quite distinct both from the philosophy of Averroes himself and from Christian Averroism. For one thing, Averroes was generally linked with Maimonides, and often also with Abraham ibn Ezra, and some thinkers such as Narboni were even involved in trying to introduce Kabbalistic notions into their development of the philosophy of Averroes. It was only with the coming of the Renaissance that interest in Averroes declined, and that was largely owing to a reduction in interest in Aristotle. Averroes' chief claim to fame in the Jewish world lay in his expertise in expounding Aristotle, and once the latter fell out of fashion, so did his primary commentator.

One of the distinctive contributions of Jewish Averroism is its approach to the connection between religious and philosophical truths. The Decisive Treatise had established that philosophy is not only acceptable from a religious point of view but is really required as a mode of study by the intelligent enquirer. The need to be cautious about trying to translate religion into philosophy was taken very seriously by the Jewish Averroists, and for two reasons. Philosophy and religion are very different activities, and there is little point in trying to reduce one to the other. Secondly, the idea that the truths of Judaism cannot be reduced to philosophy might lead

to scepticism and disbelief. It might even lead to people wondering what the point is in maintaining adherence to one religion as opposed to another. This was far from just an academic point in the Middle Ages, given the determined efforts by both Islam and Christianity to convert Jews to their faiths. This pressure was resisted by the Jewish Averroists, who argued that there were good philosophical reasons for not becoming Christians, since the principles of Christianity were flawed owing to their self-contradictory nature.

The Jewish Averroists distinguished between notions which are possible albeit unlikely, and which can be miraculously brought about by
the deity, and those ideas which even God could not actualize, since they are impossible in themselves and only an imperfect deity (who does not realize this) would try to bring them into existence. There were a whole categoiy of important theological notions in Christianity such as that of God becoming man, the incarnation, the Trinity, transubstantiation and the Virgin Birth, which were criticized as impossible in themselves, and so inconceivable as the products of a perfect creator. Although the principles of Judaism, in so far as Judaism has principles (which was a controversial issue in itself), cannot be established as true through philosophy, they can be demonstrated to be rational. While philosophy cannot show that one religion is superior, in the sense of more firmly based upon reason, than another, it can show that some religions lack a rational basis altogether, and so should not even be considered as competitors with Judaism.

One might think that this strategy is disingenuous, since it seems to ignore the fact that for Averroes, as for Aristotle, the distinction between rational and natural necessity is

sometimes very slim indeed. Many accounts of miraculous events would be ruled out as offending against the principles of reason on Averroes' own account, and they would require considerable modification before they could be accepted as rational possibilities. The use of Maimonides here proved to be helpful. It could then be argued that the stories of the miracles should not be taken literally to be true, by the philosophically sophisticated. They can then be understood as having a message which is itself perfectly rational, while the way in which it is presented to the masses possibly offends rationality. This does not matter, since they will not realize that there is a problem here anyway. The Jewish Averroists could use Abraham ibn Ezra to argue that we are so distant in both time and place from the miraculous events that we do not know exactly what they are supposed to represent. We do not entirely understand what the language in which they are described means, nor how astrological forces then current lead to those changes in the world of generation and corruption. This variant on the approach of Averroes to this issue proved fruitful in the creation of a mature Jewish philosophy which owed a lot to its Islamic predecessors but which was not frightened to step out on its own.

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VII

Philosophy and its parts

CHAPTER 47

Metaphysics

Charles Genequand

Whereas the other great divisions of philosophy (logic, physics, ethics, etc.) are defined in relation to a clearly identifiable object or field of study, metaphysics owes its name to a book, Aristotle's Metaphysics, whose title refers to the treatises placed after the Physics in the collection of his works. Moreover, the proper subject-matter of that book is largely problematic: unlike the Physics, for instance, which studies the material world of generation and decay, the bulk of the Metaphysics is devoted to looking for its subject matter and trying to define it. An important consequence of this is that for a long time metaphysical writings mostly assumed the form of commentaries on the founding text of Aristotle. The existence of a metaphysical reflection in Islam is thus closely dependent on the availability of translations of that work, although other sources were also used. A nearly complete translation of Aristole's work (some books seem never to have been translated at all) was made by a certain Usṭat (Eustathius?) about the time of al-Kindi and is preserved in the commentary of Ibn Rushd (Averroes). Several other translations followed, all fragmentary.[1] Owing to the difficulty of the text, the Muslim philosophers often preferred

to use paraphrases and summaries, among which those by Alexander of Aphrodisias and Themistius were especially appreciated.[2]

Neoplatonic texts were also translated, but their influence on the falasifah was not as profound as might be expected. Some treatises by Plotinus and Proclus were made available to Muslims in the days of al-Kindi, [3] extracts from Plotinus' Enneads were patched together under the title of The Theology of Aristotle, and a number of propositions from Proclus' Elements of Theology were adapted in various guises, such as the Book of the Pure Good, and falsely ascribed to Aristotle. The confusion (or should we say the deception?) was made easier by the fact that the more specific Neoplatonic tenets had been watered down to the point of being almost unrecognizable. The basic hierarchical structure, intellect–soul–nature, could be deduced from those texts, but the very special status of the One beyond intellect and being was totally erased.

While it is important to be aware of the genealogy of the concepts used by the falasifah, this should not blind us to the new meanings these were often given by being inserted into different contexts. In the same way as the early mosques are unmistakably mosques even though elements of their technical features can be traced back to ancient churches or other monuments, the synthesis achieved in Islamic philosophy assumes a clearly recognizable form which differentiates it from its parent despite the general likeness.

What is Metaphysics?

Metaphysics is variously designated in Arabic philosophical literature by the expressions ma ba'd (fawq, wara') al-ṭabi'ah (what is after (above, beyond) nature), al-falsafat al-ula (first philosophy), ilahiyyat (theology, divinity) or even ḥikmah (wisdom). All these terms except the last derive historically from Greek equivalents and their use, in the first stages of philosophical reflection in Islam, seems to have been dictated by the usage of the respective Greek sources or models of the Muslim authors more than by their literal meaning or their correctness. Thus, at the beginning of his treatise On First Philosophy (Fi'l-falsafat al-ula), al-Kindi explains that first philosophy is so called because it is the science of the first Reality (ḥaqq) which is the cause of all reality, and knowing a thing requires knowing its cause.[4] A little further on he mentions the study of the things above nature (fawq al-ṭabi'ah), i.e. immaterial things, the relation between the First Cause and immaterial things in general remaining so far unexplained. What is clear, however, is the contrast between natural things, which have both matter and motion, and immaterial ones, which have neither.[5] The third chapter of the same tract is devoted to a long discussion of unity and multiplicity culminating in the renewed affirmation of the existence of a First Cause "higher and nobler than all things and prior to them which is the cause of their being and permanence".[6] One of the reasons for this is that it is impossible to postulate an infinite series of causes. The First Cause, moreover, is one; it is neither motion, nor soul, nor intellect, nor any other thing, but it is the cause of all other things. This causality is also described as creation (ibda') and

emanation (fayḍ). In the epistle On the Number of Aristotle's Books, metaphysics (ma ba'd al-ṭabi'ah or ma ba'd al-ṭabi'ah) is the science of immaterial things and of God as efficient and final cause of the universe.[7]

In his Philosophy of Aristotle al-Farabi explains in a few lines that metaphysics (ma ba'd al-ṭabi'ah) investigates the existents from a point of view different from that of natural philosophy.[8] But another passage
of the same work affords us a glimpse of his conception of the relation between the two disciplines: the study of the heavenly bodies' essence does not belong to natural philosophy because the latter deals only with beings falling under the ten categories. But there are beings which fall outside the categories, such as the Active Intellect or the thing which imparts their motion to the heavenly bodies.[9] It is thus necessary to study beings in a more comprehensive fashion than that of natural philosophy, and this more comprehensive study, which represents humanity's highest achievement and highest goal, is metaphysics.

In his short epistle On the Aims of Aristotle's Metaphysics (rrid bad al-ṭabi'ah), al-Farabi shows himself to be aware of a duality of purpose in the work of the master: it contains a general science of being and a theology. Many people, he says, have wrongly imagined that the subject-matter of this book is God, the intellect, the soul and what pertains to these entities; but only book Lam (= Lambda = XII) corresponds to this definition. Metaphysics is a universal science ('ilm kulli) investigating such general concepts as being, unity, species, accidents and so on. But theology (al-'ilm al-ildhf) is a part of this science because God is the principle of being in general.[10]

The fullest treatment of the problem of determining the exact subject-matter(s) of metaphysics is, as expected, that of Ibn Sina (Avicenna). The term he favours to designate this discipline is that of ildhiyydt, which is the title of the metaphysical part of his main philosophical encyclopedia al-Shifd'. But he is careful to accommodate the other traditional denominations of metaphysics and attempts a synthesis of the different views taken of the matter, showing them to be but different ways of envisaging the same discipline. Thus, theology (ildhiyydt) inquires into the things which are separate from matter, the first cause of natural beings and the cause of causes and principle of principles which is God. There is in addition a "first philosophy" which provides the principles of the other sciences: it is also properly called "wisdom" (hikmah): the object of this science is variously described as (1) the best science of the best object of science; (2) the truest and most certain science; (3) the knowledge of the first causes of the universe. But these are merely three different descriptions of the same science.[11]

Here Ibn Sina introduces a distinction between a science's subject-matter (mawdu j and its object, or goal (matlub). The subject-matter of any one science is taken for granted (musallam) in that science which merely investigates its "modes" (ahwdl). God is the goal, not the subject-matter, of this science,[12] and so are the ultimate causes (asbdb quswct). What is then the subject-matter of metaphysics? It must be something which is taken for granted in this science: no science can demonstrate its own subject-matter, for this would imply the existence of a higher science as starting-point of the demonstration. Being as being (al-mawjud bi-md huwa mawjud) is therefore the primary subject-matter of this science,

because the study of the properties of being is at the same time the study of its principles. Moreover, the principle is not the principle of the whole of being, because in that case it would be the principle of itself, which is impossible. The whole of being has no principle: the principle is the principle of the caused being (malul) only.[13] In this way, Ibn Sina tries to escape from the pitfall of infinite regress.

This science is subdivided into several parts: (1) the ultimate causes, i.e. the causes of every caused being; (2) the First Cause from which every caused being emanates (yafiḍu); (3) the properties of being; (4) the principles of the particular sciences. It deserves the name of "first philosophy" in two senses: as science of the first in being, i.e. the First Cause, and as science of the first in generality (or inclusiveness), i.e. being and unity. As knowledge of God and of the immaterial causes of the universe, it is a "divine" science. As to the term "metaphysics", literally "what is after nature", it refers to the fact that natural, or sensible, bodies are what we perceive first. If we consider the essence of this science it should rather be called "what is before nature".[14]

What Ibn Sina sketches thus in the first pages of his Ilahiyyat is an attempt to reconcile the two apparently conflicting aspects of Aristotle's metaphysics: a science of being as such, and a study of the divine and immaterial causes of the physical world. How the programme is to be fulfilled we shall consider in more detail later on.

One of the most striking features of Ibn Rushd's metaphysical works and particularly his so-called Great Commentary (Tafsir)[15] is the complete failure to distinguish different aspects or parts of the science of metaphysics corresponding

to the different terms that traditionally serve to designate it and which he uses quite interchangeably.[16] It is true that the form of the commentary is not conducive to the expression of personal opinions, and Ibn Rushd for one tends to take over in each case the term which Aristotle himself is using in the passage commented upon, thus reproducing to a large extent the ambiguities of the Aristotelian metaphysics. For instance, he uses the name 'ilm ilahi in the only passage of the Metaphysics where Aristotle explicitly defines its subject-matter as theologikH.[17] Metaphysics is there regarded as the science of the substance that is both unmoved and separate from matter, as opposed to physics or natural philosophy which deal with the movable and material substance, and to mathematics which deals with the substance that is unmoved but separate from matter in definition only. Ibn Rushd insists that the "separate" substance is the proper subject-matter of metaphysics, but a distinction must be maintained between the movable eternal things (i.e. the heavenly bodies) and their causes which are unmoved and eternal; both, however, are the objects of metaphysics as understood by Ibn Rushd.[18] This comes out very clearly in a crucial passage where Aristotle does not mention theology or separate substances at all:

he [Aristotle] said concerning natural philosophy that it is second in respect to first philosophy and its task, [19] for the separate things which are the proper subject-matter of first philosophy are the principles of the subject-matter of natural science, and natural science is second in rank with regard to it, and its subject-matter is one of the tasks of the subject-matter of first philosophy which is the divine things (i.e. the heavenly bodies).

Thus the proper subject-matter of first philosophy or metaphysics is the realm of the divine, separate things, i.e. the heavenly bodies and their causes or principles.

What the concrete content of this philosophy is we shall see presently. The question which now arises concerns the place and function assigned by Ibn Rushd to the general study of being, or the study of being as being (mawjud bi-ma huwa mawjud), and its relation to the "divine science". Such a question is difficult to answer because Ibn Rushd is mostly concerned to follow Aristotle's text step by step without raising the general problem of the coherence of his model. Ibn Rushd however states clearly that metaphysics deals with the principles of all kinds of substance, because the latter is eminently being. Metaphysics studies all kinds of substance, both movable and eternal, but from a standpoint different from that of natural philosophy. Moreover the eternal and unmoved substance is eminently the object of metaphysics.

But in order to define more precisely the relation obtaining between the two kinds of substance and between the two disciplines we must turn to the cosmology of the falasifah.

The Cosmological Problem and the Theory of Emanation

There is a general consensus among the Muslim philosophers about the existence of two realms: the material world of

nature, of the things subject to generation and decay, and an immaterial, separate world. One of the main problems of Islamic philosophy is to determine the kind of relationship linking the two realms together. Aristotle had admitted the existence of such a link in vague and tantalizing allusions, but apart from the obvious fact that the yearly motion of the sun along the ecliptic, by causing the seasonal differences, is the source of the life-cycle of generation and decay, his views on the subject remained programmatic.

The basic idea that the heavenly bodies and especially the planets (including of course the sun and the moon) occupy an intermediate position between the wholly immaterial being, normally identified with God, and the natural world of generation and decay appears in different guises in all the philosophical systems of Classical Islam.

For al-Kindi, the only real cause is God who created the world ex nihilo; all other causes are so called only metaphorically bi'l-majaz), [20] This real cause, or First Cause, is also called ultimate (ba'idah) cause, as opposed to the proximate (qaribah) cause. The heavenly world, from the moon to the ultimate sphere (that of the fixed stars) is entirely devoid of the primary qualities (hot, cold, moist and dry) as well as of generation and decay which are found only in the sublunary world composed of the four elements (fire, air, water and earth). All changes occurring in the world of nature are due to the motions of the heavenly bodies, their different velocities and distances, their conjunctions and oppositions. This is particularly obvious in the case of the sun which influences even the physical make-up of the population living in the torrid zone. But all this happens only by the Will of the Creator.[21] There is a close connection between the four

primary qualities, the four elements and the four seasons.[22] The moon and the planets, and also the larger stars and constellations, although their influence is less conspicuous, also play an important role in the seasonal variations observed between one year and another.

The stars, or the sphere (falak), are thus the cause of all that occurs in the world of nature, but al-Kindi points out insistently that this is so only by God's Will, because God so arranged it.[23] The real efficient cause of all is God. It is all the more interesting, in view of such a voluntaristic theory of creation, to note that we also encounter in al-Kindi the term "emanation" (fayḍ) coupled with "generosity" (jud).[24] Creationism and emanationism are often regarded as mutually exclusive solutions to the problem of becoming. This clearly is not the case for al-Kindi, for whom emanation results from the will and goodness of the Creator. The problem of emanation will be taken up later.

Al-KindT's God is the First Cause and as such it is essentially one; it is the only real One, all other things which are said to be one being so in a metaphorical sense (bi'l-majaz) only. At the end of the preserved part of his treatise On First Philosophy al-Kindi provides one of the first and most perfect examples of negative theology in Islam: the One is none of the intelligible things and none of the terms that can be applied to any thing can be applied to it. The unity which flows from it (fayḍ) is at the same time the cause of the coming into being (takawwin) of all sensible things. It is also agent (fa'il), creator (mubdi') and mover (:muḥarrik), all these terms denoting apparently for al-Kindi different aspects of the One. If unity deserted the universe the latter would perish.[25]

The metaphysical realm for al-Kindi is that which extends from the Active Intellect upwards, including the heavens and, as a matter of course, God. If we want to discover what conception al-Farabi formed of this world we have to turn to his politico-cosmological treatises, particularly the Opinions of the Inhabitants of the Ideal State.[26] This and his other works of similar content must be taken to put forward his personal
philosophy, and although many elements in it undoubtedly derive from Greek sources, the overall construction and the way in which these elements have been combined may be considered as authentically Farabian. As noted above, al-Farabi in his exposition of Aristotle's philosophy almost entirely ignored his metaphysics. It has been suggested, quite plausibly, that this is because al-Farabi was dissatisfied with it, particularly with its unsystematic order, and wanted to replace it by a theory of his own.[27]

Al-Farabi begins with a description of the First Cause, or more simply the First, and its main attributes. The First is the source of all further being; it is absolutely perfect; it is unique (waḥid), knowing (ʿalim), wise (ḥakim), real (ḥaqq) and living (ḥayy). The influence of Muʾtazilite kalam may be detected in these epithets.[28] Like Aristotle's God it thinks itself. It must be noted that al-Farabi, with the majority of the Peripatetic Islamic philosophers, does not accept the Neoplatonic distinction between the Intellect and the One: such a notion of a One above and beyond being and intellection must have been inconceivable for them.

From the First all other beings and the heavenly world in the first place derive by a process generally designated by the name of emanation (fayḍ lit. "flowing" or "overflowing").

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This emanation results from the mere existence of the First; it is the necessary consequence of the First's existence. Terms expressing the necessary character of this process (yalḥaqu, yalzamu, yatba'u) are commonly used as synonyms of yafiḍu (emanates). The First neither gains nor loses anything by it, nor does it cause it in order to achieve a specific aim, for this would be contrary to its own perfection by implying that it is in need of something outside itself. The notion of will, on which al-Kindl lays such great stress, is conspicuously absent from al-Farabi's description of emanation. There is also a hierarchical order of the entities emanating from the First down to the lowest grade of being.

From the First emanates the Second (intellect); by thinking the First, it gives rise to the Third, and by thinking itself it gives rise to the first heaven. The Third in turn, by thinking the First, produces the Fourth and by thinking itself produces the second sphere, that of the fixed stars. The same process repeats itself ten times, thus giving rise to the ten heavenly spheres and to the ten entities (intellects) following the first. The tenth intellect is the so-called Active Intellect (al-'aql al-fa''al) which is the last of the immaterial entities. It has not only a cognitive function as in the Greek tradition, but also physical and cosmological ones. By implanting the forms in matter it constitutes the final link between the heavens and the world of nature. In spite of superficial analogies, the function of these heavenly intellects is quite different from that of the movers postulated by Aristotle in his Metaphysics. Not only has al-Farabi reduced their number by adopting a simpler astronomical theory with ten entities instead of forty-seven or fifty-five; their function is to give existence, not merely motion, to the heavenly bodies.

Al-Farabi thus meets the objection he had himself made to Aristotle's scheme on the grounds that it did not account for the existence of the heavens, but only for their motion. The reason for the latter is explained a little later in the same work:[29] each of the heavenly bodies also has a form, which is an Intellect, by means of which it thinks the First and the Intellect from which it derives its own existence. This secondary Intellect is situated within the heavenly body; it is not completely immaterial and thus has something in common with man. This emphasizes once again the intermediate position occupied by the heavenly bodies between the purely intelligible realm and the human world. But when it comes to explaining the circular motion of the heavens, al-Farabi resorts to a curiously mechanical solution: since the heavenly bodies are spherical, and no part of them is more entitled than another to the place it occupies, their parts have to succeed each other in each part of the space occupied by the sphere, thus producing an eternal circular motion. The heavenly motions and the ever-changing positions of the heavenly bodies in relation to each other are the causes of sublunar matter and of the continuous flux of the forms in matter. But this belongs to natural philosophy.[30]

When we turn to Ibn Sina, we find that he mostly builds on the foundations laid by al-Farabi but gives to the latter's theses an immensely ampler development. In the first place he wants to prove the existence of the first cause whereas al-Farabi was content to assume it. Ibn Sina's proof is based on the impossibility of admitting an infinite series of causes. Any causal series, however long it may be, presupposes the existence of an upper and a lower limit (ṭaraf). The upper limit is the cause which has no cause, or First Cause. Structurally this proof is analogous to Aristotle's proof (in the

Physics) from the impossibility of assuming an infinite series of movers. But Ibn Sina characteristically replaces the cause of motion by the cause of being. Al-Farabl had already expressed some dissatisfaction at not finding in Aristotle's writings an explanation of the origin of being, as opposed to motion. Ibn Sina is the first to undertake a full refutation of the Aristotelian conception of God as prime mover and source of motion rather than of being. Even the eternity of the sphere's motion is regarded by Ibn Sina as unproven.[31]

Ibn Sina makes a completely new start from the basic divisions, or modes, of being. These are the necessary, the possible (or contingent) and the impossible which imply each other so that all definitions given of these terms are open to the charge of circularity. Among the three, "necessary" has precedence in our understanding.[32] The necessary existent is uncaused, whereas the possible has a cause. Furthermore, the necessary existent is one: it does not admit of any multiplicity either as the species of a genus or as the individuals of a species. It is not a notion (;ma'na) common to a multiplicity of beings. The First Principle alone,

then, is necessarily existent, and every other thing derives its existence from it, that is, not only its form, but also its matter is created. The First has no other quiddity (or definition: mahiyyah) than being (inniyyah), but it emanates (causes to emanate: yufiḍu) existence on the essences of the quiddities which by themselves are merely possible.[33] According to a practice well established since al-Kindl it is described in purely negative terms.[34] There is no apodictical demonstration of it (bur hart), but it is the apodictical demonstration of everything. It can be conceived of only by clear indications (al-dala'il al-waḍiḥah), i.e. by induction, not by the demonstrative or syllogistic method. It is pure good

(khayr mahd), the reality (ḥaqq), pure intellect and intelligible, being itself the object of its own intellection, without this entailing in any way the presence in it of duality or multiplicity. The Neoplatonic distinction between the One and the Intellect is therefore clearly rejected by Ibn Sina as it had been by al-Kindi and al-Farabi.

Being good, the Necessary Being is also the aim or perfection, i.e. the final cause of everything, or that which everything desires (yatashaivivaqu). As such, it is the object of love (maḥbiib, mashuq). At this point, ibn Sinas argument links up with the physical demonstration of the eternity of motion as evidenced in the circular motion of the heavenly bodies. This motion is not natural but voluntary ('an irddah);[35] its proximate mover must be a soul, not an intellect, and this soul is not separate from the matter of the sphere. It is also necessary to postulate the existence of an intellect as final cause (ghayah, gharad) of the soul which is moved towards it by desire and love; but this desire is of a purely rational kind and may therefore be defined as choice (ikhtiydr) or will (irddah), which is properly the desire of the rational part of the soul. The kinds of desire belonging to the two inferior parts of the soul, namely passion (ghadab) and appetite (shahwah) are not fitting for an unchangeable body like the heavenly sphere. The good desired by the soul is not such that it could be attained by motion, for in that case motion would cease when the good had been reached.[36] The good therefore subsists by itself and cannot be reached; but the intellect strives to become similar (tashabbuh) to it in so far as this is possible, [37] and this is the cause of its eternal motion. Furthermore, the power belonging to a finite body is necessarily finite, so that the infinite motion of the heavens

must be bestowed by an infinitely powerful source which is the First.

Ibn Sina's explanation of the circular motion is clearly derived from that of al-Farabi; if a part of the heavenly body is actually in a certain place, it is potentially in another; but since it strives to free itself of all potentiality, it moves in order to be in all parts of the sphere in actuality in so far as this is possible. In other words, what is not possible for an individual may be possible in succession.[38] This motion is also compared by Ibn Sina to a kind of angelical or celestial worship (jbddah
malakiyyah aw falakiyyah). The first mover and first beloved is one and cannot be more than one, but each one of the nine spheres (Ibn Sina explicitly adopts the Ptolemaic system) has a proximate mover of its own (i.e. a soul) and an object of desire and love of its own. By desiring and loving its own principle each one of the spheres acquires its own particular motion, and by desiring and loving the First they all share in the common circular motion (the daily motion). The tenth Intellect (eleventh including the First) is the Active Intellect which is in the same relation to the human souls as each of the heavenly intellects to the corresponding heavenly soul.

The theory of emanation is set forth by Ibn Sina in conclusion of his astronomical and cosmological scheme. All beings derive from the First, but not as a result of deliberate intention; the First cannot will anything other than itself, because this would be tantamount to an admission of its own imperfection. The First contemplates itself and this thought produces other beings. By contemplating itself, it produces the first Intellect (that of the starless sphere). The First Intellect contemplates its own essence as possible in itself and

from this intellection the first sphere results necessarily (yalzam). It also contemplates its own essence as necessitated by the First and from this intellection the soul of the first sphere results necessarily. Finally, by contemplating the First it produces the next Intellect, that which is immediately below itself. This ternary process repeats itself at the level of each of the ten heavenly spheres down to the Active Intellect.[39]

There appear to be several reasons explaining why Ibn Sina, after al-Farabi, adopted this curious emanationist scheme. It is designed to account for the heavenly motions in accordance with the astronomical theory of Ptolemy, although it disregards some of its intricacies. It also explains the emergence of multiplicity out of absolute unity. Furthermore, there must be more than one intermediary between the First and the world of nature: out of the One only a one can arise, which is the first Intellect. But out of the first Intellect only a specific multiplicity, not a numerical multiplicity, can arise, as the latter presupposes the existence of matter. The multiplicity of the individual human souls cannot therefore arise directly from the first caused or any of the separate Intellects. Like all the forms of the physical world embedded in matter they emanate from the tenth Intellect, the Giver of Forms (wdhib al-suwar). [40] Ibn Sinas account of the origin of matter and the four elements is not very clear; he seems to regard them as produced by the heavenly motions and Intellects.

The theory of emanation is commonly regarded as typical of falsafah and as an element of paramount importance in it. While it is true that it appears in one form or another in the majority of the Islamic philosophical systems, its importance,

particularly in the case of Ibn Sina, has generally been exaggerated. It is set forth summarily at the end of what

is by contrast an extremely detailed exposition of the mechanics of the heavenly bodies' motions in their loving aspiration towards the First Cause. The upward drive of the whole cosmos is indeed one of the outstanding characteristics of Ibn Sinas philosophy which is comparable in this respect to the Aristotelian teleology. The purpose of the theory of emanation is to establish between the First Cause, the heavenly movers and the physical world the link which was missing in Aristotle's system, as was already noted and deplored by some of his Greek successors. It may of course be questioned whether the very notion of timeless creation or causality which is at the basis of the theory can reasonably be upheld in any other sense than that of finalistic causality. Creation understood as efficient causality seems to imply a time lag between cause and effect. But this is not to say that the idea of emanation is irreconcilable with the transcendence of the First Cause:[41] rather it is the device whereby the falasifah and Ibn Sina in particular thought that they could reconcile the two notions. In any case there is a much stronger emphasis in Ibn Sina's cosmology on the ascending order of the lower entities' longing for the higher and their desire to become similar to them than on the descending order of efficient causality. In this respect it is fully consistent with his psychology which culminated in the soul's ascent towards the Creator. In spite of his proclaimed intention of substituting a metaphysics of being (an ontology) for the Aristotelian metaphysics of motion, Ibn Sina retained a privileged role for motion in his system as it appears from the fact that it is through motion that the lower entities express their love of the higher ones, and through motion also that the heavenly bodies are the cause of the ordered and regular changes occurring in

the material world. This may point to the difficulty of admitting any kind of change other than locomotion in an eternal universe.

Ibn Rushd rejected most innovations introduced by Ibn Sina in what remained a basically Aristotelian system. The notion of a being contingent by itself, but necessary by something else, seemed absurd to him. However, this distinction can be maintained in the case of motion: the motion of the heavenly bodies is in itself contingent, that is to say they would stop if left to their own resources, but it is eternal and necessary through the action of the First Mover, which is unceasing.[42] Their substance is eternal because they are not composed of matter and form, or because they have no contrary. It follows from this that the only demonstration of the First Mover's (i.e. God's) existence is the Aristotelian proof by way of motion, and that Ibn Sina's attempt to derive not only the motion but also the existence of the heavenly bodies from the immaterial Intellects must be discarded.[43] Motion constitutes the link between nature and the divine, heavenly realm. Moreover, since there can be no demonstration of the first principles (a point on which Ibn Rushd agrees with Ibn Sina, although he blames him for applying it too rigidly), it is only by a kind of inductive, dialectical reasoning starting from their effects in the world of becoming that their existence and properties can be established. This explains why so much of Aristotle's Metaphysics is taken up by discussions concerning the sensible substance.

As in al-Farabi and Ibn Sina, so with Ibn Rushd the heavenly bodies are intermediaries between the first unmoved mover and the world of nature: they are moved by their desire to become similar (tashabbuh) to the First Mover, [44] and this

motion in turn is the cause of the processes taking place in the physical world. Each heavenly body has an Intellect which desires the First Mover, and this desire is the cause of the circular motion of those bodies. Furthermore, all heavenly bodies are moved by the same final cause, in other words they desire the same beloved, namely the First Mover. It is not necessary to assume different final causes for each heavenly body; they may all desire the same object and nevertheless have different motions according to their own different natures, or according to their thinking and desiring different aspects of the First Mover.[45] On this point, Ibn Rushd distances himself from Ibn Sina as he does on the question of emanation, which is emphatically rejected.[46] The main reason alleged by Ibn Rushd in this is that the very idea of emanation implies the presence of potentiality in the thing which proceeds, or emanates, from something else. The notion of an eternal procession thus appears to him to be a contradiction in terms. He also denies the existence of a First above and distinct from the mover of the first heaven: nothing exists in vain and the sole justification for the existence of the heavenly Intellects is their being the movers of the spheres. In Ibn Sina's system the First is merely the source of the existence of the first heaven's Intellect, but is not itself a mover: it is consequently useless from Ibn Rushd's viewpoint.[47] If he rejects both the theory of emanation and the Ibn Sinan demonstration of the First on the basis of the distinction between necessary and possible being, it is not because he is a doctrinaire Aristotelian, as is commonly asserted, but because the two tenets of the eternity of the world and of the primacy of motion are intimately bound up with each other; in other words, the only way in which a relation between an eternal God and an eternal universe can express itself is an eternal, and hence circular, motion.[48]

Emanation

The very notion of emanation and the meaning of this term as used with reference to the cosmological system of Islamic philosophy are problematic. For al-Farabi and Ibn Sina the heavenly bodies and their intellects arise one from the other as a consequence of their intellection (ta'aqqul).[49] But the term fayḍ which properly corresponds to emanation (overflow)
suggests something quite different, namely a kind of spontaneous outpouring independent from any conscious activity; so also do the verbs inba'atha and inbajasa which are commonly found in the Theology of Aristotle and related texts where the light metaphor is also widespread as it is in Plotinus. But the continuous process evoked by those images appears hardly compatible with the hierarchy and discontinuous succession of discrete entities constituted by the heavenly spheres and their intellects found in al-Farabi and Ibn Sina. The falasifah were influenced, perhaps unwillingly, by creationist patterns which induced them to reflect in a more ontological sense the essentially cognitive processes of Greek Neoplatonism.

A much clearer idea of the distinction between creation (ibda) and emanation (inbijds, in hi alb) emerges in the developed form of the Isma III system as we encounter it in the works of al-Sijistani and al-Kirmanl in particular. Although the terminology of these authors in the cosmological field has much in common with that of the falasifah, their conceptions differ from those of the latter in some important respects: God is described by them in more consistently negative terms than

is the case with the philosophers. He cannot even be called a cause ('illah'), for this implies the existence of an effect (maluL), whereas He exists independently of His creation. Creation from nothing (ibda) is His exclusive prerogative. Through His word or command He creates the first intellect which is therefore also called the first created (al-mubda' al-awwal). But the levels of being from the intellect downwards arise through emanation: the universal soul, nature, the heavenly spheres and the elements. AJ-Kirmani's system is more elaborate and complex in some respects than al-Sijistani's, but the basic features, and in particular the distinctive functions of creation and emanation, are the same in both authors. The main innovation al-Kirmani brought into the system inherited from al-Sijistani, namely the double process of emanation giving rise on the one hand to the heavenly Intellects and on the other to the spheres[50] seems to be due to the influence of Ibn Sina.

As happened in Greek Neoplatonism, the number of hypostases ema-nating from the First tended in Islam to increase with time. A spectacular instance of this phenomenon is offered by Suhrawardi. The hierarchies of intellects and spheres are replaced in his cosmology by pure lights, and the First itself has become the light of lights (nur al-anwdr). But the Ibn Sinan concepts have not been entirely discarded for all that: the expression wdjib al-ivujiul occurs in Suhrawardi, as well as the double movement of descending emanation and ascending desire (shawq). The proof of God's existence based on the impossibility of admitting an infinite series of contingent lights[51] is nothing but a reformulation of Ibn Sinas argument, derived itself from Aristotle. However, his exclusive use

of light imagery, his "ontology of light", brings him closer to Plotinus than any of his predecessors.

The starting-point of some of the philosophical or theosophical onceptions underlying Ibn Arabi's system is also to be sought in the metaphysics of Ibn Sina; this appears for instance in his definition of God as necessarily being by Himself (ivdjib al-wujud bi-dhdtihi),[52] The central intuition of Ibn Arab! which commands the whole development of his thought is the idea of unity: not only God's absolute unity, but the unity of the totality of being considered as the epiphany of God. In a sense, this doctrine can be viewed as the logical outcome of emanationism carried to its ultimate consequences. This is the doctrine of the unity of being (wahdat al-wujud), in which all individual beings are conceived as mere manifestations (tajalliyydt) of God. The question whether such a doctrine is open to the charge of pantheism cannot be discussed here, but should probably be answered in the negative. Ibn Arabi's idea appears to be that nothing can exist without being somewhat related to the source of all being, and to that extent can be regarded as an adaptation of the doctrine of eternal creation present in one form or another in the thought of all the falasifah. But the manifestations of Ibn Arabl's cosmos are much more closely linked with the deity than are for instance the heavenly intellects of al-Farabi or Ibn Sina; they do not have any ontological reality but are mere reflections of God in the human soul. Nevertheless the first (in a non-temporal sense) manifestations of God are described in terms which are borrowed from the traditional Neoplatonic hierarchy of hypostases (intellect, universal soul, nature).[53] The fact that the sequence of emanations closes upon itself in a circle and returns to God is quite consistent with the general structure of

Neoplatonic metaphysics in which the return (epistrophe) is the necessary counterpart of procession (proodos).[54]

Conclusion

Concerning the place of philosophy in general, and of its metaphysical and cosmological doctrines in particular, within the civilization of Islam, three types of considerations are commonly expressed which reflect widely divergent viewpoints and are hard reconcile.

Firstly, Islamic philosophy is dominated and the course of its development has been largely shaped by the problem of harmonizing the Greek tradition with the monotheistic revelation of Islam.

Secondly, the thought of the falasifah is in essence irreconcilable with certain tenets of Islamic theology especially in its Sunni form and in consequence became prematurely stifled after a short and brilliant flowering.

Thirdly, the Islamic philosophers worked under the threat of intellectual persecution and were therefore compelled to disguise their real thought or to present it in an allusive or allegorical form.

From the beginning, philosophy was regarded with suspicion by the traditional and conservative circles of Islam. But it is important to distinguish between different disciplines: large sections of philosophy, such as logic, ethics and politics, were quietly and lastingly absorbed into the mainstream of Islamic thought. The most dangerous discipline, as was already

pointed out by al-Ghazzall, [55] is metaphysics (in the sense of divine science, ilahiyydt) which can enter into direct conflict with traditional conceptions of God. But even within this rather narrow field it is important to note that of the three tenets which according to al-Ghazzali should be branded with the accusation of unbelief (kufr), only one, namely the assertion of the eternity of the world, is really central in Greek and Islamic philosophy. The denial of God's knowledge of particular things and of the resurrection of the body are inferences drawn by Muslim scholars from some basic principles of Greek philosophy rather than philosophical doctrines expressly upheld by the philosophers. In the first stages of the development of philosophy in Islam, traditional Islamic thinking and philosophical speculation for the most part did not overlap. Some of the more important debating points were elaborated in Islam inreaction to philosophical principles (for instance occasionalism versus natural causality), very much in the same way as some Islamic practices seem to have developed as a conscious reaction against Christianity (e.g. image worship).[56] The Islamic philosophers followed the dicta of reason while seeking to create harmony between reason and revelation.[57] For example, the curious doctrine of emanation, as we have seen, may be regarded as an attempt to reconcile the idea of the eternity of the world with some form of creationism, and is linked with Ibn Sina's insistence that God is cause not only of motion but of being as well. But this notion of God as efficient cause of the world is already present in the last pagan philosophers of antiquity, notably Ammonius and Simplicius. The main themes taken up again and again in Islam link up directly with the debates of late Neoplatonism.

The first hostile reactions to philosophy that we know of, directed against al-Kindl, are probably to be related to the intra-Muslim controversy of traditionalism versus Mu'tazilism and to the philosopher's association with the Mu'tazilite caliphs. In some cases, as in the celebrated Slrafl-Matta controversy, a kind of nationalistic reflex is perceptible whereby the old Arabic culture asserted itself against the new-fangled disciplines borrowed from the Greeks.[58] The conscience of a substantial incompatibility between Quranic revelation and philosophical rationalism arose in fact astonishingly slowly. But as traditionalist juridical Islam was growing aware of its own specificity, it could no longer tolerate any

rival in the field of learning and education, with the exception of very technical disciplines such as mathematics or astronomy. Even medicine was suspicious, to say nothing of kaldm. That the rise of the 'ulamd', the creation of madrasahs and the anti-philosophical reaction, all phenomena epitomized in the person of al-Ghazzall, happened roughly at the same time is no coincidence.

As for the view that the falasifah concealed their real convictions under the veil of symbols and feigned allegiance to Islam, it is not only intrinsically implausible but also in plain contradiction with the ascertainable facts. Such an esoteric approach makes sense only if the latent meaning of the texts can be made out by a discriminating reader; the proponents of this interpretation have not been able to bring forward any conclusive evidence in its favour.[59]

Philosophy did not die in Islam with Ibn Rushd. What may have died with him is philosophy as a fully autonomous discipline linking up without interruption with the Greek

tradition. In order to survive, it had to merge with other currents of thought more thoroughly integrated in Islam such as Sufism, Shi'I spirituality or kaldm. To that extent the attacks of al-Ghazzall and others led philosophy to achieve some sort of harmony with the SharVah. Just as the development of falsafah had helped the 'ulamd' to reach a deeper understanding of the specificity of Islam, so the progress of Islam led to the adaptation of philosophy to the needs of a different culture.

NOTES

1 The fullest account of the Arabic translations of Aristotle's Metaphysics is given by Bouyges, Notice, in Averroes (1952): cxv–cxxiv.

2 Excerpted by Ibn Rushd, see Averroes (1948): 1393ff., and Badawl (1947): 12–21 and 329–33.

3 On these texts see in particular Endress (1973).

4 Al-Kindl (1950): 95ff. = (1978): 26ff.

5 Ibid.: 11 Off. = (1978): 42ff.

6 Ibid.: 142–3 = (1978): 82.

7 Ibid.: 384.

8 Al-Fârâbï (1961): 132.

9 Ibid.: 130.

10 Al-Fâràbl, FF aghràd al-hakïm fî kidl maqalah min al-kitâb al-mawsüm bi'l-hurüf, in al-Fàrâbï (1890): 35.

11 Ibn Sïnà (1960): 14–15.

12 Ibid.: 6.

13 Ibid.: 13–14.

14 Ibid.: 21–2.

15
Averroes (1938–48).

16 Averroes (1948): 1424 provides a particularly clear instance of the complete equivalence of al-'ilm al-ildhi or al-falsafat al-uld with the study of al-maivjud bi-md huwa mawjud or al-jaivbar bi-md hnwa jawhar.

17 Aristotle, Metaphysics, E. 1.1026a, 19.

18 Averroes (1942): 710, 5–712, 15-

19 Ibid.: 935, 16–14. The word translated as "task" is 'amal. The sentence is slightly confused because Ibn Rushd is paraphrasing an erroneous translation of Aristotle, Metaphysics, Z.l 1.1037a. 14–16.

20 Al-Kindl (1950): 183 = (1978): 135.

21 Ibid.: 226, 231, etc.

22 Ibid.: 330.

23 Ibid.: 255.

24 Ibid.: 162, 260.

25 Ibid.: 162 = (1978): 106–7.

26 Al-Farabl (1985).

27 See on this Druart (1987).

28 Walzer (1985): 345, 348, 362.

29 Ibid.: 118–34.

30 See Druart (1981).

31 Badawl (1947): 24.

32 Ibn Sina (1960): 36.

33 Ibid.: 347.

34 Ibid.: 354.

35 Ibid.: 383.

36 Ibid.: 387–8.

37 Ibid.: 389. This is the celebrated formula of Plato's Theaetetus, 176b which became one of the standard definitions of philosophy in late Greek and Arabic commentaries. See e.g. Ibn al-Tayyib (1975): 18.

38 Ibn Sina (1960): 390.

39 Ibid.: 406–7.

40 Ibid.: 413.

41 Netton (1989): 167.

42 Averroes (1948): 1630–2.

43 Ibid.: 1423.

44 See above, n. 37.

45 Averroes (1948): 1649. Kogan (1985): 200 wants to separate the spheres' desire from their intellects, but this interpretation is in complete contradiction with Ibn Rushd's statements. See Averroes (1948): 1596–8.

46 Ibid.: 1652.

47 Ibid.: 1648.

48 Concerning the importance of motion in Ibn Rushd's metaphysics see Kogan (1985): 206ff.

49 For the idea of contemplation as source of being in Greek philosophy see Plotinus, Enneads, 3.8; Proclus (1963): prop. 174 and Dodds's note on this passage. It is interesting to note that the main texts setting forth this fundamental doctrine do not appear to have been translated into Arabic. There have clearly been other channels than the translations known to us through which Neoplatonic conceptions percolated into the Islamic world.

50 Nctton (1989): 225–9.

51 Ibid.: 258.

52 Ibid.: 270.

53 Ibid.: 281–2.

54 I cannot understand Netton's remark (1989): 280, following Afifi, that the Neoplatonic system "moves in a straight line".

55 Al-Ghazzali (1959): 23.

56 Grabar (1987): 132–8.

57 Even in the case of a late work like Ibn Tufayl's Hayy ibn Yaqzdn the earlier view of Gauthier that it was concerned above all with the harmony of philosophy and religion has been refuted by Hourani (1956).

58 Mahdi (1970); Zimmermann (1986): 111.

59 For a decisive rebuttal of such theories see Leaman (1985): 182–201.

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CHAPTER 48

Logic

Shams Inati

The task of this chapter is extremely difficult, not only because it is impossible to cover in one short chapter the long history of the field of Arabic logic and the enormous quantity of material encompassed by it but also because many Arabic logical writings have not reached us. In addition, of those works that have reached us, many are still in manuscript form. Thus, it must be stressed at the outset that this is not the full story of Arabic logic or even the recounting of all its important elements, as a comprehensive study of the field is not possible at this point. Rather, this is a modest attempt to trace the outline of the history of Arabic logic, pointing out within the space allowed some of the essential features of this field which are accessible to us.

Historians differ regarding the date of the beginning of the movement of the translation of Greek logic into Arabic, a movement that helped shape Arabic logic and philosophy. Some are of the opinion that this took place during the Umayyad period (c. 40/661–133/750); others believe it took place in the first century of the Abbasid period (1c. 133/750–235/850). Regardless of when this activity began,

however, the following points concerning the history of the development of Arabic logic remain uncontested.

The highest point in the movement of translation of Greek logic into Arabic occurred during the third/ninth and fourth/ tenth centuries. This was achieved primarily at the House of Wisdom, established in 217/832 by the Abbasid caliph al-Ma'mun (199/813–218/833).

For the most part these translations were made from Syriac, not directly from Greek. Even as early as a few centuries before the advent of Islam, Nestorians in the East and Jacobites in the West engaged in translating Greek scientific and philosophical works into Syriac. The Syriac translation movement was enhanced especially after some of the Syriac-speaking people, such as the well-known Jacob of Edessa (d. 708) and
George, bishop of the Arabs (d. 724), studied at Alexandria, where Greek culture flourished. These Syriac translations were made mainly at schools and monasteries in Persia, Iraq, Syria and Egypt, the first countries with which Arabs came into contact in the early period of the Islamic conquests.[1]

The most prominent translators of Greek logic into Arabic were 'Abd Allah ibn al-Muqaffa' (d. 139/757);[2] Yahya (Yuhanna) ibn al-Bitriq (d. 215/830);[3] Hunayn ibn Ishaq (d. 877);[4] his son, Ishaq ibn Hunayn (d. 910); his nephew, Hubaysh ibn al-Hasan al-Dimashqi, known as Hubaysh al-A'sam (d. 890); Abu Bishr Matta ibn Yunus (d. 940);[5] Abu Zakariyya Yahya ibn Adi (d. 973);[6] Ibrahim ibn Abd Allah (d. 297/940); and Abu 'Uthman Sa'ld ibn Ya'qub al-Dimashqi (d. 308/920).

In its early stages, the movement of translation of Greek logical works into Arabic focused on Porphyry's (d. 304) Is agoge[7] as well as Aristotle's Categories, De interpretatione and Prior Analytics. Aristotle's Posterior Analytics was not introduced into Arabic before the tenth century. Its introduction into Arabic and the high place it occupied in Arabic logic, as will be seen later, mark a break with the Syriac tradition that did not seem to go beyond Prior Analytics.[8] In this period, attention was also given to Galen's (d. 200) Introduction to Logic, and the works of Aristotle's commentators, such as Theophrastus (d. 287 B.C.), Alexander of Aphrodisias (d. 222), Themistius (d. 387), Ammonius (d. 520) and John Philoponus (d. 540). Other works, or parts of them, were translated and were not considered as important. Such works include Aristotle's Topics, Sophistics, Rhetoric and Poetics.

The ninth and tenth centuries witnessed not only what may in some cases be the first translations of Greek logical works into Arabic but also further improvements upon these translations, and even summaries and expansions of, and commentaries on, these works. The commentaries, which were emulated by future commentators, such as Ibn Rushd (d. 595/1198), were of three types: great, middle and short. Basically, these commentaries were similar in structure to those of the Syriac tradition. A great commentary consists of a quoted passage from the text in view followed by a long discussion of this passage. A middle commentary is a paraphrase of a passage from the text followed by a discussion of this passage. A short commentary is primarily a summary of the main ideas of the text.[9] In contrast to the Syriac tradition, however, Arabic commentaries of this and

later periods modify this basic form either by adding to or subtracting from the text certain ideas.[10]

Arabic commentaries on Greek logic (excluding those of al-Kindi) and, more importantly, the creativity in Arabic logic flourished from the tenth to the fourteenth centuries – first in the East and then in the West. Some of the important commentators were Abu Bakr al-Razi (d. 313/925), al-Farabi (d. 339/950), Ibn Sina (d. 429/1037) and Ibn Rushd. Almost up to the end of the tenth century, the leading logicians, with the exception of al-Farabi, were Christians.[11] After that, logic took on an Islamic guise, as it became a tool employed by eminent Muslim thinkers against each other and against non-Muslims, such as Christians and Jews, in an attempt to defend Islamic causes. In fact, in early Islam the main reason for Muslims' interest in Greek logic seems to have been their need for debating with each other over issues such as those of freedom and determinism, and for debating with others, like the Christians, over issues such as that of the Trinity.

Approximately from the end of the fourteenth century on, Arabic logic is marked by lack of creativity, appearing to have become in the main a reiteration of previous views, commentaries on commentaries, or syllabi for class use. In particular, al-Risdlat al-shamsiyyah by al-QazwInl (d. 675/1276) and Matali' al-anwar by al-UrmawT (d. 682/1283)[12] and even commentaries on these works became the subject of the commentaries of this period. One may say, therefore, that the development of Arabic logic ends by the fourteenth century, as the field continues its stagnation from that period.

In Islamic circles, Greek logic had its proponents, who made every effort to point out its value and defend its use, but it also had its opponents, who saw no value in it. Of the first group, some, such as Ibn Rushd, accepted it almost in its entirety and played the role of the commentator on, and explicator of, Aristotle's logical writings. Others, such as al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, Ibn Hazm (d. 454/1064), al-Ghazzall (d. 505/1111) and Ibn Khaldun (d. 808/1406), accepted most of its basic principles but expanded it in ways that befitted their culture, language and religious beliefs. The second group, such as Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728/1328) and al-Suyutl (d. 911/ 1505), rejected it in its entirety.

Since this chapter is a part of a history of Islamic philosophy, we will concentrate primarily on the first group, which includes the most prominent Muslim philosophers, and pay special attention to al-Farabi and Ibn Sina, who seem to have been the first and most eminent Arabic logicians to modify Greek logic to suit their linguistic and cultural purposes. Thus, they may be said to have introduced some original elements into Greek logic and to have set the ground for the further development of logic.

Like most other Arabic logicians, al-Farabi and Ibn Sina began their logical works not with a discussion of the Categories, as dictated by the Aristotelian tradition, but with discussions called for primarily by the nature of the Arabic language, the Islamic religion and the philosophical trends of the day that were to a great measure shaped by the Alexandrian and Syriac traditions. In some cases, these introductory discussions appear in works considered introductions (madkhat) to logic. This is not to say that such

works were not considered a part of logic. Ibn Sina's Madkhal,

for example, includes such discussions and is considered by its author to be the first of the nine parts of logic.[13] In other cases, however, such discussions appear in works or sections of works that do not seem to be intended as a part of logic. An example of this is al-Farabi's al-Alfdz al-mnstamulah fii-mantiq ("Book of Expressions Used in Logic"). Furthermore, these discussions did not follow the same order even in the different writings of the same author. Regardless, they seem to focus primarily on the meaning of the term logic, the function and benefit of logic, the relation of logic to grammar and to language in general, the relation of logic to philosophy and, finally, the predicables, i.e., the subject of Porphyry's Isagoge.

It is primarily in such discussions that Arabic logicians exhibited originality. For this reason, a large portion of this chapter will be devoted to a study of these matters. Let us, therefore, first explicate the meaning of logic as understood by Arabic logicians and then move on to study briefly the rest of these introductory elements, beginning with the function and benefit of logic and ending with the predicables. This will be followed by a brief account of the Organon, [14] ' or the parts of logic, and their essential elements as understood by these logicians.

The Meaning Of Ma Nt Iq (Logic)

The Arabic word mantiq meant in the Arabic language kaldm (speech).[15] Prior to the development of Arabic logic, this word was in use in its Greek form, which also gave it the added logical meaning it acquired in Islamic philosophy. In the Qur'an, for example, the word mantiq is used in the sense of speech.[16] The verb form of the word is also mentioned in the Qur an in the same sense.[17]

To facilitate the translation of the Greek logical writings into Arabic and the summaries, commentaries on and expansion of these works, Arabic thinkers felt the need to coin new words or to give new meaning to words that already existed in the Arabic language. Al-Kindl, for example, coined the words huiviyyah (essence), mahiyyah (quiddity), al-ays (existence) and al-lays (non-existence).[18] The word mantiq was among the Arabic words that took on added meanings. Thus, the word al-nutq (utterance), from which the word mantiq is derived, acquired three meanings, which it had for the ancients, as al-Farabi observes:[19]

(1) The power with which a human being grasps the intelligibles. This is the power with which one acquires the sciences and crafts, and by means of which one can distinguish between good and bad deeds. (2) The intelligibles that occur to the human soul by virtue of comprehension. These intelligibles are called by the

1415

ancients "internal utterance". (3) The expression of thought by the tongue.[20] This is called by the ancients "external utterance".[21]

The "craft" under consideration came to be known as al-mantiq because

it provides the rational power with rules concerning internal utterance, i.e., the intelligibles, and rules common to all tongues with regard to external utterance, i.e., the expression, and gives the rational power good direction towards the truth in both matters and rescues it from falsehood in both of them.[22]

Therefore, the meaning of the name of the field under consideration indicates the purpose of this field.[23]

The Function and Benefit of Logic

Muslim philosophers found it necessary to justify the enormous attention and energy they devoted to the study of logic and to point out the reasons for opening their philosophical works with this study. They did so by discussing and elaborating the important function and the indispensable use of this field. Building on the views of his predecessors, especially al-Farabi, Ibn Sina took the lead in this regard.[24] He argued that logic is the key to knowledge,[25] and knowledge is the key to happiness, the ultimate human objective. Thus, logic is the key to happiness and must be

fully understood and properly utilized at the outset if happiness is to be achieved. The understanding of this claim requires the understanding of three points: firstly, the nature of knowledge, secondly, the reason why logic is necessary for knowledge and, thirdly, the manner in which knowledge leads to happiness. While the first and second points are discussed in detail in the logical writings of these philosophers, the third is only touched upon there and is detailed in their metaphysical and mystical writings.[26]

Firstly, along Aristotelian lines, knowledge is divided into two types, conception (tasawwur) and assent or judgment (tasdlq).[27] This bipartite division of knowledge is a common feature of Arabic logical writings, whether earlier or later, whether belonging to the philosophical circle or to the religious one.[28] Conception is defined as the mental grasping of an object apart from any assertion as to whether or not the object corresponds to the external reality it is supposed to represent.[29] This mental object is the concept and can be of three kinds: simple, that is, without possibility for having parts; single, that is, if having parts (which it may), these parts cannot have separate meanings inasmuch as they are its parts; and composite, that is, with no less than one single concept as a part of
it. An example of a simple concept is "God"; an example of a single concept is "human being"; and an example of a composite concept is "mortal, rational animal". Assent is also the mental grasping of an object, but with the assertion that the relation of correspondence between this object and the external reality it represents is true.[30] This does not mean that assent is always true but only that it is an assertion of the truth. In itself, assent can be either true or false. It must be mentioned though that occasionally the term assent is used in

the sense of true judgment, [31] but this is not the general use of the word in Arabic logic.

Secondly, the objects of conception, or concepts, are either known or unknown, as are the objects of assent. Furthermore, an object, whether of conception or assent, is known relative to a mind.[32] This is to say that an object can be known by George but not by Jerry. This is so with the exception of a small number of concepts and assents that are evident to any healthy-minded individual.[33] ' Such concepts are exemplified by "being" and "thing". And such assents are exemplified by "the angles of every triangle are equal to two right angles"[34] and "every 3 is an odd number".[35] These self-evident objects al-Farabi calls "the customary, primary, well-known knowledge, which one may deny by one's tongue, but which one cannot deny by one's mind since it is impossible to think their contrary".[36] In contrast to the known objects of conception and of assent, which are not the subject of inquiry, the unknown objects of conception and of assent are the subject of inquiry but, of course, only to the individuals to whom these objects are unknown. The more one reduces the number of unknown objects, whether of conception or of assent, the higher the degree of knowledge one achieves.

This reduction in the number of unknown objects can be made by means of movement from what is known to what is unknown. The movement from a known object of conception to an unknown one is through the "explanatory phrase", and the movement from a known object of assent to an unknown one is through the "proof". The explanatory phrase is of two types: definition and description, both of which will be discussed later. Suffice it to say here that the purpose of a real

and a complete definition[37] is to determine the essence of a thing.[38]

Before the proof is discussed, a presentation is given of the proposition, a true or false phrase and which is a part of the proof. While not ignoring the Aristotelian categorical or predicative propositions, Arabic logicians, including Ibn Rushd, the strongest defender of Aristotle among them, follow in the footsteps of Themistius and the Stoics in studying conditional propositions.[39] The proof, which consists of propositions (which in turn consist of concepts either conjoined or separated by certain particles), is of three types: analogy, induction and syllogism.

Analogy is a judgment about a particular thing. This judgment is drawn from the similarity between that thing and another particular one.
But while a particular judgment may be useful in certain practical matters, it does not give knowledge. Knowledge is only of the universal, as we shall see later. That is why analogy is considered the weakest form of proof. Induction is a judgment about a universal. This judgment is drawn from judgments about particular cases. If the judgment of the induction applies to all the members of the class, the conclusion is certain and the induction demonstrative. If the judgment applies to the majority of the members of the class, the conclusion is probable and the induction is an incorrect science. However, in either type of induction, the universality of the subject makes this type of proof more reliable than analogy.

Like Aristotle, Arabic logicians consider the syllogism the most reliable form of the proof and demonstration the most

reliable form of the syllogism. A syllogism is a discourse in which the premises necessarily lead to the conclusion. A demonstration is a syllogism in which the certainty of the premises necessarily leads to the certainty of the conclusion. The definition employed as a principle in the demonstration identifies the cause of the essence of the subject, this cause being the middle term. For this reason, the definition on which the demonstrative conclusion is based is of the real and incomplete type.[40] Given the limitation of space, much has been omitted from this discussion of the proof. Our purpose here was just to give a brief overview of the role of the types of proof in knowledge and the link between definition and knowledge of the type of assent.

The concepts in the explanatory phrase and the assents in the proof must already be known; otherwise, the explanatory phrase and the proof cannot lead us to knowledge.[41] Not all such primary knowledge is necessary for logic, however. Rather, some of it is necessary for logic, while the rest is necessary for one or the other of the remaining sciences.[42]

In addition to known concepts in the explanatory phrase and known assents in the proof, the attainment of knowledge requires certain rules in accordance with which the explanatory phrase and the proof are properly formed. Logic provides the rules for determining the properly formed or valid from the improperly formed or invalid explanatory phrase and proof. By the distinction it makes between the true and the false, the valid and the invalid, it protects human thought from falling into falsehood and, therefore, secures for us the path to knowledge.[43] As a set of rules that governs thought, logic is called, among other things, mizan (the scale),

[44] mi'yar (the standard)[45] and mihakk al-nazr (the test of thought).[46]

Thirdly, the knowledge that is necessary for happiness is not the grasping of just any object. Rather, it is the grasping of the essences or natures of things, primarily the essence or nature of God. This is so because essences are the eternal, most complete and most beautiful aspects of the universe, and to grasp them is to become like them, since the
knower and the known are identical. It is in the mirroring of eternity, completion and beauty that metaphysical perfection and, hence, happiness lies. The grasping of the external elements of things is not useless for the pursuit of happiness; on the contrary, it helps to prepare the way for this theoretical knowledge.[47] But, in itself, this type of grasping cannot lead to happiness, as its objects are perishable and deficient.

From the above, it should be clear that Arabic logic is not simply a theoretical science or an exercise in reasoning purely for the sake of the exercise of reasoning. Rather, it has a strong metaphysical bent that gives it practicality and applicability to the most important human concern, namely that of self-perfection, or happiness.[48]

It is worth noting that some religious scholars, such as Ibn Hazm and al-Ghazzall, agree with the philosophers that logic is of great value. While these religious scholars do not specifically advocate the idea that logic is necessary for the ultimate human happiness, they still find it useful not only for secular but also for religious studies, [49] rejecting the claims that it can be harmful to religion. Ibn Hazm, for example, says that logic not only distinguishes us from other animals but also helps us understand God's intention as conveyed to us

through His speech.[50] He believes that logic has been wrongly charged with helping the cause of disbelief, claiming this charge is made by those who have neither understood the concepts incorporated in Aristotle's logical works nor even read those works.[51] He cites passages from the Qur'an calling on people not to argue over issues they do not understand and for which they have no evidence.[52] Ignorance, according to Ibn Hazm, has also led some to consider Aristotle's logical works as incomprehensible nonsense and idle talk.[53] Others have also rejected these works, not having understood them because of reading them after having "already accepted the ignorants' view that these are books of disbelief".[54]

If, on the other hand, one turns to these works with a "pure" and a "healthy" mind, "one will be enlightened by them and will understand their objectives; thus one will be guided by their light, and God's oneness will be proven to one through inevitable, necessary demonstrations. One will also witness the division of creatures, God's effect on them, and His management of them."[55] Claiming to speak as one who desires one's God and who does not know other than what God taught us, Ibn Hazm asserts that explicating Aristotle's logical works will perhaps earn him the pleasure of God, owing to "the great benefit of these works".[56]

Both Ibn Hazm and al-Ghazzall agree that among the reasons that led to the ignorance of Greek logical works, and hence to the rejection of these works, is the unfamiliar language in which these works were introduced.[57] Realizing that not all language can be comprehended by everybody, they were determined to correct this matter by presenting logic in simple, ordinary language which could be understood by everybody,

including, as Ibn Hazm puts it, "the commoner and the elite, as well as the knower and the ignorant".[58] Before moving on to the next issue, it must be said that the acceptance of logic by Muslim thinkers of the stature of Ibn Hazm and al-Ghazzal! was no doubt a main factor in the reconciliation between logic and the religious studies. This reconciliation, in turn, helped the flourishing of logic in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

The Relation of Logic to Grammar

As soon as logic was introduced into Arabic and began to permeate the various branches of Islamic studies, it was faced with a strong resistance by different Islamic groups, among the first of whom were the grammarians. These groups saw in logic an element of a non-Islamic foreign civilization that threatened their religion, language and grammar. The grammarians' resistance to logic reached its highest point in the tenth century. The best-known grammarian opponents to logic included Abu'l-Abbas al-Nashl';[59] Ibn Qutaybah;[60] Ibn al-Athlr;[61] and Abu Sa'ld al-Slrafl (d. 979), best known for his debate against the leading logician of his day, Abu Bishr Matta, which is said to have taken place in 932. This debate was recorded by Abu Hayyan al-Tawhidi in his works al-lmta wa'l-mu'dnasah and al-Muqabasdt.[62]

This debate consists of a severe attack on the logicians for their high regard for an innovation introduced by a Greek[63] in accordance with conventions of the Greek language, even

though the logicians did not master the Greek language, while at the same time admitting that language is a necessary means for doing logic.[64] On more than one occasion in this debate we see al-Slrafl challenging Matta to give the meanings of the same expression put in different grammatical forms to show that the grammar of a specific language is necessary for grasping the meanings, or intelligibles, as the logicians call them, and that knowledge of Aristotle's logic will not help them do so.[65] The approval with which al-Slrafi's success in this debate was met, even by the vizier, Abu'l-Fath al-Fadl ibn Ja'far ibn al-Furat, indicates that the general mood at that time was against logic and logicians.

The points advanced by the grammarians were mainly of three types: (1) the frequent use of dialectical discourse or of instructions in geometry and the science of number – in short, in reasoning – suffices for logic;[66] (2) logic is an unnecessary additional good, for it is possible for a person with a perfect native intelligence to have sound thought without any prior knowledge of logic;[67] and (3) contrary to grammar, which is self-sufficient, logic is dependent on, and can be replaced by, language and, more particularly, grammar.[68] As such, the grammarians argued that
logic is unnecessary for the sciences, since the frequency of reasoning, native intelligence or grammar can replace ir.

The logicians, headed by al-Farabi and Ibn Sina, responded to these objections and also defended the necessity of logic for the pursuit of philosophy and hence happiness, pointing out the role that language and, more particularly, grammar play in this regard. Al-Farabl, for example, responds to the first objection by saying that to make such a claim is similar to claiming that the frequent use of poetry memorization and

recitation suffices for grammatically sound discourse and protects one against committing grammatical errors.[69] Again, the second claim, he says, is similar to the claim that grammar is unnecessary, for there may be somebody who does not deviate from the correct use of the language without any prior knowledge of the rules of grammar.[70]

Ibn Sina goes further in responding to the second objection. He contends that it is possible for a proper definition and a proper proof to emerge in one's natural mind, but this would not be the result of a skill and, thus, could not protect one against falsehood in other circumstances. Rather, such an act would be like hitting the target unintentionally.[71] If natural intelligence were sufficient to develop such a skill, there would have been neither the disagreements among thinkers nor the self-contradiction that we see within particular thinkers' work.[72] He realizes that even if one has acquired such a skill, one would not be fully protected against falsehood. This is because it is possible for one at times not to use this skill effectively owing to incomplete mastery of it, negligence or other incapacitating factors. However, one who has this skill and who uses it does not fall into as much falsehood as does one who lacks it.[73] Ibn Sina draws a contrast between logic on the one hand and grammar and metre on the other. He says that it is possible for a good natural intelligence to play the role of grammar in securing sound discourse, as it is possible for good taste to play the role of metre for composing poetry. But nothing can play the role of logic in securing sound thought except the guidance of God.[74]

Before discussing the logicians' response to the third objection, it may be helpful to consider their stand concerning

the manner in which the functions of grammar and logic compare and differ. Al-Farabl, for example, asserts that there is a similarity between logic and grammar, but he reminds us that there is also a difference between the two. Logic and grammar are similar in that as logic is a set of rules governing thought or the intelligibles, so is grammar a set of rules governing expressions.[75] They differ, however, in that logic is a set of universal rules that apply to human thought and the expressions that signify human thought, regardless of time, place or language; while grammar is a set of particular rules that apply only to specific languages.[76] In other words, logic deals with language, but only inasmuch as language has common conditions. Such

conditions are exemplified in the fact that expressions are either single or composite, and that the single is either a noun, a verb or a particle. However, logic does not deal with the Arabic language, for example, inasmuch as the agent is in the nominative and the object in the accusative.[77]

Al-Farabl's response to the third objection can be found in Kitdb aTtanblh 'did sabil al-sa'ddah, where he recognizes that grammar can play an important role in facilitating the logical process. Primary knowledge, he tells us, which is instinctive, i.e., present to all minds from the beginning of their existence, may not be perceived by the individual who has it. However, when hearing expressions that signify this knowledge, one realizes that such knowledge was already present in one's mind. Furthermore, the elements of such knowledge may not be distinct in one's mind such that one comprehends every one of these elements separately. However, when one hears expressions that signify such elements, one comprehends them as distinct in the mind. In short, if one is unaware of the presence of some primary notions or is unaware of their

distinctness, then one must enunciate the expressions that signify these notions.[78] From this the conclusion is drawn that: "Since the craft of grammar … includes the various types of signifying expressions, it must, therefore, have some kind of worth for the study and understanding of the primary principles of logic."[79] It is important to note that al-Farabi here does not say that grammar is necessary for logic, as the grammarians claim, but that it has "some worth" for it. This worth consists in its governing the common elements of the signifying expressions, for such expressions form a part of the subject of logic. Al-Farabi identifies the subject or subjects of logic in this way: "The subjects of logic concerning which the rules of logic are given, are the intelligibles inasmuch as they are signified by the expressions, and the expressions inasmuch as they signify the intelligibles."[80]

In addition to being a clear rejection of the grammarians' positions, Ibn Sina's response to the third objection constitutes an expansion of some aspects of al-Farabi's view and a rejection of some of its other aspects. He clearly states that it is necessary for the logician to study expressions. However, inasmuch as one is a logician, one has no primary preoccupation with expressions except for the purpose of grasping the intelligibles and facilitating dialogue and communication.[81] Fie continues:

Were it possible to learn logic through pure thought in which only intelligibles by themselves are recognized, that would be sufficient. Also, were it possible for the interlocutor in logic to grasp the intelligibles in his soul through a means other than language, this would be sufficient for dispensing with expressions altogether. However, since it is necessary to use expressions,

especially in that reason cannot arrange the intelligibles without imagining their expressions, … it is necessary that the different states of expressions result in different states of the intelligibles that correspond to these expressions. As such, these intelligibles acquire conditions, which they would not have had, were it not for the expressions.[82]

It is for this reason alone, according to Ibn Sina, that some parts of logic came to be concerned "with the study of the states of expressions".[83] He is convinced that any discourse about expressions that have corresponding intelligibles is similar to a discourse about those intelligibles.[84] However, he maintains that it would be inappropriate to conclude from this that such expressions form the subject or a part of the subject of logic; for, after all, even the corresponding intelligibles to these expressions cannot play that role. He puts it thus: "There is no merit in the statement of those who say that the subject of logic is the study of expressions inasmuch as they signify the intelligibles, and that the logician's craft is to discuss expressions inasmuch as they signify the intelligibles."[8]" In short, according to Ibn Sïnà, neither language as governed by grammar forms the subject of logic, as grammarians claimed, nor even the expressions that signify their corresponding intelligibles form a part of the subject of logic, as al-Fàràbl claimed. Rather, logic is concerned with expressions only inasmuch as they have different states due to which the states of the intelligibles in the soul become different. The very subject of logic is identified as nothing other than "the intelligibles inasmuch as they are employed in the composition by means of which they induce in our minds the acquisition of some things which were not in our minds, and not inasmuch as they are things".[86] The same idea is expressed in al-Madkhal, where it is said that logic is not

concerned with things inasmuch as they exist externally or in the mind, or inasmuch as they are separate quiddities, "but inasmuch as they are predicates and subjects, universal and particular, etc.".[87]

This amounts to saying that the subject of logic is the intelligibles, not inasmuch as they are intelligibles and are signified by expressions, but inasmuch as they have different states whose composition in the explanatory phrase and proof leads from the known to the unknown. Therefore, while the expressions are not the concern of the logician because they signify intelligibles, they are his or her concern because they have states, the difference among which reflects the difference among the states of the intelligibles. To put it another way, neither language nor grammar is the ultimate objective of the logician. Rather, language is necessary for logic, but inasmuch as it is the only vehicle that reflects or mirrors states and interrelations of the intelligibles. In other words, language is a necessary means for reaching the object of logic, but it is accidental to the nature of this object. Thus it does not enter in the definition of the subject of logic.

Another group of Arabic thinkers took a middle ground concerning the conflict between the grammarians and logicians. This group, headed by al-Tawhldl and his teacher, al-Sijistání (d. c. 378/988), argued that whatever is true of logic is true of grammar, and vice versa. This is so because logic and grammar are two sides of the same thing, the former governing the internal aspect of expressions, and the latter governing their external aspect.[88]

The Relation of Logic to Philosophy

One of the issues that preoccupied Arabic logicians was whether logic is a part of or an instrument of philosophy. The controversy over this issue emerged in ancient times. The Platonists considered logic both a part and an instrument of philosophy; the Peripatetics considered it only an instrument of philosophy; and the Stoics considered it only a part of philosophy.

The history of Arabic logic is full of references to the idea that logic is an instrument (dlah) of philosophy.[89] However, some, such as Ibn Sina, spoke of logic at times as an instrument and at other times as a science, i.e., as a part of philosophy.[90] This is because he finds no conflict in considering logic both as an instrument of and as a part of philosophy. The conflict, he asserts, arises from using the term philosophy in two different senses. If philosophy is used in the sense of the study of "things inasmuch as they exist and are divided into the two types of existence", meaning the external and the mental, then logic is not "a part of philosophy. But inasmuch as logic is useful for this study, it is an instrument of philosophy." If, on the other hand, philosophy is used in the sense of the study of "every theoretical matter and from every point of view", then logic is "a part of philosophy and an instrument of the other parts of philosophy".[91] According to him, to engage in a dispute over such a matter is to engage in falsehood, because the two

positions are not contradictory, and in futility, because concerning oneself with such a matter leads to no benefit.[92]

The Five Predicables

On the whole Porphyry's predicables, or universal terms (genus, species, difference, property and common accident), are adhered to in Arabic logic, both in number and in basic meaning. It is true that a sixth term, the individual (al-shakhs), is added to Porphyry's terms by the Ikhwán al-Safá', but the term does not seem to have acquired acceptance in Arabic circles.[93] However, Arabic logicians elaborated these terms extensively, disagreeing at times with earlier views over certain details concerning these terms. Ibn Sina, for example, rejects the ancients' idea that a concomitant which attaches to more than one universal subject – as "two-footed" attaches to "human being" – is a property in the real sense.[94] Thus, he dismisses this type, considering it unworthy even of discussion.[95]

Arabic logicians seem to have been interested in studying the five predicables extensively, not just for the purpose of understanding these terms in themselves but primarily for a higher purpose, namely, that of determining the role these terms play in knowledge. This higher purpose required them to distinguish first between the single and the composite, the universal and the particular, the essential and the accidental to isolate the basic components of the definition and the other principles of knowledge. Ibn Sina's distinction among these terms is particularly detailed, well structured and clear.

Therefore, a brief account of it will be helpful, especially as it is representative of the general Arabic tendency.

Single and composite concepts were defined earlier in this chapter. A single term is said to signify the former, and a composite term is said to signify the latter. In the course of discussing the predicables, only the single term and its concept are discussed. A single concept is one in which either more than one can participate, such as the concept "human being", or no more than one can participate, such as the concept Zayd. The former is a single concept in which all human individuals participate; the latter is a single concept in which nobody but one can participate. Participation of more than one in the latter concept can occur only in the sound of the expression and not in the concept Zayd. The former concept and the term signifying it are universal; the latter concept and the term signifying it are individual.[96] We are told that it is the universal concepts and terms that concern the logician, for the individual ones are infinite in number and, therefore, cannot be determined. However, even if they were finite in number, knowledge of them inasmuch as they are individual is not conducive to the ultimate philosophical perfection, [97] which is the grasping of the essences of things.

An essential term is said to signify either the essence or a part of the essence of a thing.[98] The former answers the question: "What is it?" and the latter answers the question: "Which is it?" The former is of two types: a term that signifies the more general essence, the genus, and a term that signifies the more particular essence, the species. The latter is a term that signifies a part of the essence – this part being the difference.[99] For example, in relation to a human being,

"animal" is a genus, "human being" is a species and "rational" is a difference.

A term that signifies anything other than the essence or a part of the essence – whether or not this thing is a necessary concomitant – is
an accidental term which signifies an accidental concept.[100] An accident is something that can be removed from a thing both in existence and in the mind, or something that can be removed from it only in the mind, or something that can be removed from it only in existence. In no case does this removal cause the removal of the essence. An example of the first is "sitting"; an example of the second is "black" for an Ethiopian; an example of the third is "capacity for laughter" for a human being.[101] The first is a particular accident and does not concern the logician; the second and third are universal accidents, and as such they concern the logician – the second being the common accident, which is separable from its subject, and the third, the property, which necessarily attaches to its subject. Like the constituents of an essence, the property, being a necessary concomitant, is something without which the essence cannot be conceived.[102] However, "this must not be taken to mean that the elimination of such necessary concomitants leads to the elimination of the essence, but that their removal indicates that there is no essence to which they attach".[103]

These terms signify concepts that are such neither in themselves nor in relation to all things. "Animal", for example, is a genus in relation to all the species that participate in it and not in itself or in relation to all things. "Human being" is a species in relation to all human individuals. "Rational" is a difference in relation to a certain

being inasmuch as it distinguishes it from other beings under the same genus. "Laughter" is a property in relation to what occurs to the human nature only. Finally, "black" is a common accident for an Ethiopian and anything else which is black.[104]

In sum, the predicables are of two main types: essential and accidental. The essential is also of two types: either that which signifies the essence, or that which signifies a part of the essence. The former is further divided into that which signifies the more general essence and that which signifies the more particular essence. Universal accident is also of two types: common accident, which belongs to more than one thing; and property, which belongs to one thing only.

This helps us determine the explanatory phrase and the proof, the two pillars of knowledge according to Arabic thought, by helping us determine the simple elements of the former and the parts of the latter. As mentioned, there are two types of explanatory phrase: the definition and the description. The definition determines the essence of a thing, which is made up of the genus and difference or differences. Therefore, by implication, the definition determines the genus and the difference or differences of a thing.[105] If a thing has more than one difference, its identifying phrase is not a real definition unless it indicates its genus and all its differences. If, in the case of this thing, the identifying phrase indicates the genus and one difference of this thing only, the phrase gives an
essential distinction between this thing's essence and those under the same genus.[106] A thing that has no genus and at least one difference cannot be defined. From this it follows that God is indefinable since Fie has no parts. The

description, on the other hand, signifies by implication the genus and the properties of a thing.

Errors in forming the definition and the description can result from the following: including unfamiliar expressions in the identifying phrase; identifying a thing by another thing, which is equally known or equally unknown to it; identifying a thing by another thing, which is more unknown than it; identifying a thing by itself; identifying a thing by another thing, which is identified by it; identifying a thing by another thing, which is unnecessary; identifying a thing by its correlative.[107]

The Parts of Logic

Traditionally the Aristotelian Organon was thought to consist of only the following parts: Categories, De interpretatione, Prior Analytics, Posterior Analytics, Topics and Sophistics. But in keeping with the Syriac tradition, which was influenced by the views of some members of the Alexandrian school, many Arabic logicians also considered Rhetoric and Poetics as parts of logic.[108] Here is how al-Farabi puts it:

The parts of logic are eight. This is because the kinds of syllogism and the kinds of phrase, which one can use to correct an opinion or an object in general, are three. Also, the kinds of crafts, whose function comes after the acquisition of the use of syllogism in speech, are in general five: demonstrative, dialectical, sophistical, rhetorical and poetical.[109]

According to al-Farabi, the demonstrative syllogism expresses certitude, the dialectical expresses presumptiveness, the sophistical expresses delusion (falsehood), the rhetorical expresses persuasiveness and the poetical expresses imaginativeness.[110] Every one of these five syllogisms is used to correct something in some type of discourse.[111]

Eveiy kind of syllogism has some things that are proper to it and some things that it shares with the other kinds of syllogisms. A syllogism is always composite, whether in the soul or in language. A syllogism in the soul is composed of a number of intelligibles joined together and arranged just for the purpose of securing the soundness of a certain matter. Similarly, a syllogism in language is composed of a number of expressions joined together and arranged to signify these intelligibles for the purpose of securing the soundness of a certain matter for the hearer.[112] The smallest composite unit of a syllogism is composed of two expressions in the case of the linguistic syllogism, and of two intelligibles in
the case of the mental syllogism. These smallest composite units are referred to as "simple".[113] These simple units are in turn composed of single intelligibles and single expressions signifying these intelligibles.[114]

From this it follows, according to al-Farabi, that the parts of logic must be eight, each part constituting a book. The first, al-Maqülát (Categories), includes the rules that govern single intelligibles and their signifying expressions. The second, al-'Ibdrah (l)e interpretatione), includes the rules that govern what was called above "simple" units. The third, al-Qiyas (Syllogism, i.e., Prior Analytics), includes the rules governing the common elements of the syllogism of any craft. The fourth, al-Burhdn (Demonstration, i.e., Posterior Analytics),

includes the rules governing demonstrative discourse. The fifth, aTMawadi' al-jadaliyyah (Topics), includes the rules governing dialectical discourse. The sixth, al-Hikmah aTmumawwahah (Sophistics), includes the rules governing delusive matters and an enumeration of all the things that can be used in the craft of delusion and an enumeration of all the matters that protect against falsification. The seventh, al-Khatdbah (Rhetoric), includes the rules governing rhetorical discourse, the various kinds of discourse and the statements of rhetoricians to determine whether or not these statements are in accordance with the rules for rhetorical discourse. All the principles on which this craft is based are also enumerated as are all the procedures for perfecting this craft in the various disciplines. The eighth, al-Shi'r (Poetics), includes the rules governing poetry, the kinds of poetic discourse, an enumeration of all the principles on which the craft of poetry is based, the types of this craft and the principles that help perfect this craft.[115]

Al-Farabl states that the ultimate object of logic is the fourth part, which is why it is considered the most noble of the parts of logic. The three parts that precede it are mere introductions to it, and the four that follow it have a double purpose: firstly to act as instruments for the fourth part; and secondly, to help distinguish the various types of discourse and their functions.[116]

Other Arabic logicians considered the parts of logic to be nine, adding to the above-mentioned parts Isaghüji or al-Madkhal (Isagoge) as the introductory or first part.[117] Ibn Sina tells us that this is the part concerned with some expressions inasmuch as they signify universal concepts.[118] Most Arabic logicians, including those who did not consider

the Isagoge a part of logic, still considered it an introduction to the whole Organon and not just to the Categories.[119] As such, it includes discussions relating not only to the five predicables but also to logic in general. Examples of such general discussions have already been given, namely, those relating to the meaning of logic, the use and benefit of logic, the relation of logic to grammar, the relation of logic to philosophy, etc.[120]

Ibn Rushd remained more true to the Aristotelian tradition than did his fellow Muslim thinkers. Fie began his commentaries on Aristotle's
logical works with Categories and ended them with Sophistics. This is not to say that he did not concern himself with other subjects with which other Arabic logicians were concerned. He commented, for example, on Rhetoric, Poetics and even Porphyry's Isagoge. However, he did not consider these works to be parts of logic.

By way of concluding this chapter, we must say that Arabic logicians not only kept Aristotle's logic alive but also went beyond it. In doing so, they did not necessarily introduce new elements, as in the discussions of the conditional syllogism, regarding which we find mere hints in Aristotle and detailed discussions in the Stoics.[121] However, even in adhering to Greek logic, whether Aristotelian or not, they showed independence from earlier thinkers and, at times, from each other, at least in organizing, subtracting from and adding to the Greek logical works. Besides, no doubt they were pioneers in certain areas, such as that of reconciling Greek logic with Arabic grammar and Islamic religious studies, and perhaps in much more. However, the exact degree of originality in the various areas of Arabic logic is not possible

to determine at this point, because much of Arabic logic and much of what preceded it is lost, and much of what is not lost is still unpublished.

NOTES

1 The most important schools in the East are that ot Nasibin (Nisibis) in Iraq; that of Jundishapur, established in Persia (555) by Chosroes I; that of the Pagan school of Harran in northern Syria. The latter produced, among others, the prominent scholar Thabit ibn Qurrah (d. 901). The most important school in the West was that of Alexandria. Finally, the most important monastery was that of Qinnisrin, established on the Euphrates in the first half of the sixth century by John bar Aphtonia (d. 538).

2 According to some Arabic sources, Ibn al-Muqaffa' was among the first to translate into Arabic some Greek logical works, including Aristotle's Categories, De interpretatione and Prior Analytics, as well as Porphyry's Isagoge. This he did from Persian, into which these works had already been translated, at the request of the Abbasid caliph, Abu Ja'far af Mansur (136/754–159/775). (See, for example, Ibn al-Nadlm, al-Fihrist, trans. Bayard Dodge (New York, 1970): 581; al-Qifti, Tdrikh al-hukama, ed. Julius Lippert (Leipzig, 1903): 36.)

3 Among other things, he is said to have translated Prior Analytics. (See Majid Fakhry, History of Islamic Philosophy (New York, 1983): 9.)

4 The most prominent translator of Greek works into Syriac and Arabic, and the head of the House of Wisdom.

5 A prominent Nestorian logician who was the teacher of al-Farabi. He was the first to translate into Arabic Aristotle's Posterior Analytics (Nicholas Rescher, The Development of Arabic Logic, hereafter Development (Pittsburgh, 1964): 44).

6
A prominent Jacobite logician known for his debates with Nestorians over the Divine nature and with Muslims, especially al-Kindi (d. 873), over the concept of the Trinity.

7 This work played a very important role in Arabic logic. It was considered the madkhal (introduction) to Aristotle's logical works and was taught at schools and is still taught at Azhar, one of the oldest universities in the world.

8 See Rescher, Development-. 44.

9 See Al-Fdrdbis Short Commentary on Aristotle's "Prior Analytics" (hereafter Short Commentary), trans. Nicholas Rescher (Pittsburg, 1963): 22.

10 Ibid.: 23.

11 For this reason, it is better to refer to the logic in medieval Islam as "Arabic logic" instead of "Islamic logic", and to the logicians as "Arabic logicians" instead of "Muslim logicians".

12 Al-Qazwini and al-Urmawi are two of the best logicians of the thirteenth century.

13 A discussion of the parts of logic will be given in the final section of this chapter.

14 This title was given in the last three centuries B.C.E. to Aristotle's logical writings and means "instrument".

15 Ibn Manzur, IJsdn al-'arab, 10 (Beirut, 1956): 354.

16 Qur'an, 28: 16.

17 Ibid. 23: 62; 45: 29; 37: 92; 51: 23; 21: 63; 27: 85; 77: 35.

18 See Ibn Rushd, Talkhls mantiq Aristu (hereafter Talkhls), 1, ed. Jirar JahamI (Beirut, 1982): 108.

19 Al-Farabl, at-Tawti'ah in al-Mantiq 'indal-Fdrdbl, 1, ed. Raflq al-Ajam (Beirut, 1958): 59.

20 By "expression" Muslim philosophers do not mean just any external sound, but, as Ibn Sina says, it is "a human-made composition of letters" (Ibn Sina, al-Shifd', al-Mantiq, al-'Ibdrah, hereafter al-'Ibdrah, ed. Mahmud al-Khudayrl (Cairo, 1970): 9). This means that an expression is "a freely chosen composition of letters" (ibid. 10). The expression is what Ibn Hazm refers to as the intended sound (Ibn Hazm, al-Taqrib li-hadd al-mantiq, hereafter al-Taqrib, in Rasd'il Ibn Hazm al-Andalusiy, 4, ed. Ihsan Abbas (Beirut, 1983): 105–6). This is to be distinguished from a mere sound, which is any non-human or non-freely made vocal emission (Ibn Sina, al-'Ibdrah: 10).

21 Al-Farabl, al-Tawti'ah: 59; Ihsd' al-'ulum (hereafter Ihsd'), ed. 'Uthman Amin (Cairo, 1949): 62–3. For the

internal and external utterance, see al-Farabi al-Alfdz al-musta'malah fi'l-mantiq (hereafter al-Alfdz), ed. Muhsin Mahdl (Beirut, 1968): 103; Ibn Sina, al-Shifa', al-Mantiq, al-Madklml (hereafter al-Madkhal), eds George Anawatl, Mahmud al-Khudayrl and Fu ad al-Ahwanl (Cairo, 1952): 20.

22 Al-Farabl, al-Tawti'ah: 59–60.

23 Al-Farabt, Ihsd': 62.

24 For al-Farabi's discussion of this matter, see, for example, Kitdb al-tanbih 'aid sabil al-sa'ddah (hereafter al-Tanbili), ed. Ja'far Al-Yasln (Beirut, 1985): 77–9; Ihsd': 53ff.

25 Except in the case of a prophet's knowledge, which is received by God's grace. But prophets are a very small minority; therefore, in the case of the majority of people logic is necessary for the acquisition of knowledge.

26
See, for example, Ibn Sina, al-Ishdrdt tvai-tanbihdt, Part Four, tenth class, for an elaboration of the third point.

27 For a fuller analysis of tasawwur and tasdiq, see Ibn Sina, Remarks and Admonitions, Part One: Logic (hereafter Remarks), trans. Shams Inati (Toronto, 1984): 5–6 and 49–50. Compare with Aristotle, Posterior Analytics, i. 1.71 a. 11–15.

28 See, for example, al-Ghazzall, Mi'ydr al-'ilm (hereafter Mi'ydr), ed. Sulayman Dunya (Cairo, 1961): 66; Muhammad A'la ibn All al-Tahanawi, Kashshdf istildhdt al-funun, 2 (Calcutta, 1863): 2.

29 Ibn Sina, Remarks-. 49.

30 Ibn Sina, Mantiq al-nuishriqiyyin (hereafter Mantiq) (Cairo, 1910): 60.

31 Ibn Sina, Remarks-. 5.

32 Al-Farabl, al-Tanbih: 81.

33 Ibid.

34 Ibn Sina, Remarks: 49.

35 Al-Farabl, Ihsd': 53.

36 Al-Farabl, al-Tanbih: 81.

37 A definition can be real, but not complete if it determines something that relates to the essence of a thing, such as its cause, but not the whole essence. The fact that the cause relates to the essence makes the definition real. The fact that not the whole essence is determined makes the definition incomplete (see Ibn Sina, Remarks: 41).

38 Ibid.: 40; Ibn Rushd, Talkhis: 111.

39 See Ibn Rushd, TalkhJs: 105–7 and 234ff.

40 The foregoing discussion of analogy, induction and syllogism is based on Ibn Sina, Remarks: 34–41.

41 A vague reference to this idea is made in al-Farabi, al-Tatibilr. 81–2.

42 Ibid.: 82.

43 Ibn Sina, Remarks: 47.

44 Ibn Sina, al-Qasidat al-muzdawijah in Mantiq: 3; al-Ghazzall, Mi'ydr: 59.

45 As seen in a previous note, al-Ghazzall gives mi'ydr as the title of a whole logical work; see also al-Ghazzall, Tahdfut al-falasifah where logic is referred to as Mi'ydr al-'aql (the standard for reason) (al-Ghazzall, Tahdfut al-falasifah (hereafter Tahdfut), ed. Maurice Bouyges (Beirut, 1962): 45.

46 Again, al-Ghazzall gives one of his logical works the title Mihakk al-nazar (ed. Muhammad Badr al-Dln al-Ni'sanI (Beirut, 1966)).

47 For an explanation of this point, whose details are unnecessary for this chapter, see Shams Inati, Ibn Sind's Analysis of the Notion of Evil (Ph.D. dissertation, State University of New York at Buffalo, 1979), chapter 2.

48 For an elaboration of this tendency in Ibn Rushd, see Ibn Rushd, Talkhis: 109ff.

49 See, for example, Ibn Hazm, al-Taqrib: 100 and 102–3; al-Ghazzali, Mi'ydr: 60.

50 Ibn Hazm, al-Taqrib: 99.

51 Ibid.: 98.

52 Ibid.

53 Ibid.: 99.

54 Ibid.

55 Ibid.: 100.

56
Ibid.'. 98.

57 Ibid. 100; al-Ghazzali, Tahdfut: 45.

58 Ibn Haztn, al-Taqrib: 100. Compare with al-Ghazzali, Mi'yar: 61.

59 Al-Náshí's opposition to Aristotelian logic is known from the writings of others, such as Abü Hayyán al-Tawhldl (d. 1023), as none of al-Náshí"s own writings on the subject has reached us (see al-Tawhldl, al-Imta wa'l-mu'dnasah (hereafter al-Imta), 1, eds Ahmad Amin and Ahmad al-Zayn (Cairo, 1953): 24).

60 See Ibn Qulaybah, Adab aTkdtib, ed. M. al-Daynüri (Beirut, 1967): 6.

61 A linguist and historian who suggests that neither the Greeks nor Ibn Sina considered the rules of logic before composing poetry. In his opinion, this amounts to saying that logic is unnecessary for the soundness of poetry and perhaps for discourse in general (see Muhammad Abd al-Sábir Ahmad Nassár, al-Madrasah al-salafiyyah wa mawqif rijdlihti min al-mantiq im 'ilm al-kaldm (Cairo, 1979): 272–3.

62 Al-Tawhldl, id-huta": 108ff.; al-Muqdbasdt, ed. Hasan al-Sandübl (Cairo, 1929): 68ff.

63 I.e., Aristotle.

64 Al-Tawhldl, al-Imta: 110–11.

65 See, for example, ibid.: 114.

66 Al-Farabi, Ihsd': 58.

67 Ibid.: 59.

68 Al-Tawhldl, al-Imta: 113ff.

69 Al-Farabi, Ihsa': 58–9.

70 Ibid.: 59.

71 Ibn Sina, iil-Madkbal: 19.

72 Ibid.: Ibn Sina al-Najdt, ed. Majid Falchri (Beirut, 1985): 43.

73 Ibn Sina, al-Madkhal: 19–20.

74 Ibid.: 19; Ibn Sina, al-Najat: 43. The idea that nothing can replace logic except the guidance of God is also expressed by al-Ghazzali (see al-Ghazzall, Mi'yar: 65).

75 Al-Farabi, Ihsa': 59. Compare with al-Ghazzali, Mi'yar. 59–60.

76 Al-Farabi, Ihsa': 59.

77 Ibid.: 60–2.

78 Al-Farabi, al-Ta?ibih: 82–3. For a similar point, see al-Farabi, Ihsa': 59–60.

79 Al-Farabi, al-Tanbth: 83. Ellipsis points indicate omission of the word allati (which).

80 Al-Farabi, Ihsa': 59.

81 Ibn Sina, al-Madkhal: 22.

82 Ibid.: 22–3.

83 Ibid.: 23.

84 Ibid.

85 Ibid.

86 Ibn Sina, Mantiq: 10.

87 Ibn Sina, al-Madkhal: 21.

88 Al-Tawhldl, al-Muqabasap. 169–172.

89 See, for example, al-Farabi, al-Alfdz: 107; Ibn Sina, Remarks: 47; Mantiq: 5, and 10; al-Ghazzali, Taluifiit: 45; All ibn Muhammad al-Sharif al-Jurjánl, Kitdb al-ta'rifdt (Beirut, 1969): 351.

90
Ibn Sina, Remarks: 47.

91 Ibn Sina, al-Madkhab. 15–16.

92 Ibid.: 16.

93 See ibid. (introduction by Ibrahim Madkur): 50.

94 A discussion of the nature of property will be given shortly.

95 Ibn Sina, al-Madkhal: 83–4.

96 Ibid.: 26–7. Compare with al-Farabi, al-Alfdz: 58–9.

97 Ibn Sina, al-Madkhal: 27–8.

98 Ibid.: 30.

99 Ibid.: 46.

100 Ibid.: 30.

101 Ibid.: 32.

102 Ibn Sina, Remarks: 56–7.

103 Ibid.: 16.

104 Ibn Sina, al-Madkhal: 46.

105 Ibn Sina, Remarks: 19.

106 Ibid.: 20.

107 Ibid.: 21.

108 See, for example, al-Farabi, Ihsa': 63ff.; Ibn Hazm, al-Taqrib: 98.

109 Al-Farabi, Ihsa': 63–4. Compare with al-Farabi, al-Alfdz: 104–6.

110 Al-Farabi, Ihsa': 69.

111 Ibid.

112 Ibid.

113 Ibid.

114 Ibid.: 70.

115 Ibid.: 70–2.

116 Ibid.: 72ff.

117 See, for example, Ibn Sina, Risdlah fi acjsdm aI-'ulum al-'aqliyyah, in Tis ' rasa 'il fi'l-hikmah wa'l-tabi'iyydt, ed. Hasan Asl (Beirut, 1986): 92–4.

118 Ibid.

119 See, for example, Ibn Hazm, al-Taqrib: 104.

120 Ibn Sina's Madkhal is an excellent illustration of pursuing such discussions, and thus carrying his Madkhal way beyond Porphyry's Isagoge.

121 See al-Farabi, Short Commentary: 38–41; Nicholas Rescher, "Avicenna on the Logic of Conditional Syllogisms", Notre Dame Journal of Formal Logic, 4 (1963): 48–58.

CHAPTER 49

Epistemology

Sari Nuseibeh

General Questions

Perhaps two major questions relating to knowledge characterize intellectual efforts to address this subject in the Islamic period. The first question is: In what sense does human knowledge detract from, or resemble, God's knowledge? The second question is: What is the role of the person who has knowledge?

It is possible with these two questions as terms of reference to understand much of the intellectual debate – implicit or explicit – that went on in the Islamic milieu on the subject of knowledge. The first question is especially pertinent given two widely held beliefs: (1) that one of God's major attributes and abilities – besides life and power – is knowledge, and (2) that true knowledge is attainable only if and when one has knowledge of the divine cause or secret of the universe (because how otherwise, in the context of the widely held belief in God as the first and final cause of the universe, can one be said to have knowledge about the minutest item in the

ontological order?). In a nutshell, these two beliefs are that one of God's distinctive traits is His knowledge, and that true knowledge is of God. Given these beliefs, to say that human beings can attain true knowledge is to say (1) that they can acquire an ability that God possesses, and (2) that God can be to a human being qua knowledge almost what a human being is qua God (notwithstanding ontological differences). To understand these implications is to understand the underlying tensions and apprehensions which characterized the debates that took place among intellectuals about this subject. On the one hand we find views claiming that knowledge of God or the first cause – whether philosophically or mystically – is possible, and so is "union" with God in one form or another; and on the other hand we find views that a human being, because of his or her inbuilt intellectual and existential limitations, is bound at

the outer reaches of the mind to make the leap from personal capabilities (whether rational or mystical) to faith in the pursuit of understanding the universe. On this second view "revealed knowledge" (the Qur'anic text) assumes a literal importance – with varieties of this view at one end upholding a totally literal understanding of the Qur'an; while on the first view the revealed text assumes a symbolic importance – with varieties of this view at one end upholding a totally metaphorical understanding of the Qur'an. Yet more poignantly, on the first view revelation (hence prophecy) can be argued to be unnecessary for the attainment of true knowledge, while on the second view knowledge which is humanly possible is attainable only through revelation and prophecy.

The second question, relating to function or role, was addressed in literature which one could retrospectively read as

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"political", in the sense that, once it was established what kind of person possessed knowledge (e.g., a philosopher, a mystic, a preacher, a Qur'anic exegetist, etc.), the next step was to establish what function such a person ought to have in society. Views varied from those espousing Platonic "leadership" roles, to those favouring the retired and reclusive roles. Intellectuals finding themselves in disagreement over who is to be defined as possessing real knowledge may here be in agreement on espousing an active political role for such a person, or a reclusive, advisory role. Inevitably, tensions would arise if both agree that wise men should be rulers but disagree on who is to be defined as wise. Ultimately, if it can be said that there was any tension between a secularist and a religious school of thought with respect to the state in Islam, it was only in relation to this conflict over power between the jurisprudent and the philosopher. It is in this context that one can appreciate the treatise Fad al-maqdl by Ibn Rushd (Averroes), for whom a resolution of the apparent conflict between revelation and reason (or the attempt to rehabilitate reason through the revealed text) was perhaps more importantly an effort to rehabilitate the political stature of the philosopher in the context of a religious state.

In any case, any debate concerning knowledge in that period could be described as one concerning the abilities and limits of the human mind, and therefore concerning the essence and raison d'être of the human being. To what extent is the human mind free to "seek newer and newer worlds", until the limitless has been accomplished? Or to what extent is the human mind limited, not free to question and ordained only to serve? Seen from one perspective, the call is to seek to be as close to perfection and to God as possible. Seen from the opposite perspective, this unholy quest simply reinforces the

"original" sin: the sin, as al-Shahrastànï describes it in the introduction to his Milal wai-nihdl which Satan committed by asking "Why?" All later dissensions and disagreements, al-ShahrastànT claims, originate from this intellectual act of rebelliousness (of transcending the written text in search of an individual opinion).

Within these two extreme poles one may comfortably find most of the views expressed by intellectuals living in the Islamic period concerning the subject of knowledge. In what follows, a brief outline of the four main intellectual schools will be presented, followed by a closer look at some of the operating concepts in two of them.

Methods of Knowledge: Schools

What were the major "epistemological" trends in the Islamic period, and how can one give a general characterization of them? Our initial characterization might seem too general, but it is important to keep it in mind as a general framework of reference before one addresses the more specialized distinctions. Briefly, it is possible to characterize four general trends or attitudes with respect to knowledge.

Firstly, one can talk about a conservative approach, according to which every humanly attainable truth can be found in the revealed text or can be logically extrapolated from truths that are found in that text. According to this view, not every truth is humanly attainable, and it is the mark of a believer to

accept that one can only have faith in the more elevated truths. The Qur'an is specific and reiterant about the contrast between those that have faith (imdn) in the divine truths and those who claim to have contrary knowledge ('ilm) but are wrong. It is basically God who knows, and who teaches. The first lesson begins with Adam, who is taught "the names of things" before the crowd of angels who are totally without that knowledge (2: 30ff.). However, the lessons continue through the generations and history (e.g., 2: 151), and through the various prophets (e.g., 2: 251). Indeed, the Qur'an is replete with references to the fact that it is itself the repository of truth, and that it is God who transmits knowledge ('ilm) and wisdom (hikmah). The Qur'an is also replete with references to the fact that nature is full of "clues" (dyat) indicating God's wisdom and wholistic plan which it is the task of human reason to unravel. Above all to be a Muslim believer – to submit – is to accept that the human intellect is limited, and therefore to resort to faith. In this frame of reference, the domain of epistemic intellectual exercise is limited to the Qur'anic text, either by way of direct and comprehensive acquaintance with it or by way of developing the necessary skill to extrapolate from it. This latter skill (analogy, or qiyds) is developed by the jurisprudents, who are called upon to make judgments over specific events which are covered in the Qur'an only in a general sense. Analogy becomes the skill to apply the principle to the newly arising situation.

In his characterization of Islamic intellectual schools of thought Ibn Khaldun describes this trend as the "knowledge-through-transmission" (idum naqliyyah) category, and he subsumes under it all those skills which

are associated directly with a working knowledge of the Qur'an, as the exegesists, the jurisprudents, the grammarians and the linguists share. One should assume that the practitioners of these sciences, and the general milieu to which they belonged, constituted the mainstream of thought in the Islamic period. Politically, it is they who dominated the scene. Their derogation of any other kind of scientist, in particular those who relied on "foreign" texts in their pursuit of truth, is none more salient than in Abu Hayyan al-Tawhidl's famous dramatic presentation of the "argument" which takes place between a logician and a grammarian in the company of a political ruler, in which the logician is seen to be reduced to a stuttering idiot before the astute grammarian. One assumes that this dramatic exchange typified the general intellectual atmosphere which prevailed at the time rather than literally or scrupulously adhering to the actual minutes of the exchange.

Secondly, a more vivacious approach to, and use of, the human intellect was adopted by the practitioners of kaldm, or theology. Ibn Khaldun places this epistemic pursuit along with the previously mentioned sciences (as a knowledge-through-transmission item). Indeed, in so far as the Qur'anic text defines the frame of reference for the theologian in the exercise of his intellect, kaldm shares with the transmitted sciences a major characteristic. Kaldm is conceived as a defensive theology, or a polemical art whose explicitly defined objective is the defence of the Islamic doctrine against would-be detractors – whether agnostics or theologians of other religions. However, while bound to the revealed text as a fixed frame of reference for developing answers and positions, kaldm s vivacity is derived from having to address questions and doctrines which originate

from a variety of frames of reference. Thus, if the jurisprudent (who is a practitioner of the first set of sciences, and who shares with the theologian the faith that the revealed text constitutes the frame of reference to all answers) exercises his or her powers of reasoning by addressing new questions which arise from the need to maintain the direct relevance of the Qur'an to unfolding daily events, the theologian goes a step beyond this to address questions which originate from entirely different theological and philosophical frames of reference. This makes the operating theatre of the theologian much wider.

The dialectical skills developed by theologians in their pursuit to address a wide spectrum of ideological challenges involved not only a unique set of logical relations (e.g., distinctive interpretations of causal relations) but also a unique universe of discourse (i.e., a special vocabulary or terminology containing references to items or objects not generally found in other disciplines, such as ma'nd, hat, maivdut, etc.). These polemical skills, abstracted from any specific subject matter to which they may be applied, come close to being a unique logic or method of reasoning. Indeed, if one abstracts from the specific doctrines or positions adopted
by the two main schools of kalam (the Mu'tazilites and the Ash'arites), one finds that what is common to both is precisely this unique logic (causal relations and objects of discourse), thus rendering al-Shahrastanl's reference to kalam as being synonymous with "logic" quite understandable, notwithstanding the derogatory attitude to kalam expressed by the so-called "Second Master" of Greek logic in Islam, al-Farabi.

The classical characterization of kalam s distinctive methodology is its dialectical approach (as opposed to what is regarded generally as the "deductive" approach of the "Classical" logicians in Islam). However, it would be misleading to rely too heavily on this distinguishing feature, as it is not always precisely clear what is meant by it. There is certainly no presumption by its practitioners that the ultimate answers are unknown, and the argumentative nature of its literature is explanatory, not exploratory. Counter-arguments for kalam doctrines are formulated, and are then addressed and undermined. It is true that the modern-day reader faces the task of having to reconstruct the general position of the kalam practitioners on various subjects (as epistemology, perception, free will, etc.) on an argument-by-argument basis, but this seems to be more of an expository or stylistic problem rather than a substantive logical problem. If one had to focus on a truly distinguishing methodological mark, it is far safer to consider the above-mentioned universe of discourse (both ontological items as well as relations), and to determine in what precise way this differs from the "Classical" logical approach of the Aristotelian school. However, a second and related distinguishing mark of the kaldm discipline is its ontology: that the world is made up ultimately of primary, indivisible and indistinguishable atoms, which are held together through an external cause. This is a fascinating theory on more than one level, but one suspects that it also provided the ontological foundation for those claiming that even the essence of an object is accidental to it, and is therefore held to it by an external cause (meaning, ultimately, by God of course). Thus one cannot help feeling as one reads al-Ghazzall's (d. 505/1111) discourse on how God can intervene in the universe in such a way as to make fire, as fire, incapable of burning a combustible object (or

how God can therefore intervene not only in determining whether things are but also, given that they are, in what they are – the explanation of miracles) that he must have been influenced by his kalam teacher al-Juwaynl (d. 478/1085). Certainly the atomist theory, unlike the Classical Aristotelian theory on the infinity of matter, is far more amenable to the beliei in divine omnipotence, as it provides for far more room for God's intervention in the universe, including enough for the operation of miracles. One suspects also that perhaps it is this theory which is at the backbone of some of the Classical philosophers' theories on identity or unity (being a one, or a this), such as the theories of al-Kindi as expressed in his Epistle on First Philosophy, or Avicenna. Both
these philosophers also express views that seem to indicate a bifurcation between essence and existence, or its being accidental to a thing that it is a thing, an individual, and therefore being what it is. (Discourse on unity/identity/ essence in this context seems analogous to the discourse on knowledge, because the same apprehensions relating to the discussion about whether knowledge is the same in both God and humans obtain in relation to the discussion about whether a thing is necessarily what it is.)

Thirdly, there is what generally goes under the name of "philosophy", or falsafah, and is assumed as a discipline to be detached from the Islamic milieu, and more influenced by the "foreign" sciences of the Greeks, etc. It is mostly the practitioners of: this discipline that are the object of derogation and criticism by the mainstream intellectual schools of thought. What bound them together was perhaps less a set of doctrines than their respect for, and readiness to learn from, the Greek philosophers. To distinguish them from the other disciplines (in particular from the disciplines which

depended heavily on the so-called "knowledge-by-transmission" method), Ibn Khaldun called them adherents of the "knowledge-by-intellect" method. In other words, they were supposed in theory to be adherents – even worshippers of reason, and unbound by any framework of reference. But in practice they were in general bound by their own framework of reference, namely, the received set of philosophical and scientific works transmitted to them from the Greek and Syriac. Indeed, it is arguable that they were as bound to their specific framework of reference, and as bound to its parameters for the exercise of their reason, as were the practitioners of kaldm bound to the revealed text. Put differently, they worked from a transmitted body of knowledge analogously to the way the theologians worked. But because this body of knowledge was foreign, and generally seemed to be being presented as a substitute for, if not a superior replacement of, the traditional Islamic body of knowledge, the philosophers were a constant target of criticism and suspicion. The claim of falsafah to be the repository of real truth drew scathing attacks by leading Muslim thinkers, such as al-Ghazzali and Ibn Taymiyyah. Indeed, falsafah never flourished except among its own practitioners, and it was generally marginal to mainstream Islamic society.

However, it is difficult to claim (as their opponents assumed) that all philosophers defended the same set of received doctrines. Nor are the differences between the main figures of Islamic philosophy (e.g., al-Farabi and Avicenna) attributable only to different Greek and neo-Hellenistic schools of thought (e.g., Aristotelian, Neoplatonic, etc.). Indeed one finds that even on theories of epistemology (see below) there is a gulf dividing these thinkers. In the general context of falsafah

versus the traditional disciplines, the differences between the philosophers might have seemed like an irrelevant detail. But in the context of falsafah itself, the different

theories are what distinguish one philosopher from another. In his writings al-Ghazzall picks out al-Farabi and Avicenna as heretics for claiming, among other things, that God does not know particulars. It is doubtful that al-Ghazzall was unaware of Avicenna's theory on God's knowledge of particulars (see below), but in any case it is telling that he does not think it worthwhile to point out the differences between al-Farabi and Avicenna on this issue. In short falsafah was – and to some extent it still is – treated as a uniform discipline with individual distinguishing features being regarded as a marginal detail, and at best as clues for determining pre-Islamic influences on this philosopher or that. Generally, we have not succeeded yet in taking the philosophers in Islam seriously.

There were various attempts by the practitioners offalsafah to reconcile – at least ostensibly – their "body of knowledge", or their "truth", with that of the traditionalists. Regardless of the sincerity of their intentions, an entire body of epistemic discourse developed as a result of that attempt. Drawing partly on the Platonic imagery of the cave (where different shades of reality are postulated), and partly on Qur'anic verses which confirm the need to use imagery for communicating truths, the philosophers attempted to show that there are different grades of truth, not different or conflicting truths. They also tried to show that rational truth was real truth, while other truths (including religious) were images of this truth. Naturally, this did not appease the committed practitioners of the religious sciences, but it seemed to satisfy the philosophers' quest for a compromise

formula. (This imagery, by the way, was to be used by the fourth epistemic school, i.e., the mystics, to distinguish their kind of knowledge from that of the philosophers.)

Fourthly, there were the mystics. Theirs is a truly defiant theory, because it can be neither tested nor even described. There are different schools and shades of Sufi knowledge, but what is common to all of them is the claim that language obstructs, rather than communicates, understanding. To them, knowledge is a form of individual "taste". It is the difference between being able to give a precise scientific definition of health and being healthy, or "to know" medically what being inebriated is and experiencing drunkenness, or to know down to the minutest detail what a town looks like and being able to walk in its streets and to see it as it really is. Inevitably, their theories are communicated through metaphor and imagery, rather than through definitive linguistic mechanisms. Often, poetry and stories are used to convey meanings rather than straightforward expositions. While frustrating to those trained in philosophy, their methods of communication draw upon precisely that imagery which the philosophers used to reconcile their "truth" with that of the practitioners of the religious sciences.

The Epistemology of Kalam

Two major problems confront one when one attempts to provide at least a brief outline of kaldm epistemology. The first problem has to do with the diversity of views held on the subject, not only between the two Classical schools (Mu'tazilites and Ash'arites) but also between adherents of

the same school. The second problem is technical, in that we do not as yet possess a complete and consensus account of a kaldm theory of knowledge. However, if one were to look beyond the details distinguishing one view from the next, and were to attempt to throw light on the main operating concepts and words that constituted the language of discourse in the subject, one could perhaps begin with the following itinerary: (1) disposition (hal), meaning to-be-in-a-state-of-such-and-such; (2) generation (tawlid), meaning in this context the rational operation which produces knowledge; and (3) repose (sukiin al-nafs), meaning the psychological state of mind which is associated with the dispositional attitude (of being in a state of knowing). There may have been differences between various thinkers (whether in the same school or belonging to the two opposite schools) on how to understand or to explain these operating concepts, yet a definitive outline and appreciation of the significance of the different interpretations can be understood fully only against the entire intellectual frame of reference which the different thinkers operated in. For example, to appreciate why a specific thinker claimed that knowledge is or cannot be a disposition, one has to have a fuller view of his intellectual frame of reference, in which different ontological categories other than dispositional attitudes (e.g. substance, accident, cause, condition, etc.) were featured in specific ways. One often also finds that a particular thinker's definition of hal (or disposition) – for example, whether it is an effect, a cause or a condition – is a function of that thinker's general intellectual frame of reference. Therefore, the following discussion must be viewed only as a tentative introduction to the universe of discourse in kaldm epistemology, and not as a definitive outline of specific schools of thought in that universe.

How does hdl feature in a discussion about knowledge? Perhaps the simplest and most direct route to answer this question is to view it in the context of a subject (perhaps even a substance) and a state (perhaps even an accident). One asks oneself the question, in what sense is the state attributable to the subject? (Or in what sense does this kind or category of accident pertain to this kind or category of substance?) To ask such a question would be as much as to ask, in what sense is knowledge attributable to a person?

Hdl can perhaps best be described as the being-in-such-and-such-a-state. Among the thinkers who asserted the meaningfulness or existence of such a category, there were differences concerning whether such a category had the same application to living agents as to inanimate objects. Some would argue, for example, that the accident's-being-an-accident, or the substance's-being-in-existence, or even the accident's-being-a-colour, are all on a par with a living organism's-being-alive, its-being-in-a-state-of-hearing, or its-being-in-a-state-of-knowing. Others would claim that the last three examples are distinct from the first three, in that they clearly presuppose life in the substance/subject to which they pertain. In general, those who wished to give hdl a distinct status in their intellectual frames of reference would argue that hdl (plural ahwdl) can be said to pertain only to living agents. The rest would better be described as attributes, or at best – if further specifications are needed – as akwdn (singular, kawn), which are specific attributes/accidents of movement, rest, conjunction and separation.

Yet to have made this distinction as one which, in the final analysis, seems to be that of different ontic categories of

accidents, is only to have introduced the rich variety of subtle distinctions used in this discipline. Primarily, however, it was generally agreed that states (dispositional attitudes) attributable to live agents had to fulfil certain specifications relating to their causal mode. The issue therefore was, given the subject (the agent) and the disposition (the state-of-knowing), in what sense can we understand the coming-to-be of the disposition in the subject? The being-white of a table is caused, and the-being-in-a-state-of-knowing is also caused, but surely the modes of causality in the two examples are different. It is to address these questions that the concept of generation (tawlid) seems to have been evolved, as a specific type of causal implication.

To recapitulate: to know something, or "the-knowing-of-something" is an accident that comes to pertain to a subject. However, accidents are of different categories. If the accident in question is a dispositional attitude that pertains to a living agent, then it can be called a hdl. Even so, distinctions can still be made out between various sub-groups of such dispositional attitudes. For example, to be in a state of pain, or to feel pain, is not the same as to be in a state of knowledge, or to be in a state of believing such-and-such: in the first example, pain can be sensed in a particular location (the mahall, or location, where the hdl so to speak subsists and can be physically identified), whereas in the second example the mahall of knowledge/ belief is said to be the person (the jumlah) as a whole rather than a specific physical location in that person. To be in a state of desire (to desire such-and-such) can analogously to the pain example be argued to relate at least in some instances to a physical location: thus to say "I know such-and-such", or

"So-and-so finds himself in a state of believing such-and-such" is not quite the same as to say "I feel such-and-such" or "So-and-so finds herself in a state of desiring/feeling such-and-such" since one cannot or should not identify a physical location as the subject of the state of knowledge/belief, whereas one can at
least in some cases identify physical locations wherein the desire/feeling is experienced. Perhaps, to make out the distinction in clearer or more contemporary terms, one can point out that it is possible in one case to say where it hurts (one senses the pain), or which part of the body senses the feeling of, say, hunger, whereas such localizations in the case of knowledge are less appropriate to make.

These sub-distinctions are perhaps relevant only to the extent that they underline the primarily operational nature of knowledge/belief: that the state of knowledge is an active dispositional state of the person, as opposed perhaps to its being a passive or perhaps even a neutral dispositional state. Above all, the distinctions set out knowledge in terms of dispositional states. Perhaps one should point out here that, contrary to kdla?n epistemologists, the philosophers and even mystics spoke of knowledge in terms of final states, or as the end-products of a process (see below). According to them knowledge is something which one acquires after or through a process (the subject being the mind or the soul rather than the person). Thus, although being an attribute, it is somehow made out as something (an existential category) which is distinct from the person, and which the person comes to acquire, in part or in whole. Such a description obviously lends knowledge an objective status, whereas the kaldm description ties it very tightly to subjective states.

Typically, a dispositional state (a hal) is one which agents find themselves as having. Thus agents find themselves as being in the state of knowing, and are able to distinguish themselves as being in such a state partly by their ability to distinguish their being in such a state from their not being in such a state, and partly by their ability to distinguish this state from others which they find themselves as being in. Such abilities to distinguish are argued by kaldm thinkers to be direct or immediate. This is like saying that one just happens to know when one believes something, is thinking about it or knows it. The question, therefore, What is knowledge?, or What is it to know something? is first answered in terms of a dispositional state which is immediately distinguishable by the person who experiences it. One simply finds oneself being in such a state.

In order to address the second main question, namely, how to explain the acquisition of such a state, or how does one happen to come by finding oneself in such a state after not having had it first, the concept of generation (tawlid) was introduced, as a process of reasoning leading to knowledge. Kaldm thinkers distinguished naturally between immediate and acquired knowledge, but did not expend too much effort on trying to make the distinction in terms of the objects of knowledge in the Classical way that the philosophers did (for example by saying that some truths are by their nature immediately perceptible). Their main concern was to try to explain how one comes by knowledge. How is it that one comes by finding oneself being in such-and-such-a-state? Their answer
was that reason generates knowledge, in the sense that the state of knowing such-and-such can be acquired only if a methodical process of considering the right kind of evidence

in the right kind of way is applied. On this view, "aborted" generation can be due only to one or another of these conditions being absent: that methodical reasoning was not used, that not the right evidence was considered, or that not the right manner of considering this evidence was used. Strictly speaking, on this view, to "learn a truth" from someone else cannot be considered as acquiring knowledge. Similarly, "to recollect a truth" is not necessarily the same as recalling a state of knowledge. Assuming normal conditions, so to speak, only a person engaged methodically in reasoning about the right kind of evidence will find himself or herself in the state of knowing such-and-such. Merely to recollect a truth without the reasoning that led to it, or to be told a truth, is thus not to be in a state of knowledge.

The third operative concept in this discourse about knowledge sheds still further light on the subject: sukiin al-nafs, or repose of the soul, is the psychological confidence a person feels which is associated with being in a state of knowledge. This is the confidence that what one believes to be the case is in fact the case, or that no further search is needed. Indeed, more explicitly, knowledge is depicted by kaldm thinkers as a kind of belief, distinguished partly by its having been arrived at in a specified methodical manner, and partly by the additional psychological criterion of confidence that the person feels regarding this belief.

One does not find in kaldm literature too much concern for establishing – or arguing for or explaining – for example a correspondence relation between subject and object, or between a person's believing such-and-such to be the case and its being in fact the case. Knowledge is primarily addressed as a dispositional attitude, a subjective state of the

mind, and the effort to explain it is made precisely in terms of its being such a subjective state. Thus it is first of all distinguished from other dispositional states of the person (ahwdl, akwdn, sifdt, etc. – see above) and then from other dispositional states of the mind (being ignorant of, suspecting, doubting, etc.). Having thus depicted it as an attitudinal state of the mind which one finds oneself as experiencing (rather than as an object itself whose knowledge presupposes and explains knowledge of items other than itself), it is then simply explained in terms of the confidence an agent feels in the truth of what he or she believes (which makes knowledge similar to ignorance), as well as in terms of the method used by the agent in acquiring this belief.

Falsafah Epistemology

Unlike kalam thinkers, whose intellectual efforts in the subject give the impression at least of being indigenous, the philosophers operated within the framework of a transmitted system or systems, and their contributions or originality can be understood against this background. Broadly speaking, one can perhaps distinguish between two main streams of thought in falsafah epistemology, represented by al-Farabi and Avicenna. In many ways, Avicenna's epistemology is closer to kalam, while al-Farabi's is closer to the Neoplatonic system. In al-Farabi, the epistemic order reflects or corresponds to the ontic order. The world is neatly described in terms of a terrestrial and an extraterrestrial order. The extraterrestrial order consists of a progressively elevated ontology of heavenly bodies and minds (intellects) whose pinnacle is the Prime Mover, or God. The sublunar order

consists of a progressively regressing ontology of animate and inanimate objects reaching as far down as the four main elements. At the top of the sublunar ontological order stands humanity, while at the beginning of the extraterrestrial order the moon stands associated with the Active Intellect, God's contact with the terrestrial world. Everything in the world is made up of matter and form, the essence and meaning of each object being its form. Terrestrial forms originate in the Active Intellect and subsist there eternally, there being virtually no epistemic difference between the totality of forms originating in the Active Intellect as an object of knowledge and the Active Intellect itself as an eternally active cognizant subject. Standing at the top of the terrestrial pyramid humanity strives for and can achieve perfection (happiness, eternality) through the pursuit of knowledge. As knowledge is knowledge of meanings/essences/forms, the more a human being cognizes and collects forms the more similar he or she becomes to the Active Intellect. This similarity, reaching almost total fusion, is a function partly of the sameness of forms as objects of knowledge in both cases, and partly of the principle adopted by al-Farabi that in acts of cognizance the subject and object of knowledge are fused into one.

The epistemic journey towards fusion with the Active Intellect and the achievement therefore, of happiness begins at the bottom of the ladder with a material intellect that stands ready to cognize material forms (forms subsisting in matter) but has not yet done so. It is thus a potential intellect rather than an intellect-in-act. Once a form is cognized (thus undergoing a transformation in its own status, qua the intellect cognizing it, from being an 'mte\Xigib\e-in-potentia to becoming an intelligible-in-act), the intellect becomes an intellect-in-act. This intellect-in-act is material because the

form it has cognized subsists in matter. However, as the intellect transcends in its epistemic journey, apprehending material forms and then, through a series of abstractions, beginning to cognize
immaterial (or abstract) forms, it becomes an immaterial intellect. Given the finite framework of reference in which the intellect operates, the epistemic quest has an end which is the acquisition of all or nearly all the forms that are potentially cognizable. At that stage, the human intellect comes to be in possession of the same "data" as that inhering in the Active Intellect, and a state of fusion or sameness between the two is achieved, explained by the principle of the fusion or sameness of the subject and object of knowledge. There may be some subtle distinctions introduced at this stage (the distinction between the acquired intellect as a perfection of the human immaterial intellect and the Active Intellect as a part of the heavenly order, as well as the additional possession, by the Active Intellect, of forms abstracted from a higher ontological order), but the bottom line is that the human intellect can achieve a sense of fusion with the Active Intellect, and can thus acquire its characteristics of eternity and happiness.

Avicennan epistemology, in contrast, denies the principle of fusion between subject and object of knowledge (thus forestalling Farablan conclusions and theories relating to the achievement of final happiness and eternity). Furthermore, and in a series of ideas that can be truly described as ingenious, Avicenna tries to depict a theory of knowledge that is distinctively subjectivist. Whatever the ontological status of forms in the material world, forms in the intellect in any case have a distinct ontological status, in such a way that the immediate objects of intellectual cognition are not what exist in the external world. These intellectual forms are further

transformed once they become logically categorized, so that the logical objects of thought and discourse are quite distinct from external as well as mental/intellectual objects. In a sense, the categorization of logical objects in a certain way (the framework of knowledge) is not a reflection of sacrosanct or eternal truths in the world (an ontic order), and it is not set up the way it is owing to an inner code of relations of essences, but it is a causal and contingent product of the intellectual effort at understanding the world. Even in the world itself objects or relations are not the way they are because of an inner code of essences, but are a causal and contingent product of God's Providence. Avicenna does not deny forms as essences, but after ascribing to them the status of subsistence as indeterminate things, their subsistence in the material or logical worlds in specific ways ceases to be regarded as essentially necessary, and retains only a causal necessity. The "Classical" school would have argued that objects might or might not have existed, but their being what they are is due to an inner cause which is their essence. Fire might not have existed, but given that it exists its essence necessitates that it have such-and-such qualities. In contrast, Avicenna held that not only is an object's essence contingent to it, but more radically that the essence being of such-and-such a description is also a contingent matter. Therefore, not only

is fire's existence contingent on God's causing it to come to be, but also the character of its essence is also contingent on God's causing it to have this description. In the al-Farabian model the formal order in the Active Intellect becomes manifest in the external world and is then imprinted as that order in the human intellect. In the Avicennan model forms have no order in the Active Intellect, and their manifestation in a specific order in the external world or their categorization

in a specific order by the human intellect is an expression of one of several logical possibilities. Indeed, the forms (the essences) themselves subsist as such only in the Active Intellect, but not in the material world. They are not therefore abstracted (as in the Farabi an model) from the external material world. Images of particulars are indeed cognized, and the intellect performs the active function of unification and differentiation. Flowever, this function is integrated with the Active Intellect, in that the presentation of a particular image enables the human intellect to cognize an abstract form emanating from above. Given that neither particular images from the material world nor abstract forms from the Active Intellect are relational in themselves (that they do not have an inherent order), the construction of the objects of knowledge (the logical order) by the human intellect becomes a non-definitive exercise, i.e., an exercise in opinion-formation rather than in the acquisition of knowledge strictly so-called. Like kaldm thinkers, Avicenna thus subsumes knowledge under the category of belief.

Perhaps because of the absence of a formal order, the intuitive faculty (the capability to be inspired) plays a major part in the Avicennan epistemic system. Intellects vary in their receptivity to intuition, and these variations (whether in terms of number or of speed) explain the movement from premisses to conclusions (i.e., the acquisition of knowledge). The intellect has to apply itself methodically to evidence, but there is no internal or independent mechanism associated with this application that guarantees the arrival at results. Avicenna's point here seems to be that inspiration is a necessary condition for the arrival at a result, and that perspiration alone is not sufficient. There are various degrees in this intuitive ability, reaching the point where the human intellect is

ever-ready to receive forms emanating from the Active Intellect, or where it is in a state of semi-constant inspiration. This intuitive faculty, at its zenith, is a holy or prophetic faculty. Avicenna argues in this context that once the human intellect reaches this point it would not be impossible for it to start perceiving images of particulars from other times, in particular from the future. Flowever, in general Avicenna argues that the human intellect is almost always burdened by its association with bodily matters, and it cannot therefore achieve epistemic perfection (or happiness, etc.) until after becoming relieved, as a soul, from the human body. Once again, in this Avicenna seems to hold a view that is at variance with that of al-Farabi, and closer to the Islamic tradition.

For Avicenna the knowledge of something must proceed on the basis of methodical reasoning, the result must be inspired, and ideally the intellect must be cognizant of this step-by-step process to be truly said to have knowledge. However, such knowledge can be recollected without detailed cognizance of the steps that led to it, and it can be transmitted to others. One assumes that this variety of categories of knowledge in Avicenna is possible given the overall framework of knowledge being a form of belief, which can therefore be manifested in different epistemic states of the mind.

God's Knowledge of Particulars

One cannot end this brief presentation on epistemology without quickly referring to the controversy which arose concerning God's own knowledge of the material world. Once again, two main views can be distinguished here, the "Classical" Farablan view which held that God cannot know particulars, and the Avicennan view which tried to explain how God in fact knows particulars through the intermediation of that particular's species. In trying to put up a theory explaining how God knows particulars in a universal way (that not an atom's worth in the heavens or earth escapes his knowledge), Avicenna was once again closer than al-Farabi to the Muslim/religious tradition.

The theory Avicenna seems to have evolved consists of several elements, parts of which have some points in common with the Theory of Descriptions. The first element in the theory, however, has something to do with "causal knowledge", or with knowledge of particular effects through knowledge of principles or general causes. Given that God knows these general principles and their interaction with one another, He can therefore also know the particular effects these lead to in the context of time (i.e., their occurrence in time). This causal knowledge, Avicenna claims, is universal (presumably since it is a knowledge of a conditional). However, Avicenna seems to distinguish here between knowledge of a particular and knowledge about a particular. The distinction has to do with whether the particular is one of

a kind. If it is (e.g., like the sun) then God can have knowledge of it (through its description). If, however, it is not one of a kind, then God can know about it through a description, but God cannot be ascribed with knowledge of it, since this can only be acquired through ostensive reference in the first place.

In this second case, the ability according to which reference to (and therefore knowledge about) a particular can be achieved is explained through postulating two related "universal" truths or items of knowledge. The example Avicenna uses in this context is that of an eclipse: of any particular eclipse it is possible to provide (know) an entire account of
specific descriptions (spatial as well as temporal). In God's case, this account is presumably possible in the causal sense already referred to. The condition here is that these spatial and temporal descriptions are part of the knowledge (the predicate), and are not limiting parameters of the intellect having that knowledge (the subject). Avicenna argues, in another context, that even particular statements are eternally true if their particularity is regarded as a feature of the predicate instead of its being a condition which is external to the statement or a characterization of the subject.

This entire account of specific descriptions, however, is universal in that it is predicable of more than one eclipse. In order for this description or universal account to be said to have a reference function, Avicenna adds a second item, namely, the knowledge that this described eclipse is only one. God can thus be said to know a particular by knowing that particular's description and by knowing, in addition, that this description happens to be true of only one. Interestingly, it is

the combination of these two items as an explanation that is reminiscent of the Theory of Descriptions. Avicenna pointedly adds that, even armed with this knowledge, it would be impossible to determine of this particular eclipse whether it is the eclipse one had knowledge about. This is like arguing that I could know everything about the thief who broke into my house, but I cannot determine ol this person, whom I now see before me, if he or she is the person who did it. Clearly, knowledge based on ostention is different from knowledge based on description, but both kinds can still be argued to be knowledge about particulars.

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CHAPTER 50

Political philosophy

Hans Daiber

❧

As leader of the new Islamic community (ummah)[1] the Prophet Muhammad combined religious interests with requirements of politics (siyasah, literally "government").[2] In the so-called Constitution of Medina the community of the believers declared their solidarity against common enemies and accepted Muhammad as prophet and arbiter between rival clans.[3] His leadership was legitimized by the divine revelation.

This legitimacy of the leader appeared to be replaced among the successors of the Prophet, the caliphs, by an appointment through the community either because of their merits or because of their affiliation to the family of the Prophet. There was, however, no consensus on the legitimacy of the caliphs. Early debates starting immediately after the death of the Prophet[4] created among Muslims a consciousness of community and leadership, of hierarchical structures in society and of dependence and responsibility within the individual freedom of man as a member of the new Islamic community. The traditional deterministic character of the Islamic conception of belief in an Almighty God induced

members of this Islamic ummah to reflect again and again on the role of man as related to the leader of a religious state and to define the task and qualities of the leader, who became khalifah by God's decree. Among the Umayyads we therefore find tendencies of jahr, divine omnipotence, and qadar, human freedom, as description of a polarization resulting from a developing critical attitude towards rulers: one is free to rebel against them if they are sinful rulers, that is, disobey the Qur'an, God's Book, or the Sunnah of the Prophet.[5] Simultaneously, it became evident that political leadership is dependent upon divine inspiration: it is based on the revelation of the Qur'an, the ethical guiding principle of the community for what is good and just.[6]

This ideological background of early Islam was the starting-point of political philosophy, which from the third/ ninth century onwards
developed under the influence of Hellenism and integrated political thoughts and ideas reflected in the early mirrors of princes, written in the second/eighth century, and in Islamic theology. The Persian Ibn al-Muqaffa' (d. 140/757), one of the early famous writers of Arabic literary prose, gives in his Kitdb al-adab al-kabir = al-Durrat al-yattmah, his Risalah fi'l-sahdbah and in his version Kalilah wa Dimnah, originally a collection of Indian fables, practical advice to the prince.[7] The texts give a picture of society as consisting of a minority of people with excellent judgment, solid friendship, integrity and fraternity, the khdssah in contrast to the masses, the 'ammah;[8] they reveal a rather rationalistic morality aimed at savoir vivre; in the domination of political authority over Islamic Shari'ah they show a rationalistic-critical and perhaps Manichaean-inspired attitude against religion, without, however, totally denying the value of religion: religion gives

people what they deserve and directs them to what is their duty.[9] The prince, the ruler, appears to be a worldly and a religious leader; he should be prudent and just, but at the same time the ruled should be distrustful towards him. This sceptical attitude against religious and political authority seems to have revived the value of friendship as creating community and improving human character.[10]

Ibn al-Muqaffa' was indebted to Indian material; mainly, however, like later authors of mirrors of princes[11] or authors of political thought,[12] he followed Persian–Sassanian ethical traditions. They were combined with gnomological sayings by the wise men of the past: Sassanian wisdom literature is corroborated by sayings of wise men from the Greek, pre-Islamic and Islamic past.[13] Aristotle's pupil Alexander the Great becomes the ideal figure of a king[14] and appears as addressee in a collection of advice said to be by Aristotle.[15] These letters are based on Byzantine handbooks on warfare and on administration; they include material from classical and later Hellenistic–hermetical literature; they were translated from Greek at the suggestion of Salim Abu'l-Ala, the secretary of the caliph Hisham (reigned 106–126/ 724–743) and used in Arabic revisions like the famous pseudo-Aristotelian Sire al-asrar,[16] a mirror of princes from the fourth/tenth century, which in its Latin version played a major role in the Middle Ages.[17]

Ethical literature of Islam is classified as adab and aims at the moral education of man, ruler and ruled; authorities of the past, Islamic and non-Islamic, justify practical advice in contemporary political situations. Above all, Greek gnomological literature became integrated in Arabic compilations like the Nawadir al-falasifah by the famous

translator Hunayn ibn Ishaq (d. 260/873), which was widely used in later times.[18] The Greek heritage became a guiding-line for popular philosophical ethics which relied on gnomological sayings and, in addition, on translations of Greek texts like the pseudo-Aristotelian De virtutibus et vitiis,[19] Plutarch's De cohibenda ini,[20]" Galen's treatise on ethics, of which
only an Arabic summary is preserved,[21] Themistius' letter to Julian on Politics,[22] the Oikonomikos by the neo-Pythagorean Bryson[23] and a treatise on the banishment of sorrow, perhaps by Themistius or by Plutarch,[24] The materia] of these books was integrated in Islamic philosophical ethics and formed the basis of political philosophy in Islam: it elaborated the political idea of justice[25] and the hierarchical structure of society in which the position of people is determined by their behaviour (virtues and self-control) and achievement and in which friendship is a key factor of its holding together; friendship and love are central themes in Miskawayh (see below) and continue the discussion begun by Ibn al-Muqaffa (see above).

These ethical traditions formed the basis of Islamic political philosophy, which began to arise in the third/ninth century. The origin of Islamic political philosophy is correlated with the translation of political writings mainly by Plato (summaries of his Republic, Laws and Politics)[26] and by Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics, which was available to the Arabs in the translation by Ishaq ibn Hunayn and in a translation of a lost Greek summary perhaps by Nicolaus Damascenus, the Summa Alexandrinorum; in addition, the Arabs knew Porphyry's commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics.[27]'

Finally, besides the early development of the caliphate and ethical Islamic and non-Islamic traditions, the theological discussions on the just Imamate by Shi'ites and Mu'tazilites from the second/eighth century and by the Ash'arites from the fourth/tenth century (cf. e.g. al-Baqillani)[28] redefined the role of the leader, the Imam, and his function in the community. He is liable for the community and must have knowledge of law, moral and religious matters and must be independent in his judgment; only the most excellent can be a rightful Imam. The Twelver Shi'ah based their Imami doctrine on the necessity of an infallible leader for humanity, an Imam who is a God-inspired teacher of religion and thus comparable to the Prophet, without, however, being the transmitter of a holy book.[29] This conception of a divinely guided.leadership deeply impressed political philosophers of Islam from the fourth/tenth century.

Their forerunners in the third/ninth century restricted themselves to the ethics of the single individual in a community and continued the tradition of Islamic and non-Islamic gnomological sayings: although the first great philosopher of the Arabs, al-Kindl (c. 185/801–252/866),[30] and more clearly his younger contemporary Qusta ibn Luqa (fl. about 205/820–300/912)[31] knew the Aristotelian tripartition of practical philosophy in ethics, economics and politics and attribute to Aristotle works in these fields, the works themselves apparently were not available to them; the Nicomachean Ethics was translated later[32] and from Aristotle's treatise on Politics only a part seems to have been available to the Arabs in a paraphrase or abridgement made in the Hellenistic or Roman period.[33]

Nevertheless, the Fihrist by Ibn al-Nadlm lists several "political books" (kutubuhu al-siyasiyydt) by al-Kindl,[34] among them a treatise on politics (siyasah) and another one on the government of the people (siydsat al-'ammaU)\ both are lost. The rest of the listed treatises primarily discuss ethical themes, including the virtues of the individual. This interest of al-Kindl in ethics as the main feature of politics can be confirmed from his preserved works. In his Risalah fi hudud al-ashya wa-rusiimihd[35] al-Kindl betrays knowledge of the Platonic–Aristotelian anthropology,[36] of the soul-body dichotomy and of the Platonic tripartion of the soul into reasonable, desiring and irascible parts; these parts cause the four Platonic cardinal virtues:[37] wisdom (hikmah), temperance ('iffah) and manliness (;najdah); if the equilibrium (i tidal) in them is disturbed, the opposite of them, i.e. vices, are caused; "real virtue" (al-fadilah al-haqqiyyah) is part of "ethics in the soul" and also part of its "righteous" adl) acting (afal al-nafs).[38] This Platonic–Aristotelian conception of ethics also appears in the sayings ascribed to al-Kindl.[39] His Risalah fi alfaz Suqrdf[40] and his Risalah fi Alcibiades wa-SuqrdL[41] describe Socrates as an ideal of moderation and spiritual values, which are superior to worldly possessions.[42] al-Kindl's interest in the figure of Socrates reveals his sympathy with this conception of ethics. In a similar manner, his treatise On the Means to Drive Away Sorrow (Risalah fi'l-hilah li-daf' al-ahzan), which in fact reproduces a lost Hellenistic treatise,[43] advises the neglect of worldly things and concentration on the intelligible world by "imitating God".[44] This is attained through the human virtues, by our goodness in behaviour and acts. If we neglect worldly things, we will not be "unlucky" (shaqiy) in the hereafter, we will be "near to our creator" and will "know him".[45]

Al-Kindfs political philosophy combines Platonic-Aristotelian features with Neoplatonic trends and appears to be restricted to an individualistic ethics of the divine soul, to the behaviour of man as striving for happiness[46] in the hereafter by neglecting the world and by increasing knowledge of spiritual things, of his Creator. It is not exclusively contemplative; in its concept of wisdom (hikmah) it implies man's righteous action in relation to his fellow-citizen, as a means to a higher, spiritual goal.

After al-Kindi and before al-Farabi (d. 339/950), the political philosopher par excellence, the following authors of books on politics (siyasah) are listed by the Fihrist of Ibn al-Nadlm: the historian Ahmad ibn Abi Tahir Tayfur (b. 205/819), the already mentioned Christian translator Qusta ibn Luqa (b. c. 205/820), al-Kindl's student as-Sarakhsi (b. c. 220/835), his contemporary 'Ubayd Allah ibn Abd Allah ibn Tahir (b. 223/838) and Abu Zayd al-Balkhl (c. 236/850–323/934).[47] As far as the preserved fragments allow a judgment, they do not take up and develop al-Kindl's Platonic-Aristotelian idea of politics as ethics and seem to follow mainly the above-described Persian heritage as reflected in the
mirror of princes: good people can be guided by making them interested |targhib) through pleasurable things and lower-class people by means of intimidation (tarht b). '[48] To this manner of leading Abu Zayd al-Balkhi added the concept'*[49] of masfahah (welfare) of the people, which is the concern of the ruler.[50] Finally, al-Balkill's classification of politics as one of the most important "crafts", because it allows the cultivation ('imarah) of a country and the protection (himdyah) of its people, is directly or indirectly inspired by Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics (1094a27ff.).[51] As in Aristotle the end of politics is not one single person, but all the people and their

country. Here, the welfare of the community outweighs the interests of individuals. In contrast to al-Kindl's approach to the ethical behaviour of the individual, the virtue of humanity as a means to happiness is neglected in the available fragment of al-Balkhl's treatise. Contrary to al-Balkhi's pupil Abu'l-Hasan al-'AmirI[52] the available text does not mention the importance of religion, especially of the Islamic religion, which according to al-Amiri is superior to other religions and is a moral guide of the individual in the perfect state, leading to individual improvement.

Al-Balkhi's realistic attitude reappears in Qudamah ibn Ja'far (b. 260/873), Kitdb al-khardj, chapter 8 (on al-Siydsah);[53] like al-Balkhi he combines Persian, Islamic and Greek traditions.[54] His definition of politics, however, is different and emphasizes the necessity of a leader because of the differences between men, [55] the role and ethical qualities of rulers[56] and their subjects[57] as well as the necessity of the consolidation of people into one community, as they need each other.[58] Reflection on the science of politics and their bases (asbdb/'ilal "causes") is necessary for the leader.[59]

The treatment of politics by Qudamah ibn Ja'far presupposes an advanced stage of discussion. State, ruler and ruled call for a new definition and evaluation, inspired by and orientated to new developments in Islamic intellectual history. Politics became a part of ethics, a development which, under the influence of Aristotle had already started in al-Kindl and was built up to a unique system of political philosophy by Qudamah s contemporary al-Farabi (259/873–339/950). This philosopher (see below) developed, under the influence of Aristotle, the Peripatetic tradition, Plato and Neoplatonic trends, a philosophical system which at the same time is a

reaction to current discussions on the role of the Imam, i.e. must his knowledge be based on divine inspiration and does prophecy confirm polirical authority? These problems arose in discussions between the Isma'lll Abu Hatim al-RazI and the well-known physician and philosopher Abu Bakr al-RazI, which took place in Rayy between 318/930 and 320/932–3 or perhaps already before 313/925 in the presence of the governor Mardawljl. These discussions are mirrored in Abu Hatim al-RazT's book The Proofs of Prophecy (A 'lam al-nubuwwah)[60]It shows

that Abu Bakr al-Razi denied the existence and value of prophecy; man can obtain knowledge on his own, has no need of an authority, for example a prophet, and can learn from the ancestors, previous scholars and philosophers, even from their mistakes.[61] An example is Socrates, who is called "our Imam" in Abu Bakr al-Razl's al-Sirat al-faisafiyyah: [62] Even if Socrates is not the perfect man as he is commonly described, he is a philosophical model for man's way from extremism to moderation (through asceticism), to morality by acquiring knowledge and practising justice in society; this way frees man's soul from the darkness of this world, and might save him for the world to come; the St rat al-falsafiyyah, "the philosophical way of life", is once described in a Neoplatonic manner as "becoming Godlike as far as man is capable to that" ("al-tashabbuh billdh – 'azzah iva-jatkh – bi-qadri mdft tdqati'l-insdn").[63] Abu Bakr al-Razi did not develop these soteriological aspects in his other available works, nor their relevance for political philosophy. His Spiritual Physic (al-Tibb al-ruhdni)[64] expounds Plato (especially Timaeus) and Galen, [65] and within a "hedonistic" philosophy the moral virtues of the soul are shown to restrain desire with reason as the only guide to human conduct. Pleasure is the abolition of pain, of distress caused by desire;

as such it is a return to the original state of relaxation by moderation and by minimization of desire.[66] This ethics of the soul can harmonize with leadership (ri'dsah) and assist and strengthen it; actions based on it belong to The Symptoms of Fortune and Political Success, as Abu Bakr al-Razi entitled a small political treatise.[67,] According to this treatise, which is our only source of his remarks on political philosophy, additional symptoms are intuitive knowledge/'[68] love for leadership, justice ('adl), excellent truthfulness (sidq), perception (hiss) and memory (iddikar) of the soul; whoever is "successful" (muwaffaq) and "shown the right way" (musaddad) through "a divine power" (quwwah ildhiyyah) becomes an "outstanding" person (fadil) and leader, who is needed by the people. There must be a conformity between them and their leader. Abu Bakr al-Razl's remark is interesting on the "divine power" which makes man a leader: he is dependent on it and at the same time needs his own insight, the intuition of reason.

Abu Bakr al-Razl's high estimation of reason as a principle of ethical philosophy and his not uncritical high esteem of ancient philosophers, especially of Socrates as guide (Imam), was strongly contradicted by his Isma'lli opponent Abu Hatim al-Razi in the above-mentioned book The Proofs of Prophecy. The author follows Mu'tazilite, [69] Zaidite[70] and Isma'lli[71] tradition according to which people are imperfect and therefore require a leader, whose perfect knowledge is based on prophetic inspiration.[72] People have different opinions and are commanded by God (Qur'an 3:93/87) to "examine" (al-nazar) and to "follow what is most excellent, suitable, true, and necessary".[73] There is no equality among men, in contrast to the Kharijites, who in accordance with ancient Arab egalitarianism

defended the equality of men and did not attribute to the leader of a community any charisma or make him primus inter pares.[74] In accordance with the Hanbalites[75] Abu Hatim al-RazI explicitly criticized here the Kharijites, their radicalism in belief (taammuq fil-d/n), which according to him cannot be compared with independent judgment (ijtihad).[76] He concludes that

there are different classes of men as concerns their intelligence, insight, and power of distinction and perception. For men are not created equal to each other in their natures, as are animals, for instance, which do not differ \tatafddalu\ in their perception of what is needed by them. Since every class of animals is equal by nature, as regards their consciousness of the obligation to look for food and to reproduce, they do not differ in a comparable fashion as is the case with the mentioned diversity of classes as regards their intelligence and insight.[77]

Men can be divided into two classes, into those who know ('alitn) and those who learn (muta al/im), into leaders (imam) and people guided by them (ma'mum).[78] God forgives the weak, who have not the same obligation as the strong;[79] "it is possible that God bestows his wisdom and mercy on men, chooses them from his creation, makes them prophets, helps them, and gives them prophecy".[80] Because of their intellectual differences people require a leader, who is elected by God and equipped with divine knowledge; the Prophet is the divinely inspired leader par excellence. People must obey him, the teacher of the divinely revealed law;[81] otherwise they must be "forced" to "accept the external forms of (the prophetic) prescriptions".[82] Nevertheless, men have the capacity to choose.[83] Who does not obey the prophetic

guidance is ignorant (jalril), vicious (tdlih), desecrating (muntahik) and unwise[84] and causes enmity and injustice.[85] People without knowledge love power and struggle for wordly things, [86] "they have preferred the world to religion, even though they are convinced of the reward and punishment of those to whom these are promised and threatened".[87] Wars do not arise primarily for the sake of belief, but because of the insatiability and avarice of men for worldly things. They are "kept in check" (yuqhar) by religion, by the divinely inspired religious leader.[88] Men cannot attain knowledge and judgment by their own "inventiveness" (istinbdl).[89]'' The divinely inspired leader teaches them to distinguish between truth and error and to find the true meaning of the religious symbols, of the "external" forms by way of "interpretation" (la'm/).'[90] Among the prophetic leaders the Prophet Muhammad has the highest rank and is perfect in his intellect (\iql), magnanimity, patience, leadership and guidance of all people".[91] In his good qualities (shamd'il, hilyah) the Prophet appears as an ideal of perfect moral life;[92] he is the bearer of prophetic knowledge, equipped with the
Platonic cardinal virtues of wisdom, abstinence, courage and justice, which appear combined with the Aristotelian happy mean (mesotes).[93] Whoever follows him understands the meaning of the religious laws, avoids error and controversy, and so can attain salvation (najdt).[94] Abu Hatim al-RazI keeps to the superiority of the Prophet Muhammad, but at the same time defends the universality of religions in their belief in one single God and in the justness of his laws. Religion and prophetic knowledge are common to all people and nations and not a privilege of one nation.[95]

The idea of the inequality of people in society, who therefore require a leader, a "teacher" of universal knowledge, which is

not the result of his own inventiveness but based on divine revelation, reappears shortly after Abu Hatim al-Razi's discussions with Abu Bakr al-RazI in the political philosophy of al-Farabi (d. 339/950), also called "the Second Teacher" (after Aristotle). Al-Farabi developed these ideas into an elaborate system of political philosophy[96] which in its originality betrays a unique combination of Platonic and Aristotelian elements on the basis of Ismaill doctrines about the Imamate,[97]

Like Abu Hatim al-RazI, al-Farabi distinguishes in society between different classes, which can be grouped into "knowing" and "learning" people. Even more than Abu Hatim al-RazT he stresses among the listed twelve qualifications[98] besides the ethical features the intellectual qualities of the "first ruler" and "Imam", who is "understanding and conceiving very well all he is told, so that it becomes comprehensible to him according to the matter itself".[99] To the Isma'Tii notion of interpretation of religious symbols, of parables indicating the same universal meaning of differing external forms, the laws, [100] al-Farabi adds the Aristotelian doctrine of conception and understanding based on Aristotle's Organon and Rhetoric.[101] According to him "religion" (millah) is a description of the "opinions" and "actions" which are imposed upon society by its rulers in the shape of laws.[102] This explanation is combined with doctrines taken from Aristotle's epistemology, psychology and ethics and from Alexander of Aphrodisias as commentator on Aristotle's De anima.[103] Religion is an imitation, a picture of philosophy, which can prove and justify the "opinions" of religion; it mirrors Aristotle's practical prudence (sophrosyne) as developed in the Nicomachean Ethics. Religion is an aspect of philosophy, which uses religion as its instrument:

through religion philosophy realizes itself, becomes moral insight, practical prudence leading to supreme happiness (al-saadah aEquswa).[104]

Here, al-Farabi presupposes the epistemological and Aristotle-inspired doctrine, that the universals of philosophy are only imaginable to human thinking by using the imaginative powers, which conceive them through imitation (muhdkdt) of the perceptible things, the particulars; on the basis of the Aristotelian interrelation between thought and perception man can only think, be a philosopher, by using pictures "imitating"
the intelligible things. Ultimately, they are inspired by the divine intellectus agens\ he transmits them to the prophet, who thus – in Platonic terms in his "assimilation" to God[105] – becomes authorized as ruler of the "perfect state". In this doctrine philosophy appears as practical philosophy in the shape of religion, of "opinions" and "actions" imposed on society in the shape of laws by the divinely inspired ruler, the prophet.[106] In contrast to Abu Hatim al-Razi, who considered Muhammad as a prophet with the highest rank, al-Farabi is silent on the best prophet and speaks only in general terms of the "prophet", "Imam" and "first ruler". Apparently he did so because he strictly kept to the Isma'ili notion of the universality of true religion, of the belief in one single God and in the justness of His laws, common to all nations.[107]

Al-Farabl also took up the Isma ili concept of society as consisting of differing ranks, which apparently induced him to modify similar ideas[108] from Plato's Republic and Earn.'[109] At the same time he stressed the Aristotelian notion of man as zoon politikon, who wants to be part of an association, of the city-state, and needs his fellow-citizens.[110]

The cooperation of people, who obey the divinely inspired philosopher-king, leads to real happiness in the utopian perfect state[111] through virtues, primarily intellectual virtues and through good deeds by keeping to the law, the Shari'ah. Therefore, the study of politics becomes a guide to man's good actions and behaviour[112] and is necessary as a means to individual ultimate happiness; it enables man to distinguish between good and bad.[113] At the same time, philosophers like Plato and Aristotle prove the correctness and justness of the religious law, the Shari'ah.

This islamization of Greek political philosophy implies the already mentioned universal validity of religious laws; therefore, al-Farabi does not restrict himself to the Platonic description of the ideal state and the imperfect states;[114] he is more interested in the description of the perfect philosopher-ruler and legislator, who bases his knowledge on the prophetic inspiration from God and thus becomes a guide to the perfect virtuous behaviour of man in society, in the perfect state. As a teacher of man, the perfect ruler is not only addressing philosophically minded elites. Because true philosophy is practical philosophy in the state and as such "religion", aimed at the fulfilment of the law (Shari'ah) in the virtuous behaviour of the individual, religion is no more than a disguise of his real opinion, of philosophy. It appears as an alternative language in al-Farabi's summary of Plato's LawsV[115] Religion in the perfect state is the cornerstone of politics and the means of the individual to reach ultimate happiness with the co-operation of the fellow-citizen. The final stage is the release of the soul from matter and its eternal afterlife."[116]

This aim of al-Farabi's political philosophy is slightly later shared by the Rasd'il Ikhwdn al-Safd' ("Epistles of the Sincere Brethren"), an encyclopedia compiled before 349/ 959–60 by anonymous authors and

sympathizers of the Ismailis. Their didactic purpose is to purify the soul and to improve character by knowledge of "intellectual things" (al-umur aI-'nqliyyah).[117] Knowledge leads to salvation in the hereafter. In addition, the Rasd'il contain incidental passages, which reveal rather complex ideas of political philosophy based on al-Farabi.[118] People are divided into three groups: the elite (khawass), which can know the "mysteries of religion"; the masses ('awamm), which have access to the exoteric aspect of religion, namely the religious obligations like prayer, fasting, etc.; finally the "middle" class, the mutawassitun, who can contemplate the religious dogma, interpret the Qur'an in its literal and allegorical sense and can use independent judgment (ijtihad). The inequality of people induces the Ikhwan to distinguish seven classes: craftsmen, businessmen, construction engineers, rulers, servants, unemployed and scholars of religion and other sciences. The privileged and rich people are attacked because they have no moral responsibility to the poor neighbour, who is content with little, and strongly believes in the hereafter. The Ikhwan criticize social conditions of their time and the immorality of people; they list the imperfections of several professions, including the unjust ruler and the caliph, who is not appointed by designation of the Prophet.[119] Social and moral grievances are caused by the inequality of living beings, [120] who do not help each other. This necessitates a ruling authority, the Prophet, who establishes the Divine Law, the Ndmiis, which he received through divine revelation.[121] As with al-Farabi[122] he must have twelve qualities.[123] He and his designated successors of

prophetic descent, the Imams, [124] are assisted by eight classes of people: the reciters and transmitters of the Qur'an; the transmitters of prophetical sayings; the experts of the Divine Law; the commentators on the text of the Qur'an; the warriors; caliphs and leaders of the community; the ascetics and the worshippers of God; the allegorical interpreters of the Qur'an and the theologians. [125]

Contrary to the Shi'ite doctrine of ghaybah (occultation), the Ikhwan maintain that people have an Imam even when they refuse to acknowledge (munkirun) his existence. [126] Imams are the caliphs who combine in their persons the functions of prophecy and kingship, like David, Solomon, Joseph and Muhammad (who, however, is not imam). 127 But the Ikhwan are aware that a prophetic state like that of Muhammad must still be fulfilled; under the influence of the Shi'ite Imamate and al-Farabi's Platonic-Aristotelian political philosophy they developed a utopian state, the "virtuous spiritual state" (madinah fddilah ruhiiniyyaii)[127] '[128] in contrast to the "government of evil people this utopian state consists of virtuous, wise and sincere men, who in a hierarchy of "artisans", "leaders", "kings" and "divine people" help each other to reach the ultimate happiness in the hereafter.[129] People, the artisans, need the guidance of the Divine Law, the Ndmiis, because man is a combination of four souls, the vegetative, animal, rational and angelic souls, which reflect four stages of
man's way to perfection and which let man waver between good and bad; in accordance with man's varying natural disposition (jibillah) including his intelligence, [130] his rational soul induces him to acquire knowledge, to obey the Divine Law as revealed to the Prophet and taught by the Imams and to realize the "virtuous spiritual state".[131] In their

view of the utopian perfect state the Ikhwan indicate some optimism as regards their belief in progress of mankind and in cyclical revolutionary changes; things are in motion and change, primarily because man can mould his environment with his will and with his increasing knowledge of "prophetic" (al-siydsat al-nabawiyyah) and "kingly politics" (al-siydsat al-muliikiyyah), of "popular politics" (al-siydsat aI-ʻdmmiyyah) related to the ruling of the masses, of "individual politics" (al-siydsat al-khdssiyyah), i.e. economy, and of "personal politics" (al-siydsat al-dhdtiyyah), i.e. ethics of man.[132] At the same time, however, his natural disposition depends on the constitution of his body, on the geographical environment, on his cleaving to transmitted ideas of religion and on the astrological ordinances.[133] The political philosophy of the Ikhwan al-Safa appears to be a complex amalgamation of contemporary politics and Farabian notions of the perfect state in a system which is orientated at traditional Islamic eschatology and at the Neo-platonic notion of the soul. In the virtuous state where the Divine Law of the Prophet or his successors is obeyed, the soul frees itself from the body and thus reaches ultimate happiness in the hereafter. The first beginning is a fraternal community in this world, a community which remains united in its obedience to the Divine Law and thus strives, with the co-operation of its members, after the "welfare of religion and the world" (saldh al-din iual-dunyd), [134]

In their discussions on the community, its ruler and ruled, the Ikhwan al-Safa did not pay too much attention to the individual and his ethical behaviour.[135] The main purpose of their Rasa'il was an encyclopedic education of man to a new consciousness, which should enable him to avoid the blind following of wicked rulers, to develop an independent

judgment (ijtihad) and thus find the way to ultimate happiness by growing knowledge of the "intellectual things".

As the political ideas of the Ikhwan al-Safa are rather scattered in the Rasd'il, they did not influence later authors very much, although they share with al-Farabi the originally Ismaill[136] ideas of the universality of prophecy as the ultimate source of human knowledge, the inequality of people and the notions of ruler and ruled.

A new approach can be found in Miskawayh (born in Rayy c. 320/932 and said to have died 421/1030), who – as will be shown – stressed "personal politics" (a term used by the Ikhwan al-Safa, see above) and developed an ethical model of the individual in the community. His Tahdhib al-akhldq, [137] like the Ikhwan al-Safa', aims to educate man to good actions based on the Platonic cardinal virtues and in accordance with knowledge,
"wisdom" (hikmah), which leads him to the "spiritual things", [138] to happiness (al-saadah)[139] and "calmness of the soul"[140] by purification of his soul from "the physical things" (al-umur al-tabi'iyyah) and from the "bodily desires" (shahawdt aTabdan).[141] Therefore, Miskawayh called his ethics also Book on the Purification (of the Soul) (Kitdb al-tahdrah), [142] As in Plato and above all in Aristotle, [143] virtues are defined as means (i'tiddl) between two extremes. Thus man's justice to God, to his fellow-citizens and to the ancestors, plays a crucial role in Miskawayh's ethics.[144] The virtues are prescribed by wisdom (al-hikmah), law (al-shari'ah) and tradition (al-sun-nah).[145] Miskawayh is convinced that man's character can be formed by practice ('ddah, tadarrub), [146] but because of the inequality of people[147] man needs the assistance of his fellow-citizen[148] and must live together with

him in love (mahabbah) and friendship is addqah).[149] In addition, the inequality of people is the very reason why everyone must seek his own happiness[150] through the development of a perfect character [al-karndl al-khulqt).[151] Here the welfare of the individual prevails against the welfare of the state.

With his combination of Greek, Persian and Arabic traditions Miskawayh deeply impressed later authors like Raghib al-Isfahanl (d. perhaps 502/1108), al-Ghazzali (d. 505/1111), Ibn Abl'l-Rabf (wrote 655/ 1256), [152] Naslr al-Din al-TusI (d. 672/1274), al-Dawanl (d.908/1502) and even Muhammad Abduh (d. 1322/1905).[153] Here we should pay special attention to Miskawayh's younger fellow-citizen of the town of Isfahan, Raghib al-Isfahanl.[154] His comprehensive book on al-Dhari'ah ild makdrim al-sharVah combines essential ideas of Miskawayh with those of al-Farabi[155] and the Rasd'il Ikhivdn al-Safd'and offers a unique integration of Qur'anic passages confirming his philosophical ethics. Because of the inequality of people, who as in the Rasd'il Ikhwdn al-Safa' (see above) can be divided into elite, masses and middle class, [156] people need each other;[157] as in Miskawayh the harmony among people is based on love/friendship and justice.[158] In addition, Raghib follows al-Farabi's political philosophy of the divinely inspired ruler; people need prophets (anbiyd'), [159] because "most of the people are not able to get knowledge of what is useful and harmful to them in the hereafter".[160] Miskawayh's notion of law is specified as "the honourable actions of law" (makdrim al-shari'ah), as "most honourable religious duties" [ashraf al-Ibdddt), as knowledge and action, which both require purity of the soul and make man a "viceroy" (khallfah) of God;[161] Raghib refers to Qur'an 2:30 and 6:165 and develops the Neo-platonic and Farablan notion

of ruling as "assimilation" to God: to be khalifah means "to imitate the Creator in ruling according to human ability, namely by applying the noble qualities of law".[162] A precondition of khildfah and 'ibadah is man's earning (tahsil)[163] of his livelihood (ma'ash), which is classified in accordance with Qur'an 11:61/64 as "cultivation of earth" ('imarat al-ard) ¦[164] Thus, the task of man in society becomes 'imdrah, 'ibadah and khildfah, [165] The ultimate aim is happiness of the individual

in the hereafter, which cannot be reached without assistance of the fellow-citizen, and happiness in this world, in a community with harmony, love and friendship. Ràghib's ideas deeply impressed Ghazzâll (Mîzàn al 'amal, [166] Ihya 'ulüm al-dïri) and by this became widespread in the Islamic world. Ghazzâll aimed at a synthesis of the Sufi virtues of love of God, of Qur'anic ethics and of the Aristotelian doctrine of virtue as golden mean.[167] The mystical path of the believer, who inside an essentially Quranic–eschatological world view keeps to the Islamic law, is the only way to perfection and happiness in the hereafter. This notion thrusts al-Fâràbl's notion of society as the means to happiness of the citizen into the background; it mirrors a development, which after al-Fàrâbi increasingly gave political philosophy new accents. It is akin to the Neoplatonic apragmôn-bios ideal of the philosopher, who preferably retreats from society.[168] Already the Rasd'il Ikhwan al-Safa' included mysticism in their philosophy[169] and influenced the great philosopher Ibn Slnà (Avicenna) with their philosophical–scientific explanation of Sufism as a means to purify the human soul.[170]

Ibn Sinâ (370/980–428/1037) from Bukhara gives in his allegory Hayy ibn Yaqzdn[171] and in his poem On the Soul[172]

symbolical descriptions of the way the soul returns from the chains of the body, and the darkness of matter compared to the heavenly light of the pure divine intellect. Therefore, the prophet is a Sufi, who proclaims the divine laws as a way to the mystical path, [173] which frees the rational soul from the body and leads to the vision (mushahadah) of God.[174] He has spontaneous perceptions and intuitions, and therefore is higher than the philosopher and not identical with al-Fâràbî's philosopher-king, Imam and first ruler; he administers man's life in this world and in the hereafter.[175] Man, however, "cannot lead a proper life when isolated as a single individual".[176] He needs society, and because of the hierarchical structure of society – as in Plato it can be divided into rulers, artisans and guardians[177] – its members are dependent on each other. Therefore, there must be between men social relations and justice; man must obey the lawgiver, the Prophet, by fulfilling his duties to God ('ibâdât) and men (mu'dmaldt).'[178]* Different from Plato's Laws, the Islamic Sharï'ah is the only way of life in this world to the hereafter.[179]

Life on earth as the precondition of life in the hereafter explains Ibn Sïnà's interest in politics. Thus, much more than can be found in al-Fârâbî, society as the context of man's life is a precondition of human perfection; therefore "citizens are made good so that cities can exist", whereas "for Alfarabi, cities exist to make men good".[180] Besides the remarks in his Fi aqsâm al-'ulüm al-'aqliyyah, [181] in his Fi ithbdt al nubuwwdt[182] and above all in the Shifd', al-Hdhiyydt[183] an idea of Ibn Sina's political philosophy can be found in his treatise Fi'l-siydsah al-manziliyyah, [184] In accordance with his division of practical philosophy into politics, ethics and

economics in Aqsâm al-'ulüm al-'aqliyyah, he first discusses the inequality of men,
who need a ruler, [185] then ethics[186] and finally[187] economics with the subdivisions successively discussing the administration of money, women, children and servants. Ibn Sina follows Bryson's Oeconomica, [188] however with a slightly differing sequence, [189] new formulations and Islamic examples. Ibn Sina handled his sources independently and adds new considerations:[190] for example in his Shifd', al-Ildhiyydt, Ibn Sina recommends taking care of the sick and infirm and of those unable to earn their livelihood. He explains that rebellion is allowed, even against the virtuous caliph, if he is inferior in power and intelligence: here, political power appears to be more important than the virtue of a pious but weak caliph. This realistic attitude does not contradict, however, the necessity of a harmony between state and religion.

The legislator must excel in the cardinal virtues of temperance, practical wisdom (related to actions in this world) and courage, which together result in justice ('adalah), the golden mean (wasdtah).[191] If he combines with it "theoretical wisdom" (al-hikmat al-nazariyyah) through the study of philosophy, "he is happy" (fa-qad set 'idah suidah);[192] and if he in addition has prophetical qualities, he becomes khalifat Allah, God's deputy on earth. Although there might be other "praiseworthy laws" (sunnah hamidah), the revealed divine laws (al-sunnah al-nazilah) should be preferred to any other law and even imposed on other cities by war, in case this can "restore the conditions of corrupted cities to welfare [saldh]'\[193] Here, Ibn Sina presupposes the inequality of men in religion, which reminds us of a similar statement by al-Birunl: according to this contemporary of Ibn

Sina, Hindus, Christians and Muslims cannot understand each other, because of their inequality in religion, although there might be general equality between man and man, and a common belief in one God.[194] As in al-Farabi's political philosophy, the ideal ruler remains a prophet or someone with prophetical qualities. He becomes perfect not through his "theoretical wisdom" but through his additional actions as lawgiver and ruler; those ought to direct man on his way of life in society in this world and thus pave the way, the mystical path to his life in the hereafter, to the spiritual world of the intellect.[195] Who seeks after God thus becomes an ascetic (zdhid), someone who worships God by ritual ('dbid) and finally "knows" ('drif) God. The ultimate consequence of this doctrine, the total retreat from society, is not yet drawn and remains for the Andalusian philosophers Ibn Bajjah and his younger contemporary Ibn Tufayl.

Ibn Bajjah (Avempace), who was born in Saragossa and died 533/ 1138, [196] knew Plato and Aristotle and the political philosophy of al-Farabi. He is, however, less interested in the preceding discussions on ruler and ruled, on law, justice and welfare of the community. He is convinced that virtuous men as "experts" ('urafd')[197] might improve imperfect states "because social relations [al-mu'dsharah J, which perfect the state, can
be improved by ethical virtues [al-fadd "il aTshakliyyah\ [198] State and society, however, are no longer preconditions for the attainment of ultimate happiness[199] by the indvidual. Resuming al-Farabi's notion of the virtuous man and philosopher, who sometimes lives under a vicious rule and is "like a stranger in the world", [200] the notion of the solitary philosopher, the Sufi, receives a positive accentuation: not solely by moral virtue as ultimate end, but exclusively in

isolation from society, as mutaivahhid, through "self-government" (tadbir)[201] and contemplation of truth he can seek after ultimate happiness.[202] Although people of the state need the authority of the 'urafd', regents who have philosophical knowledge, separation from society might become under certain circumstances (bi'l-'arad) good, [203] especially in imperfect states, which do not assist the individual in his search for happiness. Mystical ascension to higher forms of knowledge, to liberation of the soul from matter and to union (ittisal) with the divine active intellect, [204] an emanation of God, is possible only for the mutawahhid. He may, however, profit from the encounter (liqdiltiqd') with others and from striving after intellectual perfection in the perfect state by emulating each other. The perfect state thus becomes indispensable for the attainment of happiness – not as guarantor of physical life but as a place of "encounter, which assists for [one's] benefit".[205] The most perfect state is the "Imam-state" (al-madinah al-imdmiyyah), which excels states of timocracy (madlnat al-karamah), [206] democracy (al-madmah al-janmiyyah) and tyranny (mad mat al-taghallub).[207] According to Ibn Bajjah these states are often corrupted by the ruling of children descending from people living in ease and luxury (al-mutrafun) or from people with noble descent (dhawii' l-ahsdb).[208] There might be, however, in them individuals who have "true opinions" (ara' sadiqah) and whom Ibn Bajjah identifies with al-Farabi's nawabit[209] and with the "strangers" (al-ghurabd') of the Sufis.[210] Ibn Bajjah makes them a separate class besides the judges (hukkdm) and physicians (atibbd').[211]

Upon the aforementioned "assisting encounter", which is also called "the political encounter of man" (al-liqd' al-madanl al-insdni), follows "the encounter of reason" (al-liqd '

aI-'aqli) "for the sake of teaching and learning" (li'l-ta'lim wa'l-ta'aHum) and "the divine encounter" (al-liqd'al-ild hi), which presents "theoretical knowledge" (al-'ilm al-nazari),'[212] Here, as in al-Farabi, man appears to be in need of the assistance of divinely inspired persons, of prophets, who would grant him knowledge.[213] He must isolate himself from society, if the above mentioned kinds of encounter are not possible in it. He can do so, because he is gifted with free will (ikhtiydr) based on reflection;[214] he can reach different "spiritual forms" (suwar ruhdniyyah)[215] depending upon his "opinions" and ethical virtues as he developed them in one of these four forms of states. The highest form of spiritual knowledge can be reached in the Imam state, the perfect state, which can contribute to man's increasing knowledge and happiness in a

most perfect manner and thus becomes indispensable.[216] Contrary to Plato, the citizen is not at the service of the community; a community might, however, assist the individual in his search for spiritual knowledge.[217]

A younger contemporary of Ibn Bajjah, the Andalusian philosopher Ibn Tufayl (d. 580/1185 or 1186) took over Ibn Bajjah's thesis of the solitary philosopher in his philosophical romance Hayy ibn Yaqzdn.[218]* Strongly inspired by the mystical views of Ibn Sina's allegory Hayy ibn Yaqzdn (on this see above), Ibn Tufayl narrates the story of Hayy, who on an island without help of society educates himself to mystical contemplation of God. His mystical knowledge of God appears to be identical with the inner meaning of imaged symbolic forms, which the monotheistic religion on a nearby island had developed. This religious community, to which Salaman belonged, kept to a literal interpretation of religion. Absal, however, studied its inner meaning; he and Hayy were

unable to teach it to the "literalists" and therefore returned to the island of Hayy. Ibn Tufayl turned out to be radically proscriptive of society; he deviated from al-Farabi in a much stricter sense than Ibn Bajjah, who had admitted the perfect state as assisting individual seekers after divine spiritual knowledge. According to Ibn Tufayl the only possible form of society appears to be a religious community, which does not understand the inner meaning of religious symbols but can content itself with following the ritual prescriptions of religion, which turns out to be a Farablan mirror-picture of philosophy. Only the solitary "philosopher" has access to the inner meaning of religious symbols; he cannot teach it to the religious community. At the same time, the community cannot assist the seeker after divine knowledge. Philosophy of the solitary and religion of the community do not contradict each other; at the same time they cannot assist each other and are independent of each other.

Ibn Tufayl's anti-Farablan attitude was not shared by his twenty-years-younger contemporary Ibn Rushd (Averroes) from Cordova (520/ 1126–595/1198).[219] In his Epistle on the Possibility of Conjunction with the Active Intellect[220] he declares that "felicity will not be attained by study alone or by action alone, but it will be attained by both things together; and that it is only attainable in this life". However, as man in this life is part of society, he can reach felicity and attain "theoretical sciences", which "are indeed useful for action and necessary for action"[221] and are reflected in the laws as God's will, [222] as long as society does not impede this.[223] Man needs society for his life, but only the virtuous society is an aid in the attainment of felicity. Thus, neither happiness of the solitary as proposed by Ibn Bajjah and Ibn Tufayl exists nor happiness in the virtuous city as described by al-Farabi.

According to Ibn Rushd happiness is immortality of the soul, which can be attained in a growing conjunction of man's acquired knowledge with the Active Intellect, the connective link between absolute simplicity and the eternity of God's knowledge and the multiplicity of acquired knowledge of the visible and perishable world.[224] Man's "progress from science to science"[225] leads to conjunction (ittisdl) with the active intellect, to happiness, and is declared by Ibn Rushd a task of mankind.[226] Philosophical knowledge and happiness are not any longer the aim of a single individual, either the ruler-philosopher who is inspired by the divine intellect (al-Fàràbl) or the solitary (Ibn Bajjah, Ibn Tufayl). Happiness of the individual as the ultimate aim of man is specified by the universal knowledge of mankind, because man's soul, which is striving for immortality, can attain its conjunction with the active intellect only through its form, which according to Ibn Rushd is a universal intellectus materialis, a potentiality and disposition, to connect acquired knowledge with the active intellect. Philosophy is the highest form of universal human knowledge of religious truth as reflected in the Shari'ah.[227] But like al-Fâràbî, Ibn Sïnâ, ibn Bajjah and Ibn Tufayl he holds the view that it is not accessible to everyone; even philosophers might err.

This realistic attitude is reflected in Ibn Rushd's commentary on Plato's Republic, [228] in which he also referred to Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics, Ibn Bajjah and above all al-Fâràbl. As in al-Fàràbl (see above) the virtuous ruler is qualified as king, philosopher, lawgiver and Imam[229] with cogitative and moral virtues.[230] The starting-point is the diversity of people, who can be divided into ruler and ruled;[231] this diversity necessitates the joining together and formation of a community in society as proposed by Plato.[232]

Here, Ibn Rushd concedes: it is "perhaps impossible" that there is "only one rank of humans in a city"; therefore, only some people can attain "all or most of [the human perfections]".[233] Anywhere else this is explained with the lack of submission of citizens to the ruler and the "defectiveness of most of those giving themselves to wisdom".[234] Here Ibn Rushd has in mind the city of his own time, in which the true philosopher is like a man "among perilous animals" and therefore "turns to isolation and lives the life of a solitary".[235] The role of the city is restricted to something "necessary for man's existence", a "necessity-association".[236] Based on al-Fâràbl, Ibn Rushd distinguishes between virtuous governance, timocratic governance (primacy of honour), oligarchy (primacy of the vile, love of money), democracy (primacy of the assembly of the multitude, love of liberty[237]) and tyranny (love of power).[238] According to Ibn Rushd, only in the time of Muhammad and the first four caliphs the Arabs "used to imitate the virtuous governance", based on the nomos (= Shari'ah). Thus, the best Muslim state is only an imitation of a philosophical state, which Ibn Rushd considered as something including all mankind.[239]

Ibn Rushd maintains, that after the four caliphs, in the time of Mu'àwiyah, the Muslims became timocrats, as also happened during his own time, the period of the Almohad dynasty and its predecessors, the Almoravids, [240] and finally (after 540/ 1145) in Cordova they changed democratic governance into hedonistic tyranny.[241] Therefore, Ibn Rushd could say that "citizens today receive no advantage from the wise who are truly wise".[242] This might have confirmed his conviction that man's "progress from science to science" is a task for all mankind and not only for single

nations or individuals. As in al-Farabi, [243] such a duty might justify war with the intention of bringing wisdom to those who cannot be persuaded through rhetorical and poetical or demonstrative arguments[244] and who thus are not able to adopt virtues except through coercion.[245]

Ibn Rushd's theories strongly influenced the political philosophy of Ibn Khaldun (732/1332–808/1406), as reflected in his Muqaddimah.[246] The striving for supremacy, for domination over others, becomes an aspect of 'asabiyyah, social "solidarity", a central notion in Ibn Khaldun's philosophy of the state.[247] In addition, the solidarity in tribes is based on man's longing for affiliation (suhbah) with others, which includes desires for companionship, co-operation and friendship.[248] Thus, human society and its development in its correlation to the environment[249] needs the existence of a community, of the polis, the state.[250] If the life of society becomes easier and luxury increases in the "sedentary" period, the community might become weak and die.

As in al-Farabi, Ibn Sina and Ibn Rushd, we find in Ibn Khaldun the distinction between the elite (khdssah) and the masses ('dmmah);[251] as with al-Farabi the leader of the virtuous, law-based community (which after the rise of the Umayyad dynasty ceased to exist)[252] should be a prophet with practical wisdom, including political and legal wisdom.[253] Accordingly, politics is concerned with the behaviour of man as part of the household[254] and the city "in accordance with ethical and philosophical requirements, for the purpose of directing the masses towards behaviour that will result in the preservation and permanence of the [human] species";[255] the prophet must instruct mankind in the law, of what is the best for it and protects it.[256]

What is remarkable here is the universalistic attitude. The perfect city cannot be realized; it becomes a standard, which is the permanent aim of mankind.[257] Here the message of the prophet, the lawgiver, becomes philosophy for mankind, [258] which should guide mankind and lead to the "improvement of mankind" (isldh al-bashar).[259] In the shape of "political laws" (ahkdm al-siydsah) it is concerned with "worldly interests" (masdlih al-dunya) of mankind, [260] but also with its "welfare in the other world" (saldh dkhiratihim).[261] This utterance appears to be a compromise, combining the interests of society and individual: the Utopian state is a model for man's behaviour in the society of this world; at the same time the religious laws of the ruler-prophet became a guide-line to welfare in the other world, to "happiness" (sa'ddah).[262] Religion and its laws remain an indispensable tool of society.[263] They regulate the behaviour of the

individual, make it conformable to ethics, which is the first part of practical philosophy and in agreement with the requirements of politics, its second part. Moral wisdom and wisdom of the ruler (including economics, management of the household) lead to the noble things, to happiness of man in society.

In this manner, by shaping the consciousness of man, Islamic philosophers contributed to the formation of Islamic society and its ruling powers, the caliphs, sultans, viziers, jurists and theologians. They were scarcely influential in Latin political thought.[264] With their metaphysical world view they supported the traditional Islamic nexus between religion and politics. This link is provided with a rational, scientific basis presupposing the universality of values. They are revived in the modern self-image of Islam.[265]

NOTES

1 On the concept of ummah cf. Lambton (1981): 13ff.

2 On the term and its history see E. I. J. Rosenthal (1971a): 20ff.; Lewis (1984); Najjar (1984).

3 Cf. Watt (1968): 4ff.

4 Cf. Watt (1968).

5 Cf. Murad (1991).

6 Cf. Sherwani (1977): 21ff.; Denny (1985); Hourani (1985): 23ff.

7 Several editions are available, e.g. in Atär ibn al-Muqajfa' (1978). The Kitäb al-adab al-kabir is translated into German by Rescher (1917). The Risälah fil-sahäbah is available in an edition, French translation and glossary by Ch. Pellat (1976). For details see Richter (1932): 4ff.; Lambton (1981): 43ff.; F. Gabrieli, "Ibn al-Mukaffa'", in Encyclopedia of Islam, 2nd ed. (Leiden, 1965), III: 884f. and the references given there.

8 Cf. Charles-Dominique (1965): 53f.

9 Richter (1932): 6; cf. Charles-Dominique (1965): 62f.

10 Ibn aI-Muqaffa', Kitäb al-adab al-kabir chapter 3; cf. Charles-Dominique (1965): 53ff.

11 Cf. Richter (1932): 33ff.; Salinger (1956) (on Qädi al-Nu'män, Da'ä'im al-islänr, see also al-Qädl (1978)); Busse (1968); Lambton (1954); (1963); (1971); Butterworth (1980): 2iff.; Chittick (1988) and the bibliography by Dänesh-pacuh (1988). An until now neglected example, which shows the influence of the old mirror of princes and of philosophical ethics (cf. Miskawayh's Platonic doctrine of the virtues of the soul, ed. Zurayk, pp. 16ff.) is Abu'l-Qäsim al-Husaynl ibn All al-Maghribl (d. 418/1027 or 428/1037), Kitäb fi'l-siyäsah (ed. ad-Dahhän (1948) and Abd al-Mun'im Ahmad (1982): 35–60).

12 Like al-Mäwardl (d. 450/1058), on whom cf. E. I. J. Rosenthal (1962): 27ff.; Laoust (1968); Ridwän al-Sayyid (1985).

13 Cf. Gutas (1990): 347ff.

14 Cf. Richter (1932): 93ff.

15
See Grignaschi (1967a); (1967b); cf. Stern (1968). The texts are in Bielawski/ Plezia (1970) and in Grignaschi (1975).

16 Ed. Badawl (1954): 65–171 and Sami Salman al-A'war (1986). Cf. Grignaschi (1976).

17 See Manzalaoui (1974); Grignaschi (1980).

18 The text is available only in a summary by Muhammad ibn All ibn Ibrahimibn Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Ansärl, which is edited by Badawl (1985); cf. Walsh (1976) and Gutas (1990): 350–2.

19 Peters (1968): 74f.; the translations are edited by Kellermann (1965).

20 Gutas (1975): 320f.

21 Peri ethön = Kitäb al-akhläq. The Arabic summary is edited by Kraus (1939) and by Badawl (1981): 190–211; it is translated into English by Mattock (1972). On the text cf. the studies listed in Ullmann (1970): 63; Rundgren (1976); Fakhry (1991): 63f.

22 Risälah ilä Julian al-malik fil-siyäsah wa'l-tadbir al-mamlakab, ed. Cheikho (1920–2); Muhammad Salim Salim (1970) and (with Latin translation) Irfan Shahid (1974). The text is lost in the Greek original. Some remarks can be found in Bouyges (1924).

23 Lost in the Greek original. The Arabic translation is edited by H. Plessner (1928), together with a German version and with the medieval Arabic–Hebrew and Arabic–Latin translations. As Plessner has shown, the text was highly influential in Islamic texts on economics (tadbir al-manzil), especially through the revised version by Naslr al-Dln l usT in bis Akhläq. Less known to the Arabs was the pseudo-Aristotelian Economics, of which an Arabic paraphrase, perhaps by AbuTFaraj ibn al-Tayyib, book 1 (1343al-1345b4) is preserved; the text is preserved in a collection of texts by Ibn al-Tayyib in MS. Escorial no. 888, fols l45v– l49v and Nuruosmaniye 3610 (new number 3095), fols 138r– l40v, and is edited by Ma'lüf (1921). Both texts are different from the Maqälah fi'l-tadbir ascribed to Aristotle and said to be translated by 'Isä ibn Zur'ah (ed. Cheikho (1903)). The text seems to be an Arabic compilation and is a

general discussion of the ways to deal with other persons of differing ranks. On two Hebrew translations see Pines (1954–5).

24 The title of the lost Greek text was perhaps Peri alypias. The text is transmitted byal-Kindl (ed. Walzer/Ritter (1938); Turaihl (1962): 110–25; Badawl (1973): 6–32 and Fakhry (1979), 2: 13–26) and excerpted (with changes) from al-Kindl's version by Miskawayh and in the anonymous Risälah fi'l-khawf min al-mawt (see n. 153). A paraphrase of the beginning of the Kindi text (ed. Walzer/Ritter (1938): 31.8–32.2) is separately transmitted with the title Risälah fi mähiyyat al-huzn wa asbäbihi and ascribed to Ibn Sina (ed. Tura 1937); cf. on this and on other later excerpts Walzer/ Ritter (1938): 8ff. and F. Rosenthal in his review in Orientalia, n.s., (1940): 9, 182–91. Rosenthal considers Plutarch as a possible author. Pohlenz (1938) and Gätje (1956): 228 refrain from any identification, without, however denying its Hellenistic origin. According to Pohlenz the author might indirectly be influenced by Epictetus (c. A.D. 50–120).

25 On the concept of justice among Mu'tazilites, Ash'arites and Mäturidites in Averroes and Ibn Arabl cf. the survey by Kassem (1972).

26 On the reception of Plato in the Islamic world see F. Rosenthal (1940); Klein-Franke (1973) and s.v., "Aflätün" by R. Walzer in Encyclopedia of Islam, 2nd ed.
Cf. also Mahdi (1991): 14ff. Some Arabic fragments from Plato's works are collected by Badawl (1974): 121–70. On the quotations in al-Blruni see Gabrieli (1951). Not mentioned by Badawl and still insufficiently known is the

relation of Ahmad ibn Yusuf ibn Ibrahim ibn al-Dayah (d. 340/951), Kitdb itl~uhud al-yimdniyyah al-mustakhrajah mitt nimuz kitdb al-siydsah li-Afldtun (ed. Badawl (1954): 1–64; ed. al-Maliki (1971): 45–126; cf. Anawati (1955): 61–3 and al-Maliki's introduction, pp. 33ff.) to Plato's political works. Ibn al-Daya's work is a compilation, which tries to show the superiority of the Greeks to the Persians in politics; it is said to be an extract from Plato's Politics. The text was used in the eighth/fourteenth century by the Granadine historian Lisan al-Dln ibn al-Khatlb, Kitdb al-ishdrah ild adab al-wisMrah (ed. Zamamah); see Dunlop (1959): 52–4; al-Qadl (1976): 206f.

27 On the Nicomachean Ethics, its afterlife in Arabic and on the Arabic-Latin translation of the Summaria Alexandrinorum by Hermannus Alemannus see Dunlop (1971); (1983) and the references given in Daiber (1990a). Dunlop prepared an extensive study, in which he showed that the text inserted after book 6 in the only available MS. in Fez (ed. Badawl (1979): 363–87) can be identified with the first part of Porphyry's commentary on the first half of the Nicomachean Ethics. The Arabic texts are edited by Badawl (1979).

28 Cf. Ibish (1966): 97ff.

29 Cf. Madelung, s.v., "Imama", in Encyclopedia of Islam, 2nd ed., 3 (1971).

30 Risdlah ft kammiyyat kutub Aristdtdlls, ed. Guidi/Walzer: 403, 12ff, ; ed. Abu Rldah: 384, llff. On the text cf. Hein (1985): 318f.

31 Min kaldm Qustd ibn Liujd, ed. and trans. Daiber (1990b): 80v.l5–81r.4; cf. the commentary by Daiber (1990b): 124 and 128.

32 See above.

33 See Pines (1986): 146^56.

34 Ed. Fliigel: 260.1–6; ed. Rida Tajaddud: 319, 8–12; Engl, trans. Dodge: 623; cf. Atiyeh (1966): 195f.

35 Ed. Abu Rldah, Rasail al-Kindi al-falsafiyyah, I: 177–99; French commented translation by D. Gimaret in al-Kindi, Cinq epitres (1976): 37 and 65–8. The passage is not in the version edited by Klein-Franke (1982).

36 Cf. Plato, Rep., 4.435.Bff.; Latvs, 653A–C: Aristotle, On the Soul, 432a25 and above all Nicomachean Ethics, 1102b28ff.; 1116b23ff. and 1119b.

37 Cf. Plato, Rep., 4.435.Bff.

38 Ed. Abu Rldah, Rasd'il, I: 179.4ff.; cf. Atiyeh (1980).

39 Preserved in Abu Sulayman al-Sijistanl, Mtmtakhab slwdn al-hikmah, ed. Dunlop: 246–8, esp. 248; English trans. in Atiyeh (1966): 239–57.

40 Fakhry (1977): 45–50

41 MS. Koprulii 1608, fols 21vll– 22rl.

42 Cf. Atiyeh (1966): 123ff. esp. 133ff.; Alon (1991): 131 ff. (references quoted with the abbreviations KAS and KKS).

43 Editions: see above, n. 24.

44 Cf. Atiyeh (1966): 129ff.

45 Abu Sulayman, al-Sijistanl, Muntakhab, ed. Dunlop: 248, 264–8ff.; English trans. by Atiyeh (1966): 225; cf. 127.

46 On the concept of happiness in al-Kindi (al-Farabi, Ibn Bajjah and Ibn Rushd) see Abdul Haqq Ansari (1964).

47
See F. Rosenthal (1989): 296 and 287ff.

48 See F. Rosenthal (1989): 294 and the references given there. Rosenthal compares the terms targhib and tarhib with Qur'an 21: 90

49 Ultimately, it recurs to the Persian tradition of the mirror of princes (See F. Rosenthal (1989): 293f.); at the same time, there is some parallelism with a doctrine of the Mu'tazilites, who described God's creative act as "welfare" (madaha/r, cf. aslah) of man: See Daiber (1975): 220f.; cf. 232.

50 See the fragment in Abu Hayyàn al-Tawhldl, al-Basà'ir, ed. Keilani, 2/2: 763–5 trans. F. Rosenthal (1989): 289f. and the comments by Rosenthal.

51 Cf. F. Rosenthal (1989): 290.

52 See F. Rosenthal (1956); the text by al-Amirl, his Kitàb al-i'làm (trans. Rosenthal: 46–52), can be found in the edition by Ghurab: 151–61; on al-Amiri's view of religion as superior to knowledge and on his harmonization of philosophy and religion see Rowson (1988): 19ff.

53 Ed. by Mustafa al-Hiyarl: al-Siyàsah min kitàb al-kharàj iva sinà'at al-kitàbah; the complete version of Qudàmah's Kitàb al-kharàj is now available in a facsimile edition (1986).

54 See Hiyari (1983): 91ff. and F. Rosenthal (1989): 296f.

55 See ed. Hiyari: 49ff.

56 Ed. Hiyari: 59fF.

57 Ed. Hiyari: 97ff-

58 Ed. Hiyari: 4Iff.

59 Ed. Hiyari: 53ff. Cf. Hiyari (1983): 97f.

60 Ed. by Salah al-Sawy (1977). On it cf. Daiber (1989).

61 Daiber (1989): 91

62 Ed. Kraus in Abii Bakr al-RàzI, Rasà'il falsafiyyah: 97–111; a reprint with introduction by Mehdi Mohaghegh appeared in Tehran 1964. English trans, in Arberry (1967). On the text cf. here F. Rosenthal (1940): 388; Goodman (1971); Shawer (1973): 38ff.; 62 and 68; Strohmaier (1974); Bausani (1981): 9–13; Alon (1990): 48 and 51f.

63 Al-Sirat al-falsafiyyah, ed. Kraus (Rasà'il falsafiyyah): 108, 8f.

64 Ed. Kraus, Rasà'il falsafiyyah: 1–96; Fakhry (1979): 27–64; trans. Arberry (1950); text critical notes: see Gutas (1977). On the text cf. Mohaghegh (1967) and the interpretation by Goodman (1971; 1972: 31ff.). The text by Abu Bakr al-Razi inspired Miskawayh's chapter on "health of the soul", Tahdhib al-akhlàq, ed. Zurayk: 175ff. (see Lauer (1984): 76f.) and was refuted by the Ismàìll Hamid al-Dln al-Kirmani (d. c. 411/1020–1), al-Aqu>àl al-dhahabiyyah (several editions: see bibliography).

65 On the Galenic sources (above all Perì alypias = Maqàlah fi nafy al-ghamm = Kitàb fi sarf al-ightimàm, which is lost in the Greek original and of which only fragments are preserved; see Ullmann (1970): 65, and above, n.24) of Razl's ethics see de Boer (1920): 3ff. and now Bar-Asher (1989).

66 Cf. Goodman (1971 and 1972).

67 Maqàlah fi amàrai al-iqbàl wa'l-dawlah (ed. Kraus, Rasà'il: 135–8): 137.3ff. An Italian summary can be found in Bausani (1981): 21f. On the translation of dawlah see F. Rosenthal, Encyclopedia of Islam, 2nd ed., 2: 178a.

68 Ed. Kraus, Rasà'il. 136.6f.

69
Cf. al-Jähiz, Maqälat al-zaidiyyah, ed. Härün, Rasä'il al-Jähiz, 4: 320.3ff. German trans. Pellat (1967): 104fl.

70 Cf. e.g. al-Qäsim ibn Ibrahim (d. 246/860): see Abrahamov (1987).

71 Cf. Madelung (1977): 54ff.; Makarem (1967); (1972): 35ff.; a later example is the lsmä'lll Abu'l-Fawäris Ahmad ibn Ya'qüb, Risälah fi'l-imämah: see edition and translation by Makarem (1977).

72 Cf. A'läm, ed. al-Sawy, 301.11 fF.; 314ff.

73 Ibid.: 36.4–6.

74 Goldziher (1888): 138f. (= Muslim Studies, 1: 130f.); Watt and Marmura (1985):27

75 Cf. Laoust (1958): 55f.

76 A'läm, ed. al-Sawy: 43.6ff.

77 Ibid.: 185.6–10; cf. 61.3ff.

78 Ibid.: 6.2Iff.; 8.7f.; 55; 72.5if.; 184.12ff.

79 Ibid.: 64f.

80 8.8–10; cf. 183.15ff.; 185.2ff.

81 Ibid.: 110.l4ff.

82 Ibid.: 111.9ff., with reference to Qur'an 8: 39–40.

83 Ibid.: l]1.13ff., with reference to Qur an 2: 256–7.

84 Ibid.: 111.7ff.

85 cf. 111.2ff,,

86 Cf. ibid.: 173.4£; 186.6ff.

87 Ibid.: 187. Iff.

88 Ibid.: 189.If.; cf. 189.l4f. and 188.13ff.

89 Ibid.: 273ff.

90 Cf. Daiber (1989): 97f.

91 A'läm, ed. al-Sawy: 73.17–19.

92 Cf. ibid. 77–93; Abu Hätim keeps to the orthodox picture of the Prophet (see Andrae (1918): 190f£; 245ff.).

93 Cf. Daiber (1989): 98f. and on the term mesotes = i'tidäl (cf. A'läm, ed. al-Sawy: 85f.) Bürgel (1967).

94 Cf. A'läm, ed. al-Sawy: 110.9ff.

95 Cf. Daiber (1989): 95£; 99f.

96 Cf. the articles by Najjar (1958; 1960; 1961; 1978; 1980); Mahdi in History of Political Philosophy, 182ff.; Galston (1990). A survey of the relevant Färäblan texts can be found in E. I. J. Rosenthal (1955); (1962): 122–42.

97 On the lsma'lll background ofFäräbl's political philosophy see Daiber (1991b).

98 Cf. Walzer (1985): 445f.; Daiber (1986a): 6f.

99 al-Madinah al-fädilah, ed. Dieterici: 59.16ft. ed. Walzer: 246.12ff.; cf. Daiber (1991b). On the edition and translation by Walzer see Mahdi (1990).

100 Cf. above.

101 Cf. Daiber (1986b): 7f. and (1991b): l45f.

102 Cf. Daiber (1986b): Ilf.; Butterworth (1987): 232fif.

103 For details here and in the following see Daiber (1986a) and (1986b).

104 On the concept of happiness in al-Färäbl see Shahjahan (1985).

105 Cf. Daiber (1986a): 17 n. 79 and on the Platonic notion of "assimilation" to God cf. Plato, Theaet., 176B; Berman (1961).

106 Cf. Daiber (1986a): 11 ff

107
Cf. Daiber (1991b): l47f.

108 Cf. Walzer (1985): 424ff.

109 Cf. Sankari (1970); Sajjad (1983). On al-Farabi's hierarchical structure of the feudalistic city (and cosmos) and on the Porphyrian principle of its division see Maroth (1978).

110 Cf. Walzer (1985): 429ff.

111 Al-Farabl is the first Muslim philosopher to have developed the utopian idea of the perfect state; see Simon (1963); (1971).

112 Cf. al-Farabi, Falsafat Afldtun, ed. Rosenthal and Walzer: chapter iv fF.; trans. Mahdi (1969): 57IT. The text used various Platonic sources: cf. besides the notes by Rosenthal and Walzer also Isaac Rabinowitz, American Journal of Philo logy, 67 (1946): 76–9.

113 Cf. besides al-Farabi, al-Madinah al-fadilah the following works: Kitdb al-tanbih 'aid sabil al-sa'adah (French trans. Mallet (1989); Kitdb tahsil al-sa'ddah (trans. Mahdi (1969): 13–50); Fusul muntazaah, trans. into Persian in Qutb al-Dln al-ShlrazI (634/1236–710/1311), Durrat al-tdj li-ghurrat ad-dubaj, ed. Mishkat (see Nasr (1974): 249); Kitdb al-siydsah al-madaniyyah and his Risdlah fi'l-siyasah (German trans. Graf (1902)), an ethical treatise on man's behaviour against those who are above him, below him or equal to him in rank and on man's own conduct.

114 Cf. E. I. J. Rosenthal (1972): 164–6.

115 Talklns nawamts Afldtun. Cf. Gabrieli (1949); Strauss (1957); Leaman (1985): 195Ff. and Daiber (1986b): 17f. On a summary of this Talklns, written by Abu'l-Faraj ibn al-Tayyib, see Druart (1977).

116 Cf. al-Farabi, al-Madinah al-fadilah, ed. Walzer, chapter 5: 16 and commentary: 457ff.

117 Rasd'il, 3: 241.6; cf. German trans. and commentary by Diwald (1975): 203 and 206–8.

118 See on the following the details in Enayat (1977) and for a detailed comparison of Ikhwan al-Safa' and al-Farabi, Abouzeid (1987).

119 See Enayat (1977): 34ff.

120 Cf. the parable on the animal rebellion against human domination in Rasd'il, 2: 182ff.; English trans. Goodman (1978); Spanish version by Tornero Poveda (1984) and German version by Giese (1990).

121 Cf. Enayat (1977): 39ff.

122 al-Madinah al-fadilah, ed./trans. Walzer: 246–7. Cf. above, n. 98.

123 Rasd'il, 4: 128f.; cf. Enayat (1977): 42.

124 Cf. Marquet (1962).

125 Rasd'il, 1: 249f.; cf. Enayat (1977): 42.

126 Rasd'il, 4: 199.20ff.

127 Cf. Enayat (1977): 45.

128 Rasd'il, 4: 220.7.

129 Ibid., 4: 220f.; cf. Enayat (1977): 44.

130 Enayat (1977): 29.

131 Cf. ibid.: 40f. and on the conflicting parts of the soul Diwald (1972): 49ff. (lists the parallels in al-Farabi, a source of the Rasd'il Ikhwan al-Safd').

132 Rasd'il, 1: 207; cf. Enayat (1977): 32–4. This division clearly shows the Aristotelian tripartition of practical philosophy in politics, economy and ethics
(see above, n. 31), with an additional beginning section on prophetic and kingly politics.

133 Rasa'il, 1: 229.121T. Cf. Enayat (1977): 26ff.

134 Rasd'il, 1: 223.16.

135 Cf. Faruqi (1960).

136 See above. The Isma'ih impact on the Rasd'ilIkhwdn al-Safd' seems to be much greater than could be concluded from Netton (1991): chapter 6.

137 Ed. Zurayk (1966); English trans. Zurayk (1968). Cf. Daiber, Orientalistische Literaturzeitung, 67 (1972), cols 370–3; Arkoun (1970).

138 Ed. Zurayk: 83.

139 Cf. also Miskawayh's monograph al-Sa'ddah fi falsafat al-akhldq, ed. al-Tubjl. On the concept of saadah in Miskawayh see Abdulhaqq Ansari (1963).

140 Ed. Zurayk: 40.5.

141 Ed. Zurayk: 91.18. Cf. Plotinus, Enn. 1.6.

142 Ed. Zurayk: 9If.

143 Cf. pseudo-Aristotle, De virtutibus et vitiis, Arabic trans. Ibn al-Tayyib ed. Kellermann (1965): 59.18–58; trans. 77–9 (not preserved in Greek). On the history of mean (mesotes) in Islamic philosophical ethics see Biirgel (1967):101.

144 Ed. Zurayk: 105ff.; cf. Miskawayh, Risdlah fi mdbiyyat al-'adl, ed./trans. Khan; Fakhry (1975).

145 Ed. Zurayk: 62.11.

146 Ibid.: 31.8.

147 Ibid.: 46ff.

148 As Miskawayh (ed. Zurayk: 29.8) formulates: " inna'l-insdna madam bii-tab'" (cf. Zdon politikon, Aristotle, Pol., 1.1.1253a2ff).

149 Ed. Zurayk: 135ff.

150 Ibid.: 72, lOff.

151 Ibid.: 40, 9.

152 In his mirror of princes, the Suluk al-malik fi tadbir al-mamdlik: see edition and study by Takrltl (1980). On the text cf. also Plessner (1928): 30ff.; Richter (1932): 105f.; Dunlop in his edition of al-Farabi's Fusfd muntaza'ah: 6 (on al-Farabi's Fusiil as source) and Sherwani (1977): 35–57

(considers wrongly Ibn Abl'l-Rabf as a thinker of the ninth century).

153 S. M. Arkoun, s.v. "Miskawayh" in Encyclopedia of Islam, 2nd ed., 7 (1991): 143b and on the mentioned authors E. I. J. Rosenthal (1962): 21 Off.; Rahman (1985); Sprachman (1985); Wickens (1985); Fakhry (1991); on Naslr al-Dln al-TusI cf. also Badie (1977). On the influence of Miskawayh on Ghazzali see also Zurayk (1968): 207, n. 2 on p. 157, 1. 10. As Risdlah fi daf' al-ghamm min al-mawt the text in Tahdhib, ed. Zurayk: 209.5–217–9 is transmitted separately as a work attributed to Ibn Sina (ed. Mehren (1891)); see Zurayk (1968): 209, n. 18 on p. 185, 1. 10) and as anonymous Risdlah fi'l-khawfi min al-mawt wa haqiqatihi wa hdl al-nafs ba'dahu, which from MS. Paris 4946 is edited by L. Cheikho (1911), Maqdldtfialsafiyyah, pp. 103–14, with an additional passage (= ed. Cheikho, pp. 114–17), which is derived from Miskawayh (= ed. Zurayk: 217.10–221.19); both texts are identical with al-Kindl, Risdlah fi'l-hllah li-daf' al-ahzdn (see above n. 24).

154 On him see Fakhry (1991): 176ff.; Daiber (1991a).

155
Very influential appears to be al-Fàràbi's Kitàb al-tanbih 'aid sabiI al-sa'ddah; see Khalifat (1990): 149.

156 Al-Dhari'ah ed. AjamI: 163.

157 Ibid.: 374.

158 Ibid.: 364f.

159 Ibid.: 204f.

160 Ibid.: 204.4.

161 Cf. ibid.: 59.

162 Ibid.: 91.5f.; cf. 96.8f.

163 Cf. takassub in ibid.: 380f.

164 Ibid.: 90.11–13.

165 Ibid.: 90.11–91.6.

166 Ed. Sulaymàn Dunyà; trans. Hachem (1945).

167 Cf. Chahine (1972): 105ff.

168 This topic is discussed by the Nestorian Christian Ibn al-K bam mar (d. 1017) in his Maqdlah fi sifat al-rajid al-faylasuf ed. and trans. Lewin (1955); cf. on the text also Kraemer (1986): 128.

169 On their conception of philosophy see Rasd'il, 3: 325ff. and trans. Diwald (1975): 427fif.

170 On Ibn Slna's knowledge of the Rasd'il Ikhwdn al-Safd' see Diwald (1981).

171 Ed. by Amin: 40–9, trans. Goichon (1959); cf. "Hayy B. Yakzàn", in Encyclopedia of Islam, 2nd ed., 3.

172 Ed. and commented by Fathallàh Khulayf (1974): 129–31, French trans. Noureddine (1961): 30–6.

173 Cf. Marmura (1963); (1964).

174 Cf. Marmura (1985): 363.

175 Cf. E. I. J. Rosenthal (1962): 144fF.; cf. 152ff. on the qualities of the prophet and ruler.

176 Ibn Slna, al-Shifa, al-Ildhiyydt, 2: 44l.4f.; trans. Marmura in Medieval Political Philosophy (1963): 99.

177 Al-Shifaal-Ildhiyydt, 2: 447.4ff.; trans. Marmura in Medieval Political Philosophy: 104.

178 E. 1. J. Rosenthal (1962): 154f.

179 Cf. ibid.: 148ff.

180 Galston (1979): 570.

181 Published in Tis' rasd'il (1298/1881): 71–80; Shamsaddln (1988): 261–72; English trans. Mahdi in Medieval Political Philosophy: 95–7; analysis by Baur (1903): 346–9 (based on the Latin translation by Andreas Alpago, Avicennae opera (Venice, 1546) (repr. Westmead, 1969), fols 139–46).

182 Ed. Marmura; ed. Shamsaddln (1988): 298–309, English trans. Marmura in Medieval Political Philosophy: 112–21.

183 Part 2: 441–55; English trans. Marmura, Medieval Political Philosophy: 98–111; German trans, in Horten (1907). Cf. the comments by Kohler (1908–9) and by Galston (1979), who gives a comparison with al-Fàràbl's more idealistic political philosophy. Avicenna's political ideas described in this text influenced the medieval author Francese Eiximenes, Regiment de la cosa pnblica (Valencia, 1383); see Lindgren (1980).

184
Several editions (see bibliography); the latest edition is in Shamsaddln (1988); 232–60. Cf. the remarks in Shamsaddln (1988): 60ff.; Plessner (1928): 42ff. and Ibrahim (1980).

185 Ed. Shamsaddln (1988): 233–9.

186 Ed. Shamsaddln: 240–5. On Ibn Slna's views about ethics see 'Abdul haqq Ansari (1962–3); Butterworth (1987): 238ff. and Fakhry (1991): 85ff.; 207ff.

187 Ed. Shamsaddln: 246–58.

188 On this see above, n. 23.

189 On which see Plessner (1928): 43.

190 Cf. E. I. J. Rosenthal (1962): 152ff.

191 On the mentioned terms and their Aristotelian origin see above, n. 93.

192 Al-Sbifà', al-Ildhiyydt, 2: 455.14.

193 Al-Shifa, al-Ildhiyydt, 2: 453.14; cf. E. I. J. Rosenthal (1962): 155f. (instead of jamilah read harmdalr, the interpretation given there slightly differs from ours).

194 Khurshid (1979); cf. Strohmaier (1979).

195 Avicenna discussed his eschatological views mainly in his al-Risdlat al-adhawiyyah fil-ma'àd (ed. and trans. F. Lucchetta (1969) and in his al-Mabda' wa'1-maàd (ed. Nùrànl). Cf. now the monograph by Michot (1986), esp. pp. 190ff.

196 On him cf. here the discussion in E. I. J. Rosenthal (1937; 1951); (1962): 158–174; Chemlin (1969); Allard (1974); Zainaty (1979); Leaman (1980). On Ibn Bàjjah's (and Ibn Tufayl's) influence in Jewish medieval philosophy (Moses Narboni) see Hayoun (1989); (1990): 39ff.; 77ff.; 137ft.; 168ff.; 188ff. and (on politics) see 242ff.

197 The guardians in Plato: see E. I. J. Rosenthal (1962): 287 n. 9.

198 Risdlat al-wada zd. Fakhry, Rasd'il. 136: 11–13; quoted by E. I. J. Rosenthal(1962): 161.

199 On Ibn Bàjjahs concept of ultimate happiness see Altmann (1969).

200 Cf. al-Fàràbl, Fusili muntaza'ah, ed. Najjar: 95; Kitdb al-millah, ed. Mahdi: 56f.; cf. Marmura in Watt and Marmura (1985): 354 and Endress (1986): 233ff.

201 Accordingly Ibn Bàjjah wrote a treatise called Tadbir al-mutawahhid (ed. Fakhry, Rasd'il: 37–96; ed. Man Ziyàdeh; the first two chapters (= ed. Fakhry: 37–48) are edited with English trans, by Dunlop (1945). On the concept of tadbir in this text cf. E. I. J. Rosenthal (1962): 164ff.

202 This thesis by Ibn Bàjjah, a polarization of moral virtue in society and contemplation in solitude, reappears in Maimonides (see Kraemer (1983)) and above all in Ibn Falaquera: see Jospe (1986). Maimonides remains more indebted to al-Fàràbl: cf. also the comparison by E. I. J. Rosenthal (1968); Galston (1978); Kraemer (1979); Pines (1979); Macy (1982; 1986) and Berman (1988).

203 Ibn Bàjjah, Tadbir, ed. Fakhry, Rasa'll. 91.Iff. Cf. E. I. J. Rosenthal (1962): 170; Leaman (1980): 118f.; Marmura (1985): 375fi; Endress (1986): 236.

204 This is the subject of Ibn Bàjjah's Risdlat ittisdl al-'aql bi'/ insiin (ed. Fakhry, Rasd'il. 155–73). Cf. Chemli (1969); Zainaty (1979); Kraemer (1983).

205 al-iltiqd' al-mudwin 'ald'mandfi\ Ibn Bàjjah, Risdlat al-wadd', ed. Fakhry, Rasd'il. 142, 16f.; cf. 142, 13ff.; E. I. J. Rosenthal (1962): 161f.

206 E. I. J. Rosenthal (1962): 166: "oligarchy (?)". However, cf. al-Fàràbl, al-Siydsah al-madaniyyah, ed. Najjar: 89, 14IT. Eng. trans. Najjar in Medieval Political Philosophy. 43f.

207
Ibn Bäjjah, Tadblr, ed. Fakhry, Rasa ü 74.16f.

208 Ibn Bäjjah, Tadblr, ed. Fakhry, Rasä'ii: 74.13f.

209 Ibn Bäjjah, Tadblr, ed. Fakhry, Rasä'ik 42.15ff.; cf. E. I. J. Rosenthal (1962): 167 and on al-Färäb! above. The philosophers, who are like strangers in the world, are called nawäbit in the sense of "opponents"; in al-Färäbl they are opponents of the perfect city and in Ibn Bäjjah they are identical with the solitary philosopher. On the term nawäbit see Alon (1990).

210 Ibn Bäjjah, Tadbir, ed. Fakhry, Rasä'ik 43.12,

211 Tadbir, ed. Fakhry, Rasä'ii. 43.9; cf. E. I. J. Rosenthal (1962): 167f.

212 Ibn Bäjjah, Risälat al-wadä\ ed. Fakhry, Rasä'ik 142.17ff.

213 See al-Ma'sümi (1961).

214 Ibn Bäjjah, Tadbir, ed. Fakhry, Rasä'ik 64.7ff.; cf. E. I. J. Rosenthal (1962): 169.

215 Ibn Bäjjah, Tadbir, ed. Fakhry, Rasä'ii: 49ff.; cf. E. I. J. Rosenthal (1962): 1701.

216 Cf. also Ibn Bäjjah, Tadbir, ed. Fakhry, Rasä'ii: 90f.

217 Cf. E. I. J. Rosenthal (1962): 171ff.

218 Ed. L. Gauthier or Nader; English annotated trans. Goodman. There are other editions and translations. On the text cf. Piaia (1973); Arkoun (1977); Marmura (1979): 318ff.; Rubio (1981); Daiber (1990a): 243f. On Moshe Narboni's

commentary on Ibn Tufayl's Hayy ibn Yaqzän and its political ideas see E. I. J. Rosenthal (1980); Hayoun (1988).

219 On him cf. here E. I. J. Rosenthal (1962): 175fif.

220 Trans, and ed. Bland: 108f.

221 E. I. J. Rosenthal (1956): 71; Lerner (1974): 89. Cf. Butterworth (1986): 19fF.

222 Cf. E. I. J. Rosenthal: 66; Lerner (1974): 80f.

223 The translation by Bland is not quite clear; however, cf. Endress (1986): 239; Cruz Hernández (1960): 28Iff.

224 Cf. Ibn Rushd, Epistle, trans. Bland: 36, 69, 10311.; E. I. J. Rosenthal (1956): 74; Lerner (1974): 94 and Daiber (1990a): 245ff. (with additional references).

225 Ibn Rushd, Epistle, trans. Bland: 36.

226 Cf. Pines (1978); Endress (1986): 239f.

227 Cf. Ibn Rushd, FasJ al-maqäl fi mä bayna'l hikmah wal-shari'ah min al-ittisäl, ed. Hourani (and other editions); trans. Hourani (1976); E. I. J. Rosenthal (1962): 17911.; Mahdi (1964); Bertman (1971); Marmura (1983), esp. pp. 100f.; Daiber (1990a): 244f.

228 Hebrew version ed. and trans. E. I. j. Rosenthal (1956); new trans. R. Lerner (1974). Cf. also the commentary by E. I. J. Rosenthal (1953; 1958); Piaia (1973): 13iE| Mahdi (1978); Butterworth (1986); Leaman (1988): 119ff.

229 E. 1. J. Rosenthal (1956): 60ff.; Lerner (1974): 71If.

230 E. I. J. Rosenthal (1956): 71 ff.; Lerner (1974): 90ff.

231 Cf. E. I, J. Rosenthal (1956): 65; Lerner (1974): 79f.; E. I. J. Rosenthal (1962): 186. Ibn Rushd did not go so far as to deny the equality of men and women: "They will differ only in less or more; i.e., the man in most human activities is more diligent than the women, though it is not impossible that women should be more diligent in some activities"; therefore, "women in this city will practise the [same] activities as the men, except that they are weaker at it" (E. I. J. Rosenthal: 53; Lerner: 57f.). Cf. E. I. J. Rosenthal (1953): 25If.; (1962): 191; Butterworth (1986): 36ff.

232
Cf. E. I. J. Rosenthal (1956): 57f.; Lerner (1974): 64–6; and Plato, Rep., 462ff.

233 E. I. J. Rosenthal (1956): 65; Lerner (1974): 79.

234 Cf. E. I. J. Rosenthal (1956): 63; Lerner (1974): 76f.

235 E. I. J. Rosenthal (1956): 64; Lerner (1974): 78. Here, Ibn Rushd follows the formulation of Ibn Bäjjah and Ibn Tufayl (see above).

236 E. I. J. Rosenthal (1956): 65; Lerner (1974): 79f.

237 Already al-Färäbl and similarly Ibn Bäjjah considered democracy as a corruption of the virtuous city; see Najjar (1980): llOfF.

238 E. 1. J. Rosenthal (1956): 79ff.; Lerner (1974): 104ff. Cf. Butterworth (1986): 72fif.; Fakhry (1988): 90ff. (comparison with Ibn Khaldun, who was influenced here by Ibn Rushd).

239 See Pines (1957; 1978), against E. I. J. Rosenthal (1971a), who ascribed to Ibn Khaldün the identification of the superior state with Islam.

240 Cf. E. I. J. Rosenthal (1956): 89 and 92; Lerner (1974): 121 and 125.

241 E. I. J. Rosenthal (1956): 96; Lerner (1974): 133.

242 E. I. J. Rosenthal: 63; Lerner (1974): 76.

243 Cf. Kraemer (1987).

244 On the role of rhetoric in Averroes' political philosophy see Butterworth (1972a; 1972b); Lazar (1980).

245 Cf. E. 1. J. Rosenthal (1956): 25f.; Lerner (1974): 11.

246 Ed. E. M. Quatremere (1858); English trans. F. Rosenthal (1958). Cf. E. I. J. Rosenthal (1932); Mahdi (1957) and, on Ibn Khaldun's forerunners al-Färäbl, Ibn Slnä and Ibn Rushd, Mahdi (1962). A summarizing survey of Ibn Khaldün's political views can be found in Laoust (1981).

247 Cf. Mahdi (1957): 196f£; 253ff.; 263ff.; E. I. J. Rosenthal (1962): 84f£; Rabl'(1967): 48ff.

248 Cf. Mahdi (1957): 177f.; von Sivers (1968): 81ff.

249 Cf. Mahdi (1957): 190f.

250 Cf. Mahdi (1957): 175f£; von Sivers (1968): 71ff.

251 Cf. Mahdi (1957): 9If.

252 Cf. Mahdi (1957): 127. For a comparison with al-Färäbl and Ibn Rushd see Pines (1971).

253 Cf. Mahdi (1957): 89ff.

254 Cf. Oweiss (1988).

255 Cf. Mahdi (1957): 157.

256 Ed. Quatremere (1858), 1: 62, 7–9; trans. F. Rosenthal (1958), 1: 78; cf. Mahdi (1957): 193.

257 Cf. Mahdi (1957): 2741'.

258 Cf. Mahdi (1957): 84ff,, 116f.

259 Ed. Quatremere (1858), 3: 54; trans. F. Rosenthal (1958), 3: 70; cf. Mahdi (1957): 89.

260 See Pines (1971).

261 Ed. Quatremere (1858), 1: 343.18ff.; trans. F. Rosenthal (1957), 1: 387.

262 Ed. Quatremere (1858), 1: 343.4; trans. F. Rosenthal (1957), 1: 386.

263 Cf. also Simon (1959): 110ff.

264 Cf. Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought. 329–34; 533.

265 Cf. Watt (1988), esp. pp. 88fif.

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CHAPTER 51

Literature

Shams Inati and Elsayed Omran

The determination of the relation of Islamic philosophy to literature first requires a clear delineation of the meaning of philosophy and of literature.

The most common definition of falsafah (philosophy) in Arabic thought stresses that philosophy determines the realities of all things and that it does so in accordance with human capacity.[1] Adab, which is commonly translated as literature, has been used in a number of different ways to mean: (1) guidance to good deeds and diversion from bad ones; (2) proper behaviour;[2] (3) knowledge of the art of poetic composition;[3] (4) knowledge of the Arabic language: knowledge that helps one avoid error in verbal or written Arabic discourse;[4] and (5) knowledge in an unrestricted sense.[5] The first two of the above definitions of adab can be reduced to that which leads to good conduct; the last three, to knowledge, but knowledge of rather different sorts – of poetic composition (3), of the soundness of the Arabic language (4), or of just anything (5). Thus, there are two aspects to adab\ a practical one, referring to good conduct, and a theoretical one, referring to knowledge.

A study of falsafah and adab, therefore, focuses on the subject of the human grasp of the realities of things and its relation to the practical aspect of adab and/or to one or more of its theoretical aspects.

The major Arabic extant philosophical writings that concern themselves with one or more literary aspects are those of al-Farabi, Ibn Slna (Avicenna) and Ibn Rushd (Averroes).[6] Because these three figures were primarily philosophers, their main concern was to investigate human knowledge of the realities of things, a type of knowledge they believed to be essential to ultimate human happiness. Such knowledge, however, must be preceded, according to them, by the performance of good deeds. This performance is, in turn, enhanced by the use of a certain type of language – a type of language that reflects a certain type of reality. For reasons that will be elaborated later in this chapter, these three philosophers believed that this type of language would have to be primarily poetic in order to be most effective with the majority of people.

To study their understanding of the relation of philosophy to literature is thus in part to study their concept of the relation of human knowledge of the realities of things to that which leads to good conduct and language, particularly, poetic composition. Their view of the relation of philosophy to language in general is touched upon in the chapter on logic. The present chapter will concentrate on the relation of philosophy to poetry and on how the latter can lead to good deeds, although reference to other forms of linguistic composition will be made when relevant.

In order to understand these philosophers' view of human knowledge of the realities of things and the manner in which poetry relates to the good deeds necessary for such knowledge, it is important first to examine their view of the structure of the human soul and the function of its parts.

Structure and Function of the Human Soul

According to Muslim philosophers, the human soul consists of three parts or souls: the plant soul, the animal soul and the rational soul. The first is responsible for nourishment, growth and reproduction; the second for sensation and movement; the third for knowledge. To say this, however, is not to say that no powers of the human soul other than those of the rational soul are needed for knowledge. The animal soul plays a significant role in preparing the way for the attainment of knowledge, and at least one of its powers (the imagination) is said to be able to attain some form of knowledge to be specified later.

Sensation is of two types: that of the external senses or faculties and that of the internal ones. Al-Farabl, Ibn Slna and Ibn Rushd agree that there are five external senses: those of touch, taste, smell, hearing and sight. The function of these faculties is to collect material and, hence, particular forms from external objects, a function these faculties can perform only if such objects are present to them. The internal senses, however, vary in number, according to these philosophers. For al-Farabl and Ibn Slna, for example, there are five: those

of common sense, representation, imagination, estimation and memory.[7] Ibn Rushd, like his teacher, Ibn Bajjah, reduces their number to three: those of common sense, imagination and memory.[8] The function of the internal senses is more varied and more complex than that of the external ones. Because of this variation and complexity – especially in the works of Ibn Slna – only a general view of the function of the internal senses will be given
here. The details and differences of opinion among the philosophers studied will, therefore, not be dealt with except when relevant to the present subject.

In part the function of the internal senses is to receive the material forms from the external senses and to purify them from material attachments as much as possible. For the internal senses to do this, the external objects need not be present to them.

The common sense faculty receives all the material forms from the external senses. It differs from the external senses though in that it collects the various types of external sensations instead of only one and does not require the presence of the external objects. The imagination plays two roles, an epistemological one and an ethical one, both of which will be discussed in some detail.

The epistemological function of the imagination consists in its acting as a central post office, where it receives information from all its neighbouring faculties and then distributes it in different directions after having stamped it with its own character. From the common sense, it receives the material forms of external objects (whether through the representational faculty that stores such objects, as al-Farabi

and Ibn Slna have it, or directly, as Ibn Rushd has it). From memory, it receives nonsensible, particular notions of external objects, such as the sheep's fear of the wolf. According to al-Farabi and Ibn Slna, such notions are first grasped by the estimative faculty and then stored in memory.

The rational soul, which is a superior neighbour to the imagination and from which the imagination can also receive information in a manner to be mentioned later, possesses two faculties or intellects, the theoretical and the practical. The proper function of the theoretical intellect is to know the realities also called natures, quiddities or essences. Such realities are the universal aspects of the universe. They are simple and eternal; that is why when the theoretical intellect grasps them it becomes like them, since the knower and the known are one.[9] The theoretical intellect, which is potential at first, attains its actuality by receiving the realities of things. How this happens, however, is not fully clear. At times, for example, al-Farabi and Ibn Slna seem to think that the objects of the imagination, which are somewhat material and particular and cannot therefore be grasped by the theoretical intellect, are finally stripped of their materiality when the light of the agent intellect, the lowest celestial intelligence,[10] shines over them. This light, as it were, makes the objects of the imagination, which are still in mud and darkness, completely visible to the theoretical intellect. In other words, the light of the agent intellect casts the universal aspect of the objects of the imagination on the theoretical intellect, leaving behind their particularity and materiality. This is the Aristotelian tendency that locates the original source of the universal in the outside world, from which they are taken by the external

senses. From the external senses, the universals are then taken by the common sense that conveys them to the imagination, which finally hands them to the intellect. Ibn Rushd is a strong advocate of this tendency. Al-Farabl and Ibn Slna, on the other hand, seem at times to speak as if the imagination only prepares the rational soul for accepting the universals that overflow to it from the agent intellect.[11] But the manner and nature of this preparation are not fully clear. Still, whether the objects of the imagination are themselves abstracted from matter and then grasped by the theoretical intellect or whether these objects simply prepare the way for the overflow of the universals from the agent intellect to the theoretical one does not change the fact that the imagination plays a very important role in the attainment of theoretical knowledge.

While the theoretical intellect looks upward to learn the essences of the universe, the practical intellect looks downward to manage worldly affairs. Its proper function is to know the principles of the practical crafts as well as those of ethics and the manner in which they must be applied. The practical intellect requires that virtue consist in acting in accordance with reason, something which calls for moderation in action and results in knowledge and happiness. In grasping such principles and their manner of application, the practical intellect relies on the imagination for providing repeated instances of particular things on the basis of which the practical intellect draws its conclusions. After all, the practical intellect perfects itself through experience and habits, which require particular instances as prerequisites. Without knowledge and application of the principles of the practical intellect, there would be disorder in the life of the individual, society and state. Such disorder, however, can

distract the theoretical intellect from performing its function by calling for its attention downward. The imagination, therefore, can help in the attainment of theoretical knowledge also by providing the practical intellect with the information necessary for disciplining the individual.

The ethical role of the imagination consists in its directing the locomotive powers of the animal soul. These powers are of two types: those that move other things (the desiderative parts, including instincts, inclinations and reactions) and those that are moved by other things (the parts of the body, such as muscles). The desiderative parts cause motion either in the direction of something or away from it.[12] How the imagination portrays an object to the desiderative power determines whether or not the latter moves in the direction of, or away from, that object. If the imagination portrays an object as suitable, the desiderative power moves in the direction of that object. If, on the other hand, the imagination portrays in object as unsuitable, the desiderative power moves away from that object.[13]

The imagination generates desire for or against an object either in accordance with the principles of the practical intellect or independently.
If the principles of the practical intellect guide the imagination, human action is rational, that is, it follows the real good and avoids the real bad. If the imagination acts independently, however, human action is blind, that is, it follows suggestions of the imagination that are at best described as half true and half false. If one finds oneself wanting to do something but also not wanting to do it, it is because there is a conflict, as is the case quite often, between

the imagination, trying to act independently, and the practical intellect, trying to govern it.

It is primarily during sleep that the imagination is set free from the restraints of the practical intellect. That is why in sleep the imagination is more free to co-operate with the demands of the body, which it supplies with images that satisfy those demands.[14] Diseases, fears, insanity and the like can also set the imagination free from the bounds of reason even during the wakeful state.[15] But what is the role of poetry in all of this? To be able to answer this question, one must first understand the nature of poetry. Thus, we must now turn to a study of what poetry is.

The Nature of Poetry

Muslim philosophers assert that poetry is an imaginative discourse.[16] Poetry, however, differs from other imaginative compositions in that it is essentially an imitation (muhakat).[17] However, there are two main types of imitation – one that is in action, and one that is in words.[18] Poetry is of the latter type.

In order to clarify imitative discourse by discussing imitation in general, al-Farabi points out that imitation in action is further divided into two types: making something that resembles something else, such as making a statue that resembles a certain person; or doing something that mimics something else, such as mimicking a neighbour's walk. Imitation in words, on the other hand, uses a discourse composed of objects that resemble the subjects of the

discourse. This is to say that the discourse must signify things that resemble the subject of the discourse.[19] Whether in action or in discourse, imitation can represent either something that resembles the thing itself or something that resembles something else that resembles the thing itself. For example, one may make a statue that resembles Zayd himself or a mirror that reflects the statue that resembles Zayd.[20] But whether the imitation is of the thing itself or of something that imitates the thing itself, it can identify the thing itself, regardless of whether this imitation is in action or in words.[21]

Which type of imitation, though, is better, that which requires no intermediaries or that which does? To this issue, al-Farabi, for example, responds not by giving his own opinion but simply by saying, "Many people consider the imitation of a thing by means of the more remote
thing more complete and preferable than its imitation by means of the more proximate one."[22] Perhaps the reason al-Farabl and other Muslim philosophers do not give their own opinion regarding this matter is their conviction that the discussion of the more complete and the less complete imitation is not for philosophers, who must be concerned with universal principles. Rather, such a discussion, as al-Farabl asserts, is the concern of poets and those knowledgeable about poetry, in particular languages.[23]

In his Treatise on the Canons of the Art of Poets, al-Farabl distinguishes imitative discourse from other types of expressions. Fie asserts:

that expressions are either significant or non-significant; that significant expressions are either single or composite; that composite expressions are either discourses or

non-discourses; that discourses are either categorical or non-categorical; that categorical discourses are either true or false; that false categorical discourses represent in the minds of the hearers either something expressed which is other than the subject of the discourse, or something that imitates the real thing – the last being the poetic discourse.[24]

Poetry, therefore, is said to be false, but only in the sense that it gives an imitation of the thing and not the thing itself. Imitation is to be distinguished from sophistry. The objective of the former is to represent in the minds of the hearers that which resembles the real thing; the objective of the latter is to represent in the minds of the hearers the contrary of the thing.[25] An example of imitation is one's picture in the mirror; an example of sophistry is seeing things external to a ship as moving just because one is on a moving ship.[26] The well-known Arabic saying, "The best poetry is that which is most false", can, therefore, be understood by Muslim philosophers to mean that the best poetry is that which embodies the most complete imitation of reality.

This link to reality is the reason why poetic discourse is an analogy (tamtfnl), that is, a potential syllogism.[27]' But syllogisms differ from each other in terms of the degree of their truth. Al-Farabl points out that:

discourses are either unavoidably completely true; unavoidably completely false; true for the major part, false for the minor one; the contrary ot this; or equal in truth and falsity. That which is unavoidably completely true is demonstrative discourse;

that which is true for the major part is dialectical discourse; that which is equal in truth and falsity is rhetorical discourse;

that which is true for the minor part is sophistical discourse; and that which is unavoidably completely false is poetic discourse.[28]

One must keep in mind, though, that poetic discourse is to be considered completely false, not just in any sense, but in the sense stated above, namely, that it is an imitation. It must be remembered, however, that it
is an imitation of reality. Al-Farabi insists that poetry is a branch of logic, for to him it is a syllogism or "what follows the syllogism"; the latter is exemplified in induction and analogy.[29]

Ibn Slna, too, considers Poetics a part of logic, contrary to the Aristotelian tradition, which is thought not to include Rhetoric and Poetics, as pointed out in the chapter on logic.[30] Being faithful to the Aristotelian tradition, Ibn Rushd, however, does not consider Rhetoric and Poetics as parts of logic. Interestingly enough, though, he too speaks of poetry as a logical art. When distinguishing the imaginative arts in his own Poetics, for example, he says:

The imaginative art, or that which does what the imagination does, is three in kind: the art of harmony, the art of metre, and the art of making imitative discourse. The last is the logical art which is the subject of our study in this book.[31]

It must be remembered, however, » iat not every imaginative art is poetic or logical, but only that which is imitative, as pointed out in this passage from Ibn Rushd. Thus, when Ibn

Slna says, "It is only inasmuch as poetry is an imaginative discourse that it concerns the logician",[32] or "The logician studies poetry, inasmuch as it is imaginative",[33] he is referring specifically to the imitative imaginative aspect of the poetic discourse.

But what is the imaginative? To this question, Muslim philosophers respond:

The imaginative is that to which the soul submits such that it is relaxed owing to certain things and is depressed owing to certain other things, without any reasoning, thought, or choice, … regardless of whether the object of discourse is true or false.[34]

The imaginative is not the same as the true; a thing may be imaginative but not true and vice versa. A discourse has more power to move the soul by the aspect of its imaginativeness than by the aspect of its truth.[35] Ibn Slna's insight into human nature reveals that, contrary to expectation, "people are more apt to abide by the imaginative than by the truth. In fact, many people dislike and avoid true statements, when hearing them."[36] This is because of the element of marvel found in imitation, or falsehood, but not in truth.[37] The reason is that truth is either known or unknown. If it is known, it is taken for granted; if it is unknown, it is not paid any attention.[38] The way to make truth more appealing and, hence, more effective, is to merge it with the marvellous. This can be done by presenting it with a moderate degree of unfamiliarity of metre, linguistic expressions, concepts or a combination of these.[39] Unlike Greek poetic imitation, whose sole purpose was to urge the soul to do or not to do a certain thing, Arabic

poetic imitation was used either for that purpose or simply for generating marvel.[40]

An important question may now be raised. If poetry is an imaginative art, and if an imaginative art affects the soul apart from any rational consideration and regardless of the truth of the object, then how can Muslim philosophers consider poetry a logical discipline, when logic is said by them to be a set of rules for distinguishing the true from the false and for drawing the unknown from the known? To answer this question one must remember what has been stated earlier, namely that the imagination can either function independently or as bound by the rules of the practical intellect. If it functions in the former way, it is free from any rational restraints; if it functions in the latter way, it enters the sphere of logic. In other words, the definition of the imaginative as given above applies to the object or act of the imagination when this faculty acts independently. But even when the imagination is guided by the practical intellect, it does not lose its effect on the soul. Its effect on the soul is instead in line with reason, and not simply based on blind emotions. It is primarily inasmuch as poetry can play this important ethical role that Muslim philosophers took interest in it.

Another perplexing issue is the following. If the benefit of poetry lies in the rational grip of the practical intellect over the soul, a grip that is mediated by the imagination, would it not be better to maintain such a grip directly with no form of imitative imaginative mediation? After all, imitation does not give us the thing itself, but only its resemblance, something which, at least to some extent, veils the light of reason and hence the reality of a thing. The answer becomes clear when it is remembered that, to Muslim philosophers, people have

different capacities for grasping things. There is, for example, an elite group, the purely philosophical, who can grasp the realities of things as they are and by means of nothing but reason. There is also the multitude who cannot grasp the realities of things as they are but can grasp the semblance of these realities, or their imaginative or symbolic form. Poetry is the link between reason and universality, on the one hand, and action and particularity, on the other

a link that can be grasped by the greater number of people. In other words, it is only through such veiling of reason that the multitude can be guided by the light of reason. For example, Ibn Slnas poetry on logic, medicine and the soul can be taken to be intended to educate the public about truths which, if explicated in a non-poetic form, would be inaccessible to them.

While the most important function of poetry is to help the multitude not to stray from the right path of conduct, this function is an outcome, and not an essential element, of poetry. This function cannot be perfected except by metre.[41] As we will soon see, however, it is not metre but universality and reality that are the distinguishing marks of poetry itself. Ibn Slna discusses such distinguishing marks in a rather obscure passage in which he seems to be making the following points, with which Ibn Rushd seems to agree.

Imitation in proverbs, tales and fables must be distinguished from imitation in poetry. The latter "touches only upon that whose existence in things is possible, or that which existed and, thus, entered the realm of necessity".[42] If metre were the only thing that differentiated proverbs, tales and fables from poetry, as one might think, then a fable, for example, would

become poetic if it were given metre, and a poetic discourse would become a fable, if it lost its metre. But this is not the case. Rather, the primary difference between these types of discourse is that fable has an unreal subject, while poetry has a real one.[43] "Real" here means something which existed, exists or will exist; that is, something which is either necessary or possible – the unreal being the contrary of this. Put another way, the subject of a fable has verbal existence only; the subject of poetry has external existence.[44] A poet is thus like a painter, in that they are both imitators of something real.[45] Owing to this and to the universality of the poetic subject, poetry is closer to philosophy than is the other type of discourse.[46]

In spite of this assertion, Muslim philosophers recognize that in some instances proverbs, tales and fables may have subjects that have external existence, as does history. But such a subject, they say, must be particular and non-imaginative.[47] As such, this type of discourse cannot move the soul, as does poetry, but can only give an opinion.[48] They also recognize that poetry can, as it did in Greek times, have an invented particular subject, but they hasten to add that this is so only in rare cases when the state of affairs in existence corresponds to those invented.[49] In other words, poetry differs essentially from fables and the like in that the subject of the former is both real and universal, while the subject of the latter is not. The fact that the subject of poetry is real no doubt facilitates the ethical function of poetry. For one to be affected by a thing, one must realize that that thing is not unreal, but at least possible. As Ibn Slna puts it: "The existent and the possible are more persuasive to the soul than the non-existent and the non-possible. Also, if an experience

is supported by something that exists, it is more persuasive than if it were supported by an invented thing."[50]

Stressing the reality of the poetic subject, whether in existence or in possibility, leads to the conclusion that not taking such a reality into consideration is an error on the part of a poet. Such an error is of two types: essential and accidental. The former is to imitate what has no existence or possibility; the latter is to imitate something that exists, but whose existence has been distorted.[51] Jubran's poem about al-'anqa (a non-existent bird) should, therefore, count as an essential error. An accidental error is exemplified in a poetic discourse that resembles a painting that portrays a horse as having its hind legs in front or on the side instead of the rear.[52] Ibn Rushd adds to the above two types of error the following four: (1) imitation of a rational being by something non-rational; (2) imitation of a thing by something which resembles its contrary, or by something which is the contrary of itself; (3) using a word that signifies both the subject and its contrary; and (4) moving from poetic imitation to persuasive discourse, especially when the poetic discourse is far-fetched.[53] Ibn Slna's Ode on the Soul, in which the human soul is compared to a pigeon, might be considered by Ibn Rushd as an example of type (1), an imitation of a rational thing by something no irrational.

To be a poet does not require being rationally knowledgeable of the nature of poetry and the rules that govern it. One can be a poet for one of three reasons: because one has the natural capacity for composing one or more types of poetry; or because one knows all the properties of, and rules for, all types of poetry – these are the syllogistic poets; or because one imitates the poetic acts of the above two types. Since the

third type has neither the poetic nature nor the knowledge of poetic rules, they are more apt to be in error than the first two.[54]

The purpose of Muslim philosophers in their poetics was to set universal poetic rules to help reduce the degree of poetic error, considering the ethical value of poetry in human society. No doubt they contributed mightily to a better understanding of Arabic poetry, especially by the distinction they made between it and Greek poetry and by the examples of Arabic verses they provided to explicate the universal poetic rules. Nevertheless, their ultimate objective was simply to focus on the universal poetic rules to the exclusion of those that relate to particular languages.[55] That is why they did not concern themselves with the study of metre or rhyme, even though the latter was a property of Arabic poetry, but only with the imitative imaginative aspect of poetic discourse.[56]

Since Muslim philosophers considered their works in poetics as commentaries on Aristotle's Poetics, they left these works incomplete, as is the latter. This fact is interesting even though their works in this area can hardly count as commentaries on Aristotle's Poetics regardless of their assertion that they are.[57] For example, with the exception of a short discussion concerning the types of poetry, al-Farabi's Qawtimn has nothing to do with Aristotle's Poetics, nor has most of the material in the first chapter of Ibn Slnas Fann al-shi'r. Al-Farabl goes so far as to claim that it would be inappropriate for someone like him to complete a study that was left incomplete by the wise and skilful Aristotle.[58] While Ibn Sina confirms the incompleteness of his Poetics, he indicates that he may produce another deeper and more

detailed study of this area.[59] There is no evidence, however, that he ever produced anything of the sort.

Finally, it is worth noting that some Muslim philosophers did not only do philosophy of poetry but also poetic philosophy. Ibn Slna, whose

poems on the soul, logic and medicine constitute excellent examples of

poetic philosophy, is the best example of this.[60]

NOTES

1 Ibn Sina, al-Shifd', al-Mantiq, al-Madkhal, ed. G. C. Anawati, M. al-Khudayri and A. F. al-Ahwani (Cairo, 1952): 12.

2 Ibn Manzur, Lisdn al-'Arab, 1 (Beirut, 1956): 206–7; al-Fayruzabadi, al-Qamiis al-muhit, 1 (Cairo, 1977): 36; Butrus al-Bustani, Muhit al-muhit (Beirut, 1977): 5.

3 Butrus al-Bustani, Muhit al-muhit: 5.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

6 Al-Kindi is said to have written two works on poetics, a commentary on Aristotle's Poetics and an essay on poetics, but so far these have not been discovered (Ibn al-Nadlm, al-Fihrist (Cairo, 1929): 359).

7 See, for example, Ibn Slna, al-Ishdrdt wa'l-tanbihdt, Part Three, ed. S. Dunya (Cairo, 1950): 373–86.

8 See, for example, Ibn Rushd, al-Hdss wa'l-mahsus, in Aristutdlis fi'l-nafs, ed. A. R. Badawl (Cairo, 1954): 208–12.

9 Ibn Slna, Risdlat al-'ariis, ed. C. Cuns, in Majallat al-kitdb, 11 (Cairo, 1952): 396.

10 For the function of the agent intellect, see Chapter 16 above on Ibn Slna, p. 239.

11 See, for example, Ibn Slna, Risdlah fi baydn al-mu'jizdt wa'l-kardmdt wa'l-a'djib, in al-Madhhab al-tarbawi 'ind Ibn Sind min khildl falsafatih al-dmaliyyah, ed. Abd al-Amlr Shams al-Dln (Beirut, 1988): 404.

12 Al-Farabi, Ard' ahl al.-madinat al-fddilah ed. A. N. Nadir (Beirut, 1959): 72; Ibn Slna, 'Uyun al-hikmah, ed. A. R. Badawl (Cairo, 1954): 39; Ibn Rushd, Talkhis kitdb al-nafs, ed. A. F. al-Ahwanl (Cairo, 1950): 92.

13 Ibn Slna, Risdlah fi'l-nafs wa baqd'ihd wa ma'ddihd, in Rasd'il Ibn Sind, ed. H. D. Ulken (Istanbul, 1953): 120; Ibn Rushd, Talkhis kitdb al-nafs: 60.

14 Al-Farabi, Ard' ahl al-madinah al-fddilah: 89–91; Ibn Slna, al-Nafs: 195; Ibn Rushd, al-Hdss wa'l-mahsus: 231–2.

15 Al-Farabi, Ard'ahl al-madinah al-fddilah: 95; Ibn Slna, al-Ishdrdt wal-tanbihdt, Part Four, ed. S. Dunya (Cairo, 1958): 876; Ibn Rushd, al-Hdss wa'l-mahsus: 223.

16 Al-Farabi, Kitdb al-shi'r, ed. M. Mahdi, in Majallat shir, 12 (Beirut, 1959): 94–5; Ibn Slna, al Shifd', al-Mantiq, Fann al-Shi'r (hereafter Fann al-Shi'r), in Aristutdlis: Fann al-shi'r, ed. A. R. Badawl (Cairo, 1953): 161; Ibn Rushd, Talkhis kitdb Aristutdlis fi'l-shi'r (hereafter Talkhis, in Aristutdlis: Fann al-shi'r: 203–4.

17 Al-Farabi, Kitdb al-shi'r: 92; Ibn Slna, Fann al-shi'r: 168; Ibn Rushd, Talkhis$_M$ al-shi'r: 203–4.

18 Al-Farabi, Kitdb al-shi'r: 93; Ibn Sina, Fann al-shi'r: 168.

19 Al-Farabi, Kitdb al-shi'r: 93.

20 Ibid.: 93–5.

21 Ibid.: 95.

22 Ibid.

23
Al-Farabl, Risalah fi qawanin sina'at al-shuara (hereafter Qawanin), in Aristutdlis: Fann al-shi'r: 150.

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid.: 150–1.

27 Ibid.: 151

28 Ibid.: for the nature and function of these various types of discourse, see

29 Al-Farabl, Qawanin: 151.

30

31 Ibn Rushd, Talkhls al-shi'r. 203.

32 Ibn Slna, Fann al-sbir: 161.

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid. See also al-Farabl, Kitdb al-sbi'r: 94.

35 Ibn Slna, Fann al-sbi'r: 161–2.

36 Ibid.: 162.

37 Ibid.

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid.: 162–3.

40 Ibid.: 170.

41 Ibid.: 183; Ibn Rushd, Talkhls al-shi'r. 214.

42 Ibn Slna, Fann al-sbi'r. 183; Ibn Rushd, Talkhis al-shi'r: 214–15.

43 Ibn Slna, Fann al-shi'r: 183.

44 Ibid.

45 Ibid.: 196.

46 Ibid.: 184; Ibn Rushd, Talkhls al-shi'r. 214.

47 Ibn Slna, Fann al-shi'r: 183

48 Ibid.

49 Ibid.: 184.

50 Ibid.; see also Ibn Rushd, Talkhls al-shi'r: 214, 219.

51 Ibn Slna, Fann al-shi'r. 196; Ibn Rushd, Talkhls al-shi'r: 247–8.

52 Ibn Slna, Fann al-shi'r, 196; Ibn Rushd, Talkhls al-shi'r-. 248.

53 Ibn Rushd, Talkhis al-shi'r: 248–9.

54 Al-Farabl, Qawanin: 155–6.

55 See al-Farabl, Qawanin: 158.

56 Ibn Slna, Fann al-shi'r. 161.

57 Al-Farabl, Qawanin: 149; Ibn Slna, Fann al-shi'r: 198; Ibn Rushd, Talkhls al-shi'r. 201.

58 Al-Farabl, Qawanin: 149–50.

59 Ibn Slna, Fann al-shi'r: 198.

60 It would be most interesting to study the content of these poems, especially the one on the soul, and to compare it with those of Shawqi and al-Ghadban which address the same subject with the same metre, rhyme, spirit and terminology. An even more important inquiry resulting from the present study, though, would be the determination of whether or not such philosophical poems are governed by the rules set in Islamic poetics. There is no room, however, to explore such subjects here.

CHAPTER 52

Language[1]

Shukri B. Abed

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Throughout fourteen centuries of history, Islam as a civilization has faced major external cultural challenges on two separate occasions. The first of these occurred during the early days of Islam, when Greek, Indian and Persian philosophy and science were transmitted to the Islamic world cotemporaneously with the rise of the Muslims as a power in the Middle East region; the second began about two hundreds years ago with European colonization of the Middle East. On both occasions, the Arabs found it advisable and even necessary to re-evaluate certain aspects of their own indigenous culture in light of the cultural and scientific challenges presented by the West. The Arabic language, the language of the holy Qur'an, was not only the medium through which these challenges were debated but also itself a central subject matter of the debates.

The purpose of this chapter is to characterize the debates concerning the development of the Arabic language (al-'arabiyyah) and to identify the specific mechanisms through which linguistic accommodations have been (and are being) made in the Arabic language to adapt to evolving

circumstances. The first section will deal with the reaction of Arab intellectuals to the introduction of Greek, Indian and Persian philosophy and science into the Islamic world beginning in the second/eighth century. This reaction was mirrored in a series of debates concerning the relative merits of (Greek) logic and (Arabic) grammar. These culminated in a particularly important debate, documented toward the middle of the fourth/tenth century, which will serve as a focus for discussion in the first section of the chapter. The second and third sections will address the impact of the two external cultural confrontations cited above on the Arabic language, during the classical and the modern periods of Islam, respectively. The fourth and final section will briefly summarize contemporary debates concerning the future of the Arabic language.[2]

Language and Logic in Classical Islam

The question of the relationship of the Arabic language to Greek logic arose during the early stages of the "philosophical movement" in the Islamic world. Al-Kindl's student Ahmad ibn al-Tayyib al-SarakhsI (d.286/899), for example, was reportedly the first in the Arab world to write about the difference between logic and Arabic grammar. Although his treatise on "the difference between the grammar of the Arabs and logic" is not extant, al-Sarakhsi, we are told, considered logic to be a universal grammar and as such superior to Arabic grammar and to any other particular grammar, for that matter.[3]

This view – according to which logic is superior to language because the former is a necessary science dealing with meanings and with what is universal, whereas the latter is conventional and accidental – is a view that prevailed among Arab logicians throughout the tenth and eleventh centuries. In fact, according to the Arab logicians of this period, language should not even be considered an issue for logicians in their logical inquiries. Logic, they claimed, is concerned with utterances (alfdz) only accidentally and only in so far as these utterances signify the concepts (ma'am) themselves, which (in the logicians' view) are the only proper subject matter of logic.

This theme is clearly stated in a debate concerning the relative merits of logic and grammar that took place in Baghdad in 331/932 between grammarians (represented by Abu Sa'ld al-Sirafi) and logicians (represented by the Nestorian Christian Abu Bishr Matta). A second theme formulated during this debate and relevant to our discussion is the Arab grammarians' claim that, in order to introduce Greek philosophy and science into the Islamic arena, the Arab philosophers had resorted to "building a language within a language";[4] that is, they were distorting the original and pure Arabic language as revealed in the Qur'an in an unnecessary and irresponsible manner. This debate, translated into English toward the beginning of the fourteenth/twentieth century,[5] has been the subject of several scholarly studies in recent years.[6] I nevertheless propose to summarize briefly herein those sections of the debate which suggest that the linguistic arguments upon which the opposing positions are ostensibly based may in fact mask socio-political arguments identifiable just beneath their surface.

At the outset of this debate, Abu Bishr Matta is quoted by the vizier Ibn al-Furat as having claimed that "there is no way to know truth from falsehood, verity from lying, good from bad, proof from sophism, doubt from certainty except through logic".[7] Matta, present when the vizier attributed this claim to him, attempted to defend his position as follows:

The logician has no need of grammar, whereas the grammarian does need logic. For logic enquires into the meaning, whereas grammar enquires into the utterance. If, therefore, the logician deals with the utterance, it is accidental, and it is likewise accidental if the grammarian deals with the meaning. Now, the meaning is more exalted than the utterance, and the utterance humbler than the meaning.[8]

Statements of this sort clearly belittled the study of Arabic grammar and the status of the Arab grammarians. It is not difficult, therefore, to comprehend why the logicians' position drew a strong reaction from the circle of Arab grammarians, a reaction later endorsed by certain influential theologians (such as Ibn Taymiyyah in the seventh/ thirteenth century). The grammarians criticized Matta and the other logicians on the grounds that the intelligible meanings they present as universal and eternal can be achieved only through the mastering of a specific language.

Abu Sa'ld al-Slrafi, described by al-Tawhidl as a dignified, pious and earnest man,[9] undertook the challenge of open debate with Matta to defend the grammarians' point of view. Towards the beginning of the debate, al-Slrafi asked Matta to define what he means by logic so that their discussion

concerning logic would be "according to accepted rules and a defined method".[10] Matta replied as follows:

I understand by logic an "instrument" \alah\ of "speech" [kaldm], by which correct "speech" is known from incorrect, and unsound "meaning" [mana] from sound: like a balance, for by it I know overweight from underweight and what rises from what sinks."[11]

Speaking for the grammarians, al-Slrafi criticized Matta on the grounds that there is no such thing as "language" in general, rather we speak and express meanings by using a particular language, and each language has its own tools and instruments by which one determines what is correct and what is incorrect when that language is used.

Abu Sa'id [al-Slrafi] said: You are mistaken, for correct speech is distinguished from incorrect by the familiar rules of composition and by the accepted inflection [i'rdb\ when we speak in Arabic; unsound meaning is distinguished from sound by reason when we investigate meanings.[12]

According to al-Sirafl, then, on the language level, correct speech is distinguished from incorrect speech by following the standard rules of Arabic grammar and syntax, rather than the formal rules of logic; whereas on the level of intelligibles, unsound meaning is distinguished from sound meaning by utilizing reason. In other words, al-Slrafi rejects the notion that one instrument (logic) can be used simultaneously on two different levels: the language level and the level of intelligibles or concepts.

Al-Sïrâfï further attacks the very analogy of "balance" employed by Mattà:

Suppose you determine the relative weight of two or more objects, how can you know which one of the things weighed is iron, which gold, which copper and which lead? Hence, after you know the weight, you still need to know the substance of what is weighed, its value and the rest of its qualities.[13]

Al-Slràffs point seems to be the following. Even if we grant you that logic is capable of distinguishing between correct and incorrect language usage, as well as between sound and unsound meanings, there are still many aspects of both the utterances and the meanings that cannot be known by logic. Furthermore, al-Sîrâfl argues,

not everything in this world can be weighed. Some things are weighed, others are measured with respect to their volume, others with respect to their length, … and still others can be guessed at. And if this is the case in the realm of visible bodies, this applies also to the domain of intelligibles.[14]

Elsewhere in the debate, the logicians are urged to concentrate on the knowledge of a particular language (Arabic, in this case) as a necessary condition for mastering the art of logic. Knowledge of the Arabic language is required if logicians wish to convey the logical theories of the Greeks to speakers of the Arabic language, al-Slrafl concludes.

This [Arabic] language in which you dispute or agree with us, you should instruct your friends in accordance with the way it is understood by those who speak it, and interpret the books

of the Greeks according to the custom of those whose language it is. For then you will come to know that you can dispense with the meanings of the Greeks as well as you can dispense with the language of the Greeks.[15]

According to al-Sîràfî, then, there is no distinction between logic and language.[16] Logic for him is the logic of a particular language, and there is no such thing as "universal logic". The logic the logicians are promoting is a purely Greek logic, derived from Greek language and grammar.[17]

Al-Slrafl moves on to argue against the very notion that other nations should accept a logical system based on a specific language:

Furthermore, since logic was established by a Greek man [i.e., Aristotle] according to the language of his country's people, according to their understanding of it and their conventions
regarding its definitions and properties, why should the Turks, the Indians, the Persians and the Arabs study it and take it as their judge and arbitrator, who decides for them and against them such that they must accept what he agrees to and reject what he denies?[18]

In other words, al-Slràfî rejects the notion that logic transcends national and language boundaries (rendering it a universal instrument), a notion that is the cornerstone of the logicians' position, as is clear from the following counter-argument by Mattà:

This follows since logic investigates the intellcgibles, the intentions and the conceived meanings … As far as

intelligibles are concerned, all human beings are equal, as is evident from the fact that [the sum of] four plus four is the same for all nations.[19]

Again, al-Siràfï accuses Mattà of offering a misleading example. For al-Slràfì, this mathematical example fails to reflect the complex nature of the problems for which logic is presumed to be the solution or the means to a solution. He in fact charges Mattà and his fellow logicians with a conscious effort to mislead people:

If the things conceived by the mind and expressed by words with all their various divisions and diverse paths could be reduced to the level of simplicity [in the statement] "four plus four equals eight", then the disputes [among people] would disappear and there would be total agreement. But this is not the case. Your example is misleading, and you [logicians] are accustomed to misleading others.[20]

Later on in the debate,[21] al-Slrafl in fact accuses the logicians of purposely using invented terminology (such as the Arabic counterparts for "genus", "species", "essence", etc.) – terms with which most people are not familiar – in order to confuse the ignorant and create the impression that logic is a magical solution to the problems of the world.

For al-Slrafl this logic which Mattà and his fellow logicians hold in such high regard is nothing more than Greek logic and as such it cannot be employed by other nations, since it is based on and derived from the Greek language. Al-Sïràfï charges that in essence Mattà is asking the Arabs to study not a universal logic but the Greek language. Yet this same Greek language Mattà wants them to study "perished long ago, its

speakers have disappeared and the community that used to communicate their intentions by means of its inflections are now extinct".[22]

Although al-Slràfï seriously doubts Mattà's assertion that the translations from Greek to Arabic have managed to preserve the meanings and the truth, he is nevertheless willing, for the sake of argument, to grant
that this is the case. Al-Sirafl is perfectly willing to ignore the question of the reliability of these translations, since he detects that Matta s assertion is in fact based on a quite different assumption, and one he categorically rejects. "You seem to be implying, " al-Slrafi says, "that there is no reliable authority [hujjah] other than the intellects of the Greeks, no demonstration except what they have established and no truth except what they brought to light."[23]

Al-Sirafl strongly criticizes Matta's blind support of the Greeks, thereby implicating all the other defenders of Greek culture. He completely rejects Matta's insinuation that the Greeks are a special nation and that "of [all] [nations], it was they who applied themselves to the pursuit of wisdom \hikmah\ and to the investigation of the apparent and hidden aspects of the world", and that "the discovery and propagation of every kind of science and art is due to them, something we cannot attribute to other [nations]".[24] Accusing Matta of being prejudiced \ta'assabta\ and of committing an error by making such a statement, al-Slrafl goes on to explain that the Greeks are not different from any other nation, as "they were right about certain issues and wrong about others, they knew certain things and were ignorant of other things".[25]

At this point, al-Slrafi's strategy becomes clear. He means to discredit the entire Greek culture, considered by its defenders in the Arab world as superior to other cultures, including the Arab/Islamic culture. Al-Sirafl seems to single out Aristotle and his teachings, above all his logic, for particular disparagement. The reason for this is clear, as well. Aristotle was considered by his defenders the authority. It was, in fact, customary for the Arab philosophers to refer to Aristotle as "the First Teacher", a designation with quasi-religious connotations. Yet Aristotle, in al-Slrafl's view, cannot be identified with the Greek nation. He is only one man, who learned from his predecessors just as his successors learned from him. Nor can he be considered "an authority [hujjah] over all God's creation … he has opponents among the Greeks and among other nations".[26]

The logicians' reported defeat[27] in this particular confrontation with the Arab grammarians did not alter their position that logic is concerned with meanings rather than with utterances as such, while Arabic grammar \nahw\ is concerned exclusively with utterances.[28] It did, however, lead them to take the grammarians and their field of endeavour more seriously. The Achilles' heel of the first generation of Arab logicians had been their profound ignorance of the discipline they so summarily dismissed.[29]

The next wave of logicians – including al-Farabl, Yahya ibn Adi (both disciples of Matta) and Abu Sulayman al-Sijistani (a disciple of Ibn Adi)

was broader in its analysis of the relationship between logic and language. These philosophers still believed that logic is a universal grammar and therefore more significant than any

particular language which, by definition, is restricted to a particular nation. But the defeat of Abu Bishr

Matta, whose openly admitted ignorance of Arabic grammar had left him vulnerable to the Siraflan attacks, suggested that serious logicians might do well to master their own language as a firm basis from which to pursue their logical studies. Al-Farabi, Ibn Adi and al-Sijistanl all engaged in serious study of Arabic grammar and were able to argue their positions much more convincingly than Matta, leader of the fourth/tenth-century Baghdad logicians, had been able to do. These logicians continued to maintain that logic is superior to grammar, with the only utterances seriously considered by the logician being those that signify universal concepts or meanings. Yet, unlike their predecessors, these men accorded the beauty and intricacies of the Arabic language due respect, realizing that language and logic are closely, indeed inextricably, interrelated.[30]

While the details of these debates are fascinating in and of themselves, what is important to realize is the context they form for the language development issues to be dealt with in our subsequent discussion. At the time these debates took place, the Arabic language was being deluged by a tremendous influx of new terminology required to convey the scientific and philosophical ideas and discoveries of other nations. The grammarians and their supporters genuinely feared an attempt by the logicians of fourth/tenth-century Baghdad to ravage the Arabic language, while importing foreign ideas and modes of thought that were not only ill-suited but also downright contradictory to certain essential tenets of the Arabic/Islamic culture. This fear is clearly reflected in the grammarians' charge that the logicians, in response to the linguistic and philosophical developments of

the period, were threatening to "build a language within a language [which is already] well defined among its native speakers [muqarrarah bayna ahliha]"[31] – an attack levelled not only at the introduction of foreign terminology but also at the imposition of new and artificial structures on the Arabic language.[32]

Al-Sirafl's attempt to discredit the Greeks and their major supporters among the Arab philosophers clearly has implications above and beyond a single debate concerning the relative merits of logic and language. Al-Srrafi's criticism penetrates deeply into the question of the Muslim attitude towards foreign cultures and the perceived threat they pose to the Arabic/Islamic culture. In other words, it is an attempt to combat the influence of the Greeks and other foreigners on the Arabic culture, a battle that was to continue into the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, ultimately pitting the philosophers against the Islamic religious establishment. In fact, as we shall see, the battle rages on to this day, enveloping religious, political and artistic dimensions along with the linguistic.

With this theoretical background, we will now examine in concrete terms the linguistic process that took place as a result of the medieval philosophical movement in Islam and continued in a similar form with the advent of Western colonialist expansion in the Middle East.

The Medieval Period – the Transmission of Greek

Philosophy and Science to the Arab World

The Qur'an, the holy book of Islam, was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad during the first part of the first/seventh century and is considered by Muslims as the word of God. Among other things, it includes thoughts about humanity and knowledge. The term 'ilm, which in Arabic has two closely related meanings ("knowledge" and "science"), appears repeatedly in the Qur'an, as well as in the Hadith. All believers, male and female, old and young are obliged by the teachings of the Qur'an to acquire knowledge; knowledge is to be sought and acquired from cradle (birth) to grave (death). Muslims are urged to pursue knowledge even if they must travel to China for that purpose.

Scientific activity in Islam, however, did not begin when the Qur'an was revealed during the first part of the first/seventh century, nor when it was assembled several decades later; rather it did not begin in earnest until the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries.[33] Thus, while clearly encouraging the followers of Islam in the pursuit of knowledge, the Qur'an in and of itself was not a sufficient condition to stimulate scientific activity. Initially, the inhabitants of the Arabian peninsula, to whom the Qur'an was first revealed, were simply not prepared to engage in scientific activity, nor were they in the least aware of the scientific and philosophical developments that had taken place in Greece, Persia and India more than a thousand years before the appearance of Islam. The early Muslims of Arabia excelled in poetry and in

warfare, but were blissfully ignorant of Euclid's theorems in geometry, Ptolemy's astronomy and the philosophical treatises of Plato and Aristotle.

Even the Arabic language was not equipped to function as a scientific language. At the time, for instance, its writers and speakers had not yet begun to exploit the -iyyah ending later so productive in generating the abstract nouns required to discuss philosophy and scientific theories. The Qur'an itself included no more than two terms with this ending: rahbdniyyah (monasticism) in Al-Hadtd (27); and jdhiliyyah (ignorance [of God]) in Al-Imrdn (154), al-Md'idah (50), al-Ahzdb (33) and al-Fath (26).

The translation of Greek philosophical works into Arabic, however, presented an opportunity for a fresh, new look at the Arabic language. Faced with the task of creating equivalent terms to express meanings conveyed in the original Greek (and other language) texts, the translators set about developing the means to expand the Arabic language and enhance its ability to adjust to changing realities. These translators, most of whom were Nestorian Christians, translated Greek works into Arabic primarily via their native language of Syriac.

Following is a summary of the linguistic techniques these early translators employed in order swiftly and effectively to close the gap between the Arabic language as it then was and the barrage of new concepts and ideas they wished to express by means of it.

Formation of abstract nouns (the sujjix -iyyah)

One of the most productive word generation techniques employed by the early translators was the aforementioned formation of new abstract terms by means of the suffix -iyyah, a mechanism that has become an integral part not only of the Arabic philosophical language, where it finds the majority of its uses, but also of the Arabic language in general.

In Arabic, the relative adjectives (al-asma al-mansiibah or al-nisbah) are formed by adding the termination -iyy to the words from which they are derived. They denote the fact that a person or thing belongs to or is connected with the thing from which its name is derived (in respect to origin, family, birth, sect, trade, etc). According to W. Wright, Arabic abstract nouns of the form -iyyah are morphologically derived from relative adjectives.[34]

Using the -iyyah suffix to generate abstract nouns not only solved a major problem for the translators in their work with philosophical and other texts but also proved productive in everyday life during the translation period and thereafter. The -iyyah suffix could be used with question particles, such as kam (how many or how much?) and kayfa (how?), to create abstract nouns such as kamiyyah (quantity) and kayfiyyah (quality). It could be used with pronouns, such as huwa (he), to create a noun such as huwiyyah (being). It could be used with particles, such as inna (truly) to create a noun such as inniyyah[35] (nature [of a thing]), etc.

Despite the alternatives suggested by several scholars of the time,[36] then, the translators and subsequently the Arab philosophers had no need to look beyond the Arabic language in order to find a suffix with which to produce abstract nouns. All they did was broaden the scope of application for an existing suffix. The only new element introduced was the idea that this suffix might be applied to terms that were not nouns – such as huwa (a pronoun), kayfa and rnd (question particles) – and even to semi-verbs such as ays[37] (there is, existence) and laysa (there isn't, negation of existence, it is not the case), to create aysiyyah (being) and laysiyyah (non-being), respectively,[38] or to terms such as ghayr (other), to create ghayriyyah (otherness).[39]

The use of the suffix -iyyah as a means to generate abstract nouns is discussed by several leading philosophers of medieval Islam, primarily by al-Farabl (fourth/tenth century) and Ibn Rushd/Averroes (sixth/twelfth century). Both al-Farabl and Ibn Rushd discussed this issue in relation to the term huwiyyah, derived from the pronoun huwa in order to render the Greek ousia (being).

Al-Fárábí states, for example, that -iyyah is the form of the masdar of certain nouns that are both non-declinable and prototypal[40] (fa-inna hadhaí-shakl fii-'arabiyyah huwa shakl masdar kull ism kdn mithdlan awwat" wa-lam yakun lah tasrif), such as insdniyyah (humanity), which is the abstract noun of the non-declinable prototype insdn.[41] This is a somewhat surprising statement, since masdar generally refers to the infinitive (or verbal noun), and it hardly seems appropriate to categorize a noun such as insdniyyah as an infinitive. However, given that another (more essential)

meaning of the term masdar is 'source', the statement begins to make sense.

In al-Fárábí's view, although we arrive at the abstract concepts (which are second order concepts) during a (chronologically) later stage in the language acquisition process, these forms are nevertheless ontologicallyprior to the first order concepts. It is in this sense, then, that the form insdniyyah can be considered a 'source' (masdar) for the term insdn, just as the second order concept tül (tallness, length) is ontologically prior, in al-Fárábí's view, to the particular tawil (tall, long), although we first become acquainted with the latter and later abstract to the former.

Therefore, al-Fárábl can state (as he does in his Kitdb al-hurüf ("Book of Letters") that when the suffix -iyyah is added to substantive nouns (both non-declinable and prototypal), it produces a masdar (or 'source'). The examples given by al-Fárábl to illustrate this point are: insdn (man) from which insdniyyah (humanity) is derived; himdr (donkey) from which himdriyyah (donkeyness) is derived; and rajul (man) from which rujüliyyah (manhood) is derived. Al-Fárábl seems to take the liberty of identifying "abstract nouns" with masddir because this serves his purpose. Having once been coined, the abstract nouns, as second order terms that correspond to second order concepts, become sources (masddir) from which everything else (linguistically speaking) is derived.

Averroes, as mentioned above, also addresses this question in his Tafsir md ba'd al-tabi'ah ("Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics").[42] In essence, he repeats al-Fárábí's explanation that huwiyyah was derived from the pronoun huwa following the pattern of deriving (abstract) nouns from

nouns. It is unusual for the Arabic language to derive a noun from a pronoun, and Averroes explains that it was done in this case in order to replace the term mawjüd used by the translators (mainly in the Posterior Analytics). It is clear that Averroes, like al-Fárábí before him, speaks of this pattern of derivation as a natural phenomenon in the Arabic language. Neither suggests that the -iyyah suffix is modelled on similar suffixes in other languages.

The use of the suffix -iyyah was only one of several linguistic devices used by the translators of that period in order to expand the Arabic
language to encompass the new ideas pouring into the Arab world from the Greek and other cultures. These included borrowing, altering the meaning of existing terms, abbreviating, producing compound terms and creating new terms from existing roots.[43]

Borrowing terms from other languages (al-ta'rib, i.e. "arabicizatton" or al-mu'arrab, the "arabicized")

This method, which refers to the generation of arabicized words or al-dakhil (foreign or strange [words and expressions]),[44] was already in use during the pre-Islamic period, primarily involving borrowings from Aramaic, Hebrew and Persian. The Qur'an itself includes several terms the origin of which can be traced back to other languages.[45]

This fact In itself apparently legitimized the method of borrowing terms from other languages as the need arises.

During the philosophical and scientific movement in Islam, many more loan-words were introduced into Arabic from Greek and Persian, primarily in the fields of pharmacology and medicine. According to Josef Bielawski, Greek and Persian loan-words "are particularly numerous among the names of plants and mineralogy, but very rare in the [fields] of jurisprudence, philosophy, theology and philology".[46] Words – such as jawhar ("substance", borrowed from the Persian), falsafah (from the Greek philosophia),[47] safsatah (from the Greek sophistry), hayiild' (from the Greek hyle, meaning "matter", ustuqussdt (from the Greek for "elements") and qdtTghuriydt (from the Greek for "categories") – became assimilated into works of the Islamic philosophers, even when an Arabic term had also been coined for them.[48] Once a term was assimilated, the rules of derivation for pure Arabic terms were applied to the borrowed term as well.[49]

The pros and cons of accepting loan-words into Arabic was discussed by Slbawayh, the second/eighth-century founder of the study of Arabic grammar, in his definitive work entitled al-Kitdb.[50] The topic was taken up again by grammarians of the fourth/tenth century (al-Slrafi's view that the philosophers were building a language within a language was meant to address precisely this point) and is still a subject of debate today. Apart from purely linguistic considerations (such as the suitability of borrowed words for Arabic nominal or verbal patterns), the assimilation of foreign words into Arabic has social, religious and political implications that have occasioned strong objections, then as now.

It is worth noting that many of the "arabicized" words (i.e., those accepted as loan-words) were modified in order to fit certain noun or verbal patterns.[51] For example, the term falsafah (derived in the Classical period of Islam from the Greek philosophia) was adjusted to fit the pattern falalah (like 'arqalah (impeding, hindering), and the term dirharrv'[52] (derived from the Greek drakhme) was modified to fit the pattern fi'ltd (like 'isba (a finger)). Other terms, however, were modified without accommodation to an existing Arabic pattern (for example, jughrdfid (derived from the Greek geo graphia, meaning literally earth description-, the combination of the two words produces geographia, i.e., geography)), and still others were borrowed without any change whatsoever even though they did not follow any Arabic pattern (for example, asturldb or usturldb (astrolabe)).[53]

As we shall see, the derivation of new terms from Arabic roots generally follows a certain pattern native to the Arabic language. This does not mean, however, that every word that fits such a pattern is an Arabic (i.e., non-borrowed) term; as noted above, some loan-words were adjusted to fit Arabic patterns. Rather, we can conclude only that every term that does not fit an Arabic language pattern is an arabicized term [mu'arrab]. This is the basis for one of seven criteria developed by the Arab grammarians to distinguish between Arabic words and foreign words adopted by the Arabs: "If a term does not fit one of the Arabic nominal patterns [awzdn al-asmd' al-'arabiyyah], such as ibrisam [the term should be considered foreign]."[54]

Altering the meaning of existing terms (al-majazj

This technique takes an existing Arabic term and modifies or expands it to encompass a new meaning. In essence, this method is what Arab grammarians refer to as majdz (figurative speech), which basically means going beyond the original (usually concrete material) meaning of a term and attaching to it a new meaning.[55] Whereas in the previous method \ta'rib\ terms are borrowed from other languages to be used generally within the same discipline, this method often involves borrowing terms from the same language to be used in different disciplines. Examples of this include hadd (essential definition), rasm (description), jins (genus), naw' (species), 'arad (accident), fasl (differentia), madhhab (discipline) and 'irq (vein). Each of these terms existed before the transmission of Greek philosophy and science to the Muslims, but all were given new – and in most cases, technical – meanings to augment or complement any existing meaning(s).

The term hadd, for example, acquired the technical logical meaning conveyed by the Greek term horos. Both terms – the Greek horos and the Arabic hadd – mean in ordinary usage "boundary", "border" or "limit". But just as the Greek term acquired the meaning of the Aristotelian notion of "essential definition" (i.e., a definition by means of a thing's "essential difference" and its "genus", two further terms that acquired technical
meanings of their own), the parallel Arabic term also became identified with the technical concept of "essential definition". This type of definition is based on the notion of defining

objects by delineating the boundaries that separate them from one another in an essential way as opposed to a non-essential way (i.e., by means of their "accidental properties"). In this latter (non-essential) case the distinction between the objects is made through "description" (rasm) rather than through "definition".

Similarly, the term 'irq (pi. 'uruq), originally meaning "root of a plant", acquired the medical meaning of "vein", probably owing to analogy of form and function.

To provide yet another example, the verbal noun mantiq (logic) is derived from the root n-t-q, the basic meaning of which is "to speak". The term mantiq appears already in the Qur'an,[56] although not yet in its technical meaning as "logic". Yet as "logic" and "language" are so closely related, it was but a small cerebral step for the translators to assign the term its new technical meaning.[57]

Compound construction through abbreviation (naht ikhtizall/)[58]

The technique of fusing words together to produce new meanings is used to construct new terms in many languages (English, German and even modern Hebrew). In Arabic, one can distinguish two variations of this device, which I will term "abbreviated compounds" (naht ikhtizli) and "joined compounds" (naht bi-wasitdt al-tarklb al-mazji).

Strictly speaking, naht is the derivation of one term from two or more other terms (istikhrdj kalimah wahidah min kalimatayn aw akthar').[59] In some cases, naht involves a

truncation of the terms forming the composite. An example of this would be the abbreviation of certain recurrent (primarily religious) phrases, as in the reduction of Id hawt wa-la quwwaf ilia bi-Lldh ("There is no power and no strength save in God") to the verb hawlaqa (the act of pronouncing this phrase); or the reduction of bi-ism Alldhi al-rahmdn al-rahim ("In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful") to the verb basmalah (the act of pronouncing this phrase).[60] In this sense, then, naht is a kind of abbreviation, as the fourth/tenth-century grammarian Ibn Faris rightly observes,[61] and as such requires morphological changes in the original terms.

However, just as in borrowing a term from a foreign language (ta'rib) one should attempt to conform it to the verbal or nominal patterns of the Arabic language, so in constructing this type of abbreviated compound term (naht ikhtizdli), one must also try to follow Arabic language rules to the extent possible. These include:

1
To use in this process, as much as possible, original letters of the terms involved in this process.

2 If the derived term is a noun, it must agree with one of the noun patterns.

3 If the derived term is a verb, it must follow the pattern fa'lala or tafa'lala.[62]

As stated earlier, this type of abbreviated compound was reserved primarily for religious phrases, rather than to derive new scientific or philosophical terminology. The limited use

made of it was principally confined to expressions from the religious realm.

Compound construction through joining (naht bi-wasitat al-tarklb al-mazji)

Yet naht has a broader usage, as well. It can also refer to a phrase resulting from the combining of two terms without causing any morphological change to either. The resulting combination must be considered "one term [isrtfn, lit. 'a noun'] in terms of inflection and structure, whether the [combined] terms are of Arabic origin or arabicized".[63] Modern Arab linguists refer to this process as al-tarkib al-mazji (the compound construction), and we will follow them in treating this broader sense of naht as a separate category/[64]

A clear example of this type of derivation is the compound numbers (such as ithna 'dshara, lit. "two-ten", meaning "twelve"), but the scope of this method of word formation is much broader, including adverbs of time (such as sabdha masa'\ lit. "morning-evening", meaning "all the time", "non-stop"); adverbs of place (such as bayna bayn", lit. "between-between", meaning "in the middle").

This method was used extensively during the translation period to translate literally philosophical terms that represented similar compound terms in the original language (generally, Greek). The majority of these compound terms consisted of a negation particle along with a noun. Examples

include Id-wujiid (non-existence); Id-nihdyah [lit. "no-end", meaning "infinity"]; al-ghayr mahsus (the intangible); al-ghayr mutaharrik (the immobile); al-ghayr maddi (the immaterial).

However, there are also examples of compound expressions without negation particles, as well. An example would be rnd bad al-tabl'ah (lit. "that which is beyond nature", meaning "metaphysics").[65]

Derivation or the creation of new terms from existing roots (ishtiqaqj)

Important as they were, the methods thus far discussed – formation of abstract nouns (using the suffix -iyyah), use of borrowed terms (ta'rib), semantic change of existing words (majdz), abbreviation (naht) and (the closely related method of) creating compound terms (tarkib mazjt) - were used only for a relatively limited number of terms. These methods alone would not have been able to produce the full range of new technical terms needed to convey ideas transmitted from Greek science and philosophy without "building a language within a language", the charge levelled by the Arab grammarians against the logicians. The translators of the second/eighth, third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries, realizing the limitations of the methods previously discussed,[66] ultimately made a maximum use of the unique richness of the Arabic language in terms of derivahility. The Arabic language, like other Semitic languages and even more so, offers the means to derive from any given root a significant number of related words according to patterns. This

characteristic of Arabic, called ishtiqdq (derivation), has been the single most productive method used by Arab philologists, past and present, to meet the influx of new terminology and ideas through "neologisms". We will provide two extended examples to illustrate this method and then list some of the most common patterns employed to produce new terms during the Classical period of philosophical and scientific activity in Islam.

Firstly, the term qiyds (syllogism) is a verbal noun derived from the root q-y-s, the basic meaning of which is "to measure" or "to compare". As the Aristotelian syllogism basically "measures" or "compares" against each other premises considered to be true, in order to reach a conclusion, the verbal noun qiyds ("measuring" or "comparing") was selected to convey the technical meaning of "syllogism". Qiyds, while used in logical contexts to render "syllogism", was employed by both Arab grammarians and Muslim jurists in their respective fields to mean "analogy".

Secondly, the term istildh or its synonym mustalah[67] is derived from the root s-l-h the basic meaning of which is "to be suitable" or "to be in good condition, without defects". The eighth form of this verb (istalaha) means "to agree, accept, adopt". The verbal noun of the eighth form (istildh) and the passive participle (mustalah) were both adopted to mean "a technical term", since it is something agreed upon and accepted.

This derivation method sometimes employed a given pattern to derive terms of the same category. The pattern fudl', for example, was used to derive terms relating to sickness sudd'

("headache", from s-d-', meaning "to split, to separate"); zukdm ("cold", from z-k-m, meaning "to cool, get cold"), duwdr ("dizziness", from d-w-r, meaning "to turn around" or "to move in a circular motion"), and su dl, ("cough", from suala, "to cough").

Similarly, as the tenth form (istaf'ala) often expresses "taking", "seeking" or "asking for" that which is referred to by the simple (first) form, the verbal noun of this form (istif'dl) was used in various disciplines to deduce terms expressing the concept of "seeking". In logic, for example, the term istiqrd' (induction) was derived according to this principle from the root q-r w. The tenth form of this root (istaqrd') means: to pursue things and examine their conditions and properties.[68] Consequently, the verbal noun of this form, isfitird', was chosen to mean "induction" since in induction "one examines the individual cases in order to reach an affirmative universal judgment".[69] Similarly, istintdj (reaching a conclusion) was derived from n-t-j (to result).[70] The medical term istisqd' (derived from saqd which means "to water" or "to give to drink") was coined to refer to the disease "hydropsy" (or "dropsy"), involving an excessive accumulation of fluid in the cellular tissues.

Masddir (verbal nouns) of various forms were used in the classical period to derive new terms, such as khitdbah (rhetorics), a verbal noun derived from the root kh-t-b, the basic meaning of which is to "give a speech", "to preach"; and jadal (dialectics), a verbal noun derived from the root j-d-l, the basic meaning of which is "to twist [a rope] firmly; to braid". This term acquired the meaning "dialectics" (jadal), since in dialectical discussions it is "as though each of the two parties twisted the other from his opinion: or, as some say, it

originally means the act of wrestling, and throwing down another upon the jaddlah (or ground)". '[71] Similar analysis leads us to the rationale behind assigning new technical, philosophical meanings to already existing verbal nouns such as tahltl (analysis), from the second form of h-a-l-l (i.e., hallala, "to resolve into the component parts of a thing"), tarklb (classification), from the second form of r-k-b (i.e., rakkaba, "to construct, assemble, to put together"), and qismah (division), from the root q-s-m (the basic meaning of which is "to divide, split, separate").[72]

The Second Confrontation with Tfie West – Colonization by Western Powers

For historical and internal reasons, the details of which go beyond the scope of this chapter, the Arab/Islamic culture lost its momentum after the ninth/fifteenth century and began to decline in terms of scientific and intellectual achievement and development. This stagnation continued throughout, and perhaps was further enhanced by, the Ottoman rule of most of the Arab world for over four centuries. The occupation of Egypt by the French in 1798 and later by the British in 1882, however, marked the beginning of a new phase of confrontation
between the Arabs and the West, a confrontation with both political and intellectual dimensions.

Given the influx of new concepts and terms entering from other cultures over the past two hundred years, contemporary Arab linguists, like their counterparts from the Classical

period, have attempted to coin equivalent new terms in Arabic using various methods. They have essentially employed the methods elaborated upon earlier in this chapter: borrowing words from other languages, modifying the meaning of existing terms, abbreviating, forming compound terms and deriving new words from existing roots. As in the Classical period, the latter method has experienced the most frequent use, whereas borrowing has been the method least often employed.

Borrowing terms from other languages ('al-ta'ribj ')[73]

It is interesting to note that – in contrast to other Middle Eastern languages, such as Persian, Turkish, Hebrew and even colloquial Arabic written Arabic (or what has become known as Modern Standard Arabic) has been very conservative when it comes to accepting borrowed terms (loan-words).[74] This can probably be attributed to cultural/ religious as well as political considerations. In the words of Charles Issawi:

the intense Arab nationalism has, quite rightly, fastened on the Arabic language as the main bond – together with Islam – holding the otherwise rather diverse Arab peoples and the one differentiating them from their non-Arab Muslim neighbours and has further strengthened their attachment to and jealousy for their language; hence any borrowing that might increase the diversity of the Arabic used in various parts is looked upon with deep suspicion as a disruptive factor.[75]

None the less, many terms have been borrowed by the Arabs in the thirteenth/nineteenth and fourteenth/twentieth centuries. Among the first wave of European terms the Arabs encountered in the modern period were terms of a primarily political nature. Borrowed political terms include dimuqràtî/ dïmuqrâtiyyah (democratic/democracy); barlamân (parliament); qimsullqunsidiyyah (consul/consulate); diktâtür/ diktâtürî (dictato r/dictatorial). ʿ[76]

Following closely on the heels of these political loan-words were borrowed terms from Western science and technology, such as nulyu (radio); tilfizion (television); sïnamâ (cinema); film (film); indyü (video); talafon (telephone); kombütar (computer); and the names of the chemical elements, such as uksiijin (oxygen) and haydrujîn (hydrogen).

Arabic terms coined to replace many of these loan-words were either rejected or used interchangeably with the foreign term they were meant to replace. The term mimât, for example, coined to replace telfizion, was totally ignored by the speakers of the language, as well as by those using the written language; whereas hâtif, coined to replace talafun, has managed to exist alongside its foreign counterpart.[77] The borrowed term kumbütar has evinced itself particularly resistant to supplantation by indigenous Arabic substitutes. JamTl al-Malâi'kah documents as many as ten suggested replacements for the tenacious term, ranging from al-'aql al-iliktroni (lit., "the electronic mind") to al-nazzdmah (lit., "the machine that organizes", according to the fa"âlah pattern discussed under "Derivation" generated below).[78]

Altering or expanding the meaning of existing terms

The second method of semantically modifying existing words[79] has also been employed during the modern period. According to Bernard Lewis, Arabic made much "use of an important new vocabulary coined by the Ottoman scholars, officials and journalists".[80] These were often words of Arabic origin adapted by the Ottomans for use in translating terms of European origin and later on re-adopted back into Arabic, gaining virtually universal acceptance in their newly acquired meanings. Examples of such terms include jumhiiriyyah (republic), qawmiyyah (nationality), ishtirdki (socialist), iqtisadi (economic), khdrijiyyah (foreign affairs), dakhiliyyah (domestic or internal affairs), and baladiyyah (municipality).[81]

Examples of other terms produced by this means include hukumah (government),[82] azmah (classical meaning, "shortage or famine"; modern meaning, "crisis (political or economic)"); muharrik (originally used to express the Aristotelian term "prime mover" or "God" as the first cause; modern meaning, "motor or engine"); dharr (originally, "small particles"; modern meaning, "atoms").[83]

The formation of compound terms

The method of producing compound terms in its broader sense (i.e., tarkib mazji, rather than naht) has actually gained momentum during the modern period. Whereas in the Classical period only isolated compound terms were produced

by means of this method, a relatively long list of compound terms has been compiled in the modern period. Examples include: la-silki (wireless); al-'aql al-ld wd'i (the subconscious mind); al-ashi"ah fawq al-banafsajiyyah (lit., "the rays that are above the violet", i.e., "ultraviolet rays").

The above examples closely resemble those presented in this same category for the Classical period, i.e., they represent literal translations of foreign compound terms. It is worth noting, however, that a new trend has appeared in the modern period representing non-literal, which is to say, conceptual translations of new or foreign terms. The more conceptually (i.e., non-literally) translated compounds rely heavily on a powerful construct in Arabic called idafah, which suggests through the positioning of two nouns in a sentence (or compound) a relationship of possession between the second and the first. Examples of these more conceptually translated compounds include 'ilm al-nafs ("science of the soul", i.e., "psychology"); 'ilm al-ijtimd' ("science of society", i.e., "sociology"); marad al-nafs (lit., "sickness of the soul", i.e., "mental illness"); natihat al-sahab (lit., "that which butts against the sky", i.e., "skyscraper"); jawaz safar (lit., "permit to travel", i.e., "passport"); and many more.

Derivation or the creation of new terms from existing roots

Just as in the Classical period, however, ishtiqdq (derivation of new terms from existing roots according to certain patterns) has been the main method used by modern Arabic speakers to generate new terms. There follow illustrations of

two of the more common patterns in current use.[84] Firstly, the pattern fa "dlab, the basic meaning of which is "capable of doing", is employed in the feminine form to indicate "instruments capable of doing". Thus, thalldjah (refrigerator) is derived from th-l-j (snow); ghawwdsah (submarine) is derived from gh-w-s (diving). Second is the pattern mifal, the basic meaning of which is "to perform the act involved in the meaning of the root". Thus, from the verb sa'ida (to ascend) the term mis 'ad (lift, elevator) is derived; from the verb jahara (to reveal, make public, or make known) the term mijhar (microscope) is derived.

Contemporary Debates Concerning the Future of the Arabic Language

This concludes our discussion of the methods by which new terms have been generated in the Arabic language, past and present. There are, however, further topics relating to the development of the language that are relevant to the modern period but were not really at issue during the Classical period.

Although the French occupation of Egypt lasted only about three years, European influence spread rapidly in Egypt and later throughout the rest of the Arab world. Muhammad All, a Turk sent with Ottoman
forces to battle the French forces in Egypt, ruled the country between 1805 and 1848. During these years, he instituted scientific and social reforms aimed at improving the economy

and the standard of living in Egypt. His modernization plans occasioned the first real encounter with Western civilization in the modern era, a turning point in terms of the Arabs' self-esteem and their view of their own culture. Since that time, the Arabs have been literally overwhelmed militarily, politically and technologically by the West.

The Arabs' political and military impotence and their social backwardness have prompted serious questions and inquiries concerning the ability of the Arab-Islamic culture to cope with the challenges of the modern period, marked as it is by a clear superiority of the West. A major task Arab intellectuals have set for themselves is that of divining solutions for their peoples' predicament. These attempts have in turn led to divisions within the Arab intellectual community, the effects of which go far beyond the intellectual realm.

The debates that have taken place regarding the Arabic language and its ability to reflect the scientific and technological innovations of the modern period clearly illustrate these deep divisions. San al-Husrl (1882–1968), a leading member of one of the intellectual factions and regarded as the spiritual father of Arab nationalism, summarizes these current philological debates in his al-Lughah as follows:

Whereas some Arab philologists go to the lengths of declaring VI rabiyyah to be the richest language in the world, other [Westernized] authors go to the other extreme, asserting that Arabic is incapable of adopting the scientific terminology necessary for our generation. We share neither of these extremes.[85]

Al-Husrl himself represents a third trend between the two extremes, which calls for modernization of the Arabic language, roughly along the lines adopted during the medieval period.[86]

Yet contemporary debates concerning the Arabic language centre not only on the question of how to coin or incorporate new terminology into the existing linguistic network but also on the problem of how to reduce or eliminate the degree of alienation that exists between the language and its speakers. For almost any language, there is a more or less pronounced dichotomy between the language as it is spoken and the language as it is written. For Arabic, the gap between the two levels more closely resembles a chasm. Spoken Arabic consists of a set of widely differing (and in some cases mutually unintelligible) regional dialects, whereas written Arabic is essentially the language of the Qur'an. A major challenge faced by contemporary Arab linguists, then, is to devise means for narrowing the gap between Vt mm iyyah (the spoken language) and fushd (the written language).

Prominent intellectuals – such as the Egyptians Taha Husayn (1889–1973), Salamah Musa (1887–1958), and Yusuf Idris (1927–1991); and the Lebanese Mikhail Nu'aymah (1889–1987) and Anis Frayhah – strongly suggest that the gap between the spoken and the written language must be closed so that Arabic speakers may express themselves in a language closer to their hearts, a language they use every day. Taha Husayn, for example, has repeatedly demanded that the written form of Classical Arabic, as well as its grammar, should be simplified in order to make it accessible to everyone in Egypt and the Arab world in general.[87] Salamah Musa, too, has argued that the language should be simplified,

lest it become a language of monks, which only a few people know and use.[88]

Others, such as Mikhail Nu'aymah, have gone even further, demanding that plays, for example, should be "written" in the spoken language. Otherwise one is artificially imposing a language on the characters that real people would not use.[89] Yusuf Idris has actually written many of his plays and short stories in colloquial Arabic, precisely because he believes that Classical (or written) Arabic is an alien tongue to the majority of his readers and that it would be unrealistic to impose on the characters in his drama and fiction a language they would not use in daily life. Idris was the first writer in the Arab world to follow the practice of using both colloquial Arabic (for the language of his characters) and classical Arabic (in his descriptive matter) in one and the same story.

Those who oppose the use of colloquial Arabic in writing are not only anxious about violating the purity of the language of the Qur'an, but also fear the political consequences of abandoning Classical Arabic as the written language. Since the Arabic language is perhaps the single most important aspect of the Arab identity, the promotion of colloquial Arabic would undermine the potency of this unifying factor. The future of the Arab countries, these intellectuals fear, would be similar to that of Europe, where many languages, and consequently many nations, emerged with the disappearance of Latin as a living language.[90] Even those who advocate the use of colloquial Arabic in writing are aware of this dilemma [al-'uqdah, lit., "the complexity") and seem unable to offer a solution to it.[91]

There is no doubt that the linguistic issues facing the Arab world today are exceedingly complex, with compelling arguments on both sides. It is too soon to tell what course the future development of the Arabic language will take, but one thing is sure, the philosophers, theologians and other important thinkers for whom Arabic is a native tongue will be in the forefront of the debate, just as they were during medieval times. They must help guide the community of speakers of the language in preserving their rich linguistic heritage, while also contributing to and benefiting from the fact that they are citizens of a larger and rapidly evolving global community.

NOTES

1 I would like to acknowledge the invaluable assistance of my former teacher and mentor Wolfhart Heinrichs of Harvard University, who read a draft of this chapter and offered numerous insightful comments and suggestions, many of which have been incorporated in this final version.

2 Owing to space limitations, other important linguistic issues, such as the discussion of the nature and the origin of language (i.e., whether it is conventional or inspired) cannot be dealt with here. A summary of various views on these subjects in the writings of medieval Islamic intellectuals may be found in J. al-Dln al-Suyuti (n.d.): 7ff. For the origin of the term lughah (language), consult the Encyclopaedia of Islam, new edition, s.v. "Lughah", contributed by A. Hadj-Salah.

3 G. Endress (1977): 110.

4 Abu Hayyan al-Tawhidl (n.d.): 122, p. 15.

5 English translation w'ith an introduction by D. S. Margoliouth, "The Discussion between Abu Bishr Matta and Abu Sa'id al-Sirafi on the Merits of Logic and Grammar ", Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (1905): 79–129. For further details regarding this translation consult Muhsin Mahdl (1970): 55 n. 12.

6 Mahdi (1970); Gerhard Endress (1977) and (1986); A. El Amrani-Jamal, Logique Aristotelienne et grammaire Arabe: Etude et documents (Paris, 1983). Concerning the general attitude to logic and science in medieval Islam, one should consult Goldziher's "Mawqif Abl al-Sunnah al-Qudama' Bi-iza' 'Ulum al-Awa'il" in Abd al-Rahman Badawl (ed.) al-Turdth al-yfmdni fi-l-haddrah al-isldmiyyah (Cairo, m-mahdah al-misriyyah 1940): 123–72.

7 Ibid. 108. 10–12. A very similar view was held by the fifth/ eleventh-century philosopher Ibn Slna (980–1037). See, for example, his al-Najdt (Book of Deliverance), ed. al-Kurdi (Cairo, 1938): 3.

8 Imtd': 114, 11. 6–9.

9 Ibid-. 129, 1. 2.

10 Ibid.: 109, 11. 9–10.

11 Ibid.: 109, 11. 11–13.

12 Ibid.: 109, 11. 14–16.

13 Ibid.: 109, 1. 16; 110, 11. 1–3.

14 Ibid.: 110, 11. 7–10.

15 Ibid.: 113, 11. 13–16.

16 Ibid.: 115, 11. 1–2.

17 Ibid.: Ill, para. 11, where he states, "You are not, therefore, asking us [to study] the science of logic, but rather to study the Greek language." Al-Slraff s position on this issue represents what some contemporary philosophers of language call a "naturalistic" (rather than a "constructionistic") point of view and can be summed up in the words of Fred Sommers as follows: "The naturalist believes with Aristotle and Leibniz that logical syntax is implicit in the grammar of natural language and that the structure attributed by grammarians to sentences of natural language is in close correspondence to their logical form" (Sommers (1982): 2).

18 Imta: 110, 11. 11–14.

19 Ibid.: Ill, II. 1–3.

20 Ibid., 11. 4–7.

21 Ibid.: 123, 11. 7ff.

22
Ibid.: Ill, 11. 13–14. Al-Sirafi seems here unaware of the close relationship between the Byzantine Greek spoken by his contemporaries (al-riimiyyati) and the ancient Greek of Aristotle and his contemporaries (al-yundniyyah).

23 Ibid.: 112, 11. 5–6. The translation of this particular passage is by Muhsin Mahdl (1970): 67.

24 Ibid.: 112, 11. 7–10. See Mahdl (1970): 67.

25 Ibid.: 113, 11. 4ff.

26 Ibid.: 113, 11. 8ff.

27 At least this is the picture painted in al-Tawhldl's description of this debate. At various junctures, in response to particularly incisive points made by the grammarian Abu Sa'ld al-Slrafl, the logician Matta "was bewildered" (Imta: 114, 1. 5) or "was troubled and hung his head and was choked by his saliva" (ibid. 119, 1. 2), unable to produce counter-arguments.

28 Utterances not in the sense of speech-acts but rather of composite utterances, i.e., utterances in the context of sentences.

29 Witness the following blunt admission by Abu Bishr Matta in the debate that took place between him and the grammarian al-STrafi: "This is grammar, and have not studied grammar "(Imta -. 114, 1. 6). This position was also defended by Avicenna. Cf. Ibn Slna (1970): 5. Elsewhere Avicenna says that logicians need natural languages only in order to be able to address logical issues and to communicate with others about these issues. Logic, according to him, does not deal with utterances per se because these are only a tool and can theoretically be replaced by some other device (hi lab) through which one can express logical relations without the mediation of a natural language. Ibn Sina (1952): 22.

30 Abu Nasr al-Farabl was the most thorough and systematic among the second generation of Arab logicians in analysing the relationship between Arabic grammar and Greek logic. For further details concerning al-Farabl's views on this issue, see S. Abed (1991), introduction and conclusion.

31 Imta-. 122, 1. 15.

32 Although the details of this argument exceed the scope of this chapter, let one example suffice to demonstrate, namely, the issue of the copula. The tenth-century logician and student of Matta, Abu Nasr al-Farabl (258/870–339/950), conducted a logical analysis of the language that led him to assume the implicit presence of the copula in Arabic sentences where it would naturally not be present, such as "Zayd (yujad) 'adit"''. In making this assumption, he was following Aristotle's assertion that every sentence must have a verb. Al-Farabl knew, of course, that Aristotle's rule did not accurately describe the Arabic language. He therefore applied the rule only to the logical form of the sentence, arguing that the copula exists in the logical structure of every Arabic sentence.

33 By "scientific activity" I here refer to activity in the natural sciences. As early as the eighth century, legal reasoning and linguistic thinking were already quite well developed.

34 W. Wright (1975), 1. 149, 165: "The feminine of the relative adjective serves in Arabic as a noun to denote the abstract idea of the thing, as distinguished from the concrete thing itself, e.g., ilahiyyah (divine nature), insdniyyah (humanity)."

35 For a discussion of the origin and meaning of this term, see R. M. Frank (1956): 181–201.

36
For example, L. Massignon and P. Kraus, "La formation des noms abstraits en arabe", Revue d'Etudes Islamiques (1934): 507ff., where it is suggested that "this suffix was copied from the Syriac, which in turn adopted it from the Greek =m, the common suffix denoting abstraction". S. M. Afnan (1964), from whom the last quotation was adopted, suggests (p. 32) that the inclination of the Arabs to form abstract nouns of the -iyyah variety is likely to have been influenced by Pahlawi and Persian. The holder of this opinion bases his assumption on the observation that there are far more abstractions in the writings of philosophers of Persian origin (probably a reference to the works of philosophers such as Ibn Slna and Mulla Sadra) than in those of philosophers of Arab origin. Fie also observes that in Persian the mere addition of the suffix -f makes a perfectly good abstraction out of almost any word in the language. This last observation is supported by al-Farabl, who in Kitdb al-huruf ("Book of Letters") (1970: 111, 1. 82) illustrates this linguistic feature of the Persian language by means of the terms hast (is) and mardum (men), each of which becomes an abstract noun through the simple addition of the Persian suffix -T. See Abed (1991): 155fif. for a reply to these views.

37 This is a rare word in Arabic philosophical terminology; see, however, al-Kindi's use of this term in Rasd'il al-Kindt al-falsafiyyah ("Al-Kindl's Philosophical Essays") (1950: 182); see also Abu Rldah's commentary on this term (ibid.).

38 These too are rare; see, however, the list produced by al-Slrafi in his critique of the philosophers, in al-Tawhldl (n.d.): 123, 11. 8–10. Al-Slrafi mentions in that list abstract terms such as hdliyyah, which is derived from the question particle hdl ("is it the case?"; an interrogative particle introducing direct and indirect questions), and ayniyyah (derived from ayna, which is also a question particle meaning "where?").

39 See al-Kindl (1950): 174–5.

40 For the meaning of mithdl awwal (prototype), consult F. W. Zimmermann (1981): xxxf, cxxxvi; and Abed (1991): 146ff.

41 Al-Farabl (1970): 112, 1. 83.

42 Ibn Rushd (1938–48), 2: 557.

43 For a detailed study of these methods, consult J. Bielawski (1956): 263–320.

44 Cf. al-Jawa llql (1867). The term al-dakhil is contrasted by al-Jawaliqi with al-Sarih (i.e., the pure [Arabic]), p. 3. There are also several relatively modern works dealing with this question. Cf. Al-Sayyid Adday Shir (1908); Tubya al-Halabl (1932).

45 The sixteenth-century scholar Jalal al-Dln al-Suyuti lists several Qur anic terms as foreign, mentioning (though not always accurately) their respective origin; al-Suyuti (n.d.): 1: 268. Later grammarians developed seven criteria through which to determine whether a word is of Arabic origin or

borrowed (ibid.: 270). For a comprehensive study of foreign words in the Qur'an consult A. Jeffrey (1938).

46 Bielawski (1952): 285.

47 More accurately, falsafah is an Arabic derivation from faylasitf which in turn is derived from the Greek via Syriac (philosophia); likewise safiatah in relation to sufistd'i, etc.

48 Falsafah = hikmalr, hayiild = maddah: qdtighiiriydt = maqtildt, etc.

49 For example, the past tense verb tafalsafa (philosophized) was derived from falsafah. See Bielawski (1952):

50
Slbawayh (1966–77), 4: 303ff.

51 Arabicized words, i.e., those accepted as loan-words from other languages, do not violate the "truth of the Kuran's being [altogether] Arabic; for when a foreign word is used by the Arabs, and made by them comfortable with their language in respect of desinential syntax and determinateness and indeterminateness and the like, it becomes Arabic". Lane (1980), under the term qustus (balance − arabicized from Greek). See the discussions on this issue in al-Suyutl (n.d): 268–9.

52 See Slbawayh (1966–77): 303.

53 Al-Suyutl (n.d.): 269–70. With the exception of dirham, however, the examples are not from al-Suyutl.

54 Ibid.: 270.

55 This is true of other related methods used by Arab grammarians and philologists, such as istiarah (metaphor), ittisa (extension, which is a subcategory of majdz), and tasdmuh (licence), all of which are used to expand the meanings of existing terms. Ibn Jinni, in his al-Khasd'is, for example, claims that terminology derived by majdz comprises most of the terms used in a language (al-Khasa'is, 2: 447). For al-Farabl's view of these concepts see Abed (1991): 171.

56 For example, "We have been taught the speech [niantiq] of birds" (27: 16). In two other passages in the Qur'an the verb ndtdqa is associated with "saying the truth": "Before us is a record which clearly speaks the truth [yantnq" bi'l-haqqY (23: 62); "This our record speaks about you with truth [yantuq" 'alaykum\" (45: 29).

57 Bielawski (1952): 278 classifies this term among the derived terms, rather than among the terms that have acquired new meaning.

58 Literally, "carving (usually a stone or a piece of wood)". Al-Suyutl (n.d.), 1: 482, quotes the following definition of al-manhut (passive participle of naht): "[A word is called] manhutah [carved] from two words just as the carpenter carves two pieces of wood and combines them into one."

59 1. Anis (1966): 71.

60 For further examples see Anis (1966): 72ff.

61 Ibn Faris (1977): 461. In his definition, Ibn Faris mentions only "two terms" rather than "two or more", and then adds that naht is "a kind of abbreviation 'ikhltStfr]".

62 M, Khalaf Allah Ahmad and M. Shawql Amin (eds) Kitdb fl usul al-lughah ("A Book Concerning the Principles of the (Arabic) Language") (Cairo, 1969): 49.

63 Ibid.: 52, 61.

64 Apparently this terminology is a latecomer to Arabic linguistics. It cannot be traced in the writings of Arab grammarians until the fourteenth century. See ibid. p. 58.

65 See Bielawski (1952): 284–5.

66 The method of "borrowing" has the further drawback of introducing non-Arabic elements into the Arabic language. This is something the Arabs tend to be uneasy about, as it may corrupt the purity of the language, which is after all the holy language of the Qur'an.

67 This example is analysed by Bielawski (1952): 278.

68 Lane (1980); s.v. q-r-'. See also al-Tahanaw! (1966), 5: 1229.

69 Ibid.

70 For further details, the reader is referred to Bielawski (1952): 279fif.

71

Lane (1980), s.v. jadal.

72 For the technical meaning of these last two terms see Abed (1991): 95–100.

73 One should distinguish here between two senses of the term tarib: "borrowing" as opposed to "arabicization". The first of these senses refers to the borrowing of terms from foreign languages for use in Arabic, usually with some adaptation to Arabic patterns. The second sense refers to a comprehensive change of the official language used in a country – from the tongue of the colonizers to that of the native Arab inhabitants. This second process – politically, as well as culturally motivated – is currently under way in the former French colonies of North Africa (Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco), which for decades have employed French as their official language but are now in the process of converting to Arabic. A similar conversion took place during the early days of the Arab empire when the Umayyads established Arabic as the official imperial language, replacing other languages then in use (such as Persian). See, for example, N. Ahmad (1986).

74 Charles Issawi studied the European loan-words in a Naglb Mahfuz trilogy and, on the basis of his findings, he evaluated "the Arabic response to the challenge of the foreign vocabulary by comparing it with that of three other Middle Eastern languages – Persian, Turkish, and Uzbek" (1967: 110–33). Issawi summarizes his study as follows (p. 128): "The conclusion of this study may be briefly stated. Modern Arabic has shown a very marked reluctance to take in European (or other) loan-words, Persian has been somewhat more receptive, Turkish has been very hospitable and Uzbek has been flooded with such words."

75 Ibid.: 110.

76 For a comprehensive study of political terms in Arabic in the modern period, see Ayalon (1989): 23–42.

77 This occurred also during the Classical period. Al-Suyutl, for example, devotes an entire chapter to "arabicized terms that have names in the language of the Arabs" (n.d.: 283–5).

78 J. al-Malaikah (1984): 52.

79 Bernard Lewis (1973): 285–6 refers to this method as "semantic rejuvenation or resemanticization", which he describes as follows: "This occurs where an old word, which may or may not be obsolete, is given, more or less arbitrarily, a new meaning different from those which it previously expressed."

80 Ibid.: 283.

81 Ibid.: 283–5. See also Ami Ayalon (1989): 23: "In meeting the challenge, the Arabs could largely benefit from the experience of their Turkish counterparts who, as rulers of the empire, were first to encounter European political ideas and to respond to the resultant linguistic needs."

82 See Lewis (1973): 286, for the semantic change in this case, as well as in the case of the term dustiir (constitution).

83 For a relatively detailed list, see Bielawski (1952): 294–5.

84 For further details, see Bielawski (1952): 294ff.

85 Quoted in Bassam Tibi (1990): 96.

86 This debate regarding the future of the Arabic language mirrors a deeper undercurrent of divisions in the Arab world concerning the future not only of the Arabic language but also of the Arabic culture in general. There are those who wish to transform the culture via cultural revolution, others who believe that the Arabic culture is "viable for modern life if only understood and interpreted better, and if certain of its elements are developed in light of modern needs and the experience of modern nations", and still others who seek "to return to the Islamic roots of their culture". For futher details, consult I. Boullata (1990): 3–4.

87 See, for example, his lecture Mushkilat al-i'rab ("The Problem of Declension"), delivered in 1955 before the Academy of the Arabic Language in Cairo (1981).

88 See, for example, his book al-Baläghah al-'asriyyah wa'l-lughat al-'arabiyyah "The Contemporary Art of Composition and the Arabic Language" (Cairo, 1964), particularly 43–6, "Al-Lugbah wa'l-mujtamd" (Language and Society").

89 See, for example, Mikha'il Nu'aymah (1967): 15.

90 See, for example, N. Ahmad (1986): 27.

91 See, for example, Nu'aymah (1967): 15–16.

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CHAPTER 53

Science

Osman Bakar

Introduction

The main aim of this chapter is to discuss the position of science in relation to philosophy as it has been viewed within the religious and intellectual culture of Islam. In other words, it is concerned primarily not with the history of science in Islamic culture, which is now popularly known as Islamic science, but rather with its philosophy, the writing of which, however, necessarily presupposes a sufficient knowledge of the latter.

By "philosophy" we mean falsafah or hikmah. As it has been commonly understood in Islamic philosophical tradition, either term is used to refer to a particular form of knowledge as well as in the sense of a generic noun comprising several disciplines. And by "science" we mean that domain of knowledge traditionally covered under the disciplines known among Muslim scholars as (1) mathematical sciences ('ulüm al-ta'lïm, or al-'ulüm al-riyâdiyyah) such as arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music and (2) natural sciences

(al-'ulüm al-tabï'iyyah), including physical sciences, biological sciences and cognitive sciences (faculty psychology).

In the Islamic intellectual tradition these groups of disciplines were collectively known by different names among different groups of scholars. Among philosophers and scientists who were mainly responsible for the cultivation of these sciences, the usual term used is philosophical sciences. Among religious scholars, however, various terms like ancient sciences, foreign sciences, intellectual sciences and non-religious sciences have often been used.

Each of these names reflects to a certain extent the philosophical or intellectual attitudes of individual scholars or schools who have adopted it towards those sciences. Moreover, although science was generally
presented as a branch of philosophy, there were many perspectives that shaped Muslim views concerning relations of: philosophy and science. Consequently, we will present here a broad spectrum of traditional Muslim views, representing various schools of thought, concerning the nature and characteristics of science, its epistemological paradigm and its role and function in relation to the goals of both individual and social life.

Science as a Branch of Philosophy

Martin Plessner has stated correctly that "a concern for the ancient sciences in Islam began long before the period of translations; the constant dialogue with Christians and the newly converted bearers of Hellenic culture could not fail to stimulate an interest in science".[1] Muslim interest in the Hermetic sciences of alchemy and astrology, both of which were closely allied to medicine, predates the Hunayn translation school by more than a century.

The Umayyads founded an astronomical observatory in Damascus as early as 700. During the second half of the second/eighth century, the second Abbasid caliph, al-Mansur, was known to have gathered a number of men of science in Baghdad, including physicians from Jundishapur in Persia and astronomers from India. The second/eighth-century works of the celebrated alchemist Jabir ibn Hayyan (d. c. 800) already displayed a sound familiarity with many aspects of pre-Islamic scientific knowledge.[2] As asserted by Nasr, "the Hermetic sciences were early integrated into the Shi'ite perspective".[3]

Notwithstanding all these early manifestations of Islamic scientific and philosophic interest, Muslims did not really begin to cultivate science in the form of complete academic disciplines until after the first translations into Arabic of older philosophical, scientific and medical texts inherited mainly from the Greeks but also from Indians and Persians. Al-Kindi (:. 185/801–260/873), the first Muslim to cultivate philosophy

and science in a serious and systematic manner, was also the first to define the epistemic position of science within the total scheme of philosophic knowledge.

It was on the basis of his firm belief in the possibility of a synthesis of Greek philosophical ideas and Islamic religious thought that al-Kindl sought to investigate the nature and scope of scientific knowledge, its philosophical foundation and the aims and methods of each of its various branches. In his work Ft aqsdm al-'ulum ("On the Divisions of the Sciences"), he reaffirms the Aristotelian division of philosophy into its theoretical and practical parts, and the position of science as a branch of theoretical philosophy.[4]

Consequently, an investigation into the nature of science has to be preceded by a similar kind of inquiry into the nature of philosophic knowledge. This is what al-Kindl did precisely in his treatise On First Philosophy (Fi'l-falsafah al-ula). There he begins by presenting falsafah as the highest form of human intellectual activity and of human knowledge. He defines philosophy as "knowledge of the true nature of things in so far as is possible for man".[5] Elsewhere, he defines it as "the knowledge of the eternal, universal things, of their existence, essence and causes.[6]

The two definitions are equivalent. By "the true nature of things" (al-ashya bi-haqaiqiha) al-Kindl means their existence, essence and causes, or, in short, their truths. The word haqq, which is the singular form of the word haqa'iq that he had used in the phrase, and which is abundantly found in the Qur'an, means both truth and reality. And the truth or reality of a thing refers to its existence, essence and causes. As al-Kindl himself expressed it, "we do not find the truth we

are seeking without finding a cause; the cause of the existence and continuance of everything is the True One [al-Haqq], in that each thing which has being has truth".[7]

Al-Kindl's definitions of philosophy were a restatement of those given by Plato, Aristotle, and their Alexandrian commentators. Plato speaks of philosophy as the activity of "becoming like God insofar as is possible for man". And Aristotle describes philosophy as "a knowledge of the truth" which he understands as being equivalent to the ultimate nature of things or the first principles of being.[8]

Science as an academic discipline with a special kind of inquiry and as a special kind of organized knowledge has its rational basis, ontological and epistemological, in the above conception of philosophy. This assertion at least holds true for the Peripatetic school of philosopher-scientists founded by al-Kindl and whose philosophy of science was further developed, systematized and articulated by al-Farabl and Ibn Sina. In this school, there are precise ontological and epistemological reasons for accepting mathematics and natural science and all their branches as parts of the philosophical sciences, and for maintaining the necessary link between science and philosophy, or more particularly the inseparability of science and metaphysics.

Al-Kindl maintains that "knowledge of the true nature of things includes knowledge of Divinity, unity and virtue, and a complete knowledge of everything useful, and of the way to it, and a distance from anything harmful, with precautions against it".[9] Philosophy thus includes metaphysics, the science of divine things, which falls under theoretical

philosophy, and ethics, the science of virtues and of useful and harmful things, which forms part of practical philosophy.

In al-Kindl's ontological scheme, we encounter several different divisions of beings. First, there is the broad twofold division of beings into
(1) material (al-jismdniyydt) and (2) immaterial entities. The latter he further divides into (2a) those things which have the property of being associated with matter but which are not matter in themselves, and (2b) those entities which have no matter and which are never joined to matter. As an example of immaterial objects belonging to class (2a) al-Kindi mentions in one instance geometrical shape[10] and in another instance he mentions the soul.[11]

Then there is another broad twofold division of beings into (1) divine and (2) created. The two divisions correspond to one another. In the first division, all beings belonging to class (1) and class (2a) are created while in the remaining class (2b) we have both created and divine beings. Similarly, beginning with the second division, we may arrive at the first. Divine beings are immaterial in the sense of (2b) and created beings are comprised of both material and immaterial entities.

In yet another division, al-Kindi divides beings into (1) the movables and (2) the immovables.[12] Here he identifies things which move with physical or material objects and things which do not move with immaterial entities. The three kinds of division of beings given by al-Kindi are in fact equivalent, and these represent different ways of looking at the anatomy of Reality. Any of the three divisions would be sufficient to provide him with the ontological criterion for accepting

metaphysics, mathematics and natural science as the main branches of theoretical philosophy.

Metaphysics deals with divine things, the immovables, or immaterial entities which are absolutely separable from matter. Natural science investigates material things, the movables, or created beings. Although the domain and scope of mathematics is left ambiguous, and the relation of mathematical objects to both metaphysics and natural science is left undetermined, al-Kindl's acceptance of mathematics as a branch of theoretical philosophy is implied in his reference to geometrical shape as an example of immaterial entities which have the property of being associated with matter.

Moreover, in mentioning geometrical shape and the soul as entities that are a kind of intermediate in nature between material things and absolutely immaterial entities, as seen from the point of view of their respective relations with matter, al-Kindi seems to entertain the idea of mathematics and psychology as two sciences occupying an intermediary position between natural science and metaphysics. However, not only is this idea left undeveloped, but al-Kindl's tendency to go for a more simplified twofold division of beings in which the "intermediate" immaterial objects are absorbed into metaphysical entities has led some scholars to the view that in his philosophy of science the domain of mathematics is hardly distinguishable from that of metaphysics.[13]

It was left to his successors, notably al-Farabl and Ibn Sina, to explore further the idea of mathematics as an intermediate science between metaphysics and natural science, to secure a stronger ontological foundation for mathematics and to remove certain ambiguities in al-Kindl's thought concerning

the relation between mathematics and the other two theoretical philosophical sciences.

Muslim philosopher–scientists were generally interested in the problem of classification of the sciences, especially the theoretical philosophical sciences, and in the discussion of the relative merits and positions of these sciences in the hierarchy of knowledge. Some, however, were more detailed than others in their treatment of the problem. But they shared many common views concerning the hierarchy of the philosophical sciences and the place of mathematics and natural science in that hierarchy.

For example, they all accept the idea that the philosophical sciences admit of degrees of excellence. And they all maintain that metaphysics is the most excellent philosophical science. According to al-Farabl, there are three criteria by means of which the hierarchy of the sciences may be established:[14]

The excellence of the sciences and the arts is only by virtue of one of three things: the nobility of the subject matter, the profundity of the proofs, or the immensity of the benefits in that science or art, whether these benefits are anticipated or are already present. As for the [science or art] which excels others because of the immensity of its benefits, it is like the religious sciences [al-'ulum al-shar'iyyah\ and the crafts needed in every age and by every nation. As for that which excels others because of the profundity of its proofs, it is like geometry [al-handasah]. As regards that which excels others because of the nobility of its subject matter, it is like astronomy ['ilm al-nujum]. Flowever, all these three things o

any two of them may well be combined in a single science such as metaphysics [al-'ilm al-ildhi].[15]

This passage tells us that there are three fundamental bases of hierarchically ordering the sciences, namely the ethical, the methodological and the ontological. The ethical basis pertains to the various degrees of usefulness of the sciences defined in terms of what they could contribute to the fulfilment of practical human needs, both individual and societal. This ethical basis is implied in al-Farabl's reference to the many practical benefits of the religious sciences and technology.

Next, the methodological basis has to do with the fact that the methods of discovering truths and of proving truth claims are more vigorous, reliable and thus more perfect in some sciences than in others. And this particular basis is implied in al-Farabi's example of geometry as
a science which is superior to many other sciences on account of the profundity of proofs (istiqsa al-bardhin) it employs. Among Muslim philosopher–scientists, as was the case among their Greek predecessors and even among the founders of modern science like Descartes, the rigour of geometrical proofs was generally admired as perfect.

Finally, there is the ontological basis. This basis arises from the fact that existents are hierarchically ordered. Some beings are more perfect than others on the scale of existence. There is, to borrow Arthur Lovejoy's expression, a "great chain of being" in the universe. When these beings of different degrees of perfection, or of "nobility" if we were to use ah Farabi's terminology, are investigated and studied in the different sciences, it results in the corresponding sciences having different degrees of excellence.

Al-Farabi mentions specifically astronomy as an example of a science which is considered more excellent than many other sciences when these are evaluated according to the ontological criterion. Astronomy fulfils the criterion of having a noble subject matter because it studies the most perfect of bodies, namely celestial bodies. Al-Farabi argues that celestial bodies have the finest and most excellent of whatever they have in common with terrestrial bodies. They have the best of shapes, which is the spherical and the best of visible qualities, which is light. Further, their motion is the best of possible motions, which is circular.

Although there is general agreement among the philosopher–scientists on the ontological criterion for dividing philosophy into theoretical and practical, and for further dividing theoretical philosophy into natural science, mathematics and metaphysics, they do not approach the problem of conceptualizing the ontological criterion in the same way. The differences in their approaches are most visible when it comes to the question of establishing the domains of natural science and mathematics and of delineating a clear boundary between them.

We have noted the fact that al-Kindi hardly discusses the nature of mathematical objects. He does not explain what is meant precisely by the expression "associated with matter" when referring to the class of immaterial entities that have the property of being associated with matter. We know that we can speak of this "association with matter" at different levels and as occurring in different modes. It is possible to distinguish, for example, between the property of possible association with any kind of matter and the property of necessary association with a specific kind of matter.

Let us consider the status of shape, the very example al-Kindi has given of immaterial entities that have the property of being associated with matter. Is there a distinction between shapes considered as mathematical objects and shapes that are treated as objects of natural science? Al-Kindi has left: this question unanswered. It was al-Farabl who first
attempted to define mathematical objects in terms of their special kind of relationship with matter. He specifies them as "things that can be comprehended and conceived irrespective of any material".[16] If, for example, the square is considered a mathematical object, it is because this shape or figure can be associated at the level of concrete things with different kinds of matter and yet it can be comprehended without reference to the specific matter to which it is joined.

In the extramental world of concrete things, we can find square objects made of wood, metal, paper and many other kinds of materials. Mathematics investigates the squareness of these square objects without being concerned with the materials out of which they are made. Squareness is an existent that can be comprehended and conceived irrespective of any material. It therefore satisfies the definition of mathematical objects as given by al-Farabl. What then constitutes the entire world of mathematical objects? Al-Farabl defines mathematics as the science whose subject matter is comprised of the genus of numbers and magnitudes. By magnitudes he means the geometrical entities, namely lines, surfaces and solids.

In his famous classification of the sciences given in a treatise entitled Ihsa' al-'ulum ("Enumeration of the Sciences"), he divides mathematics into seven branches. The branches are arithmetic, geometry, optics, astronomy, music, science of

weights and engineering or science of ingenious devices. No one before al-Farabl had ever given a classification of mathematics as comprehensive as this. This division raises interesting questions concerning the subject matter of mathematics and the problem of the relationship between mathematics and natural science.

What this sevenfold division of mathematics implies is that there are mathematical sciences which deal with physical bodies or concrete things as well. For example, optics deals with physical light and vision, astronomy with heavenly bodies such as the planets, and music with sound. How does al-Farabl justify his consideration of these three sciences as well as the science of weights and the science of ingenious devices as branches of mathematics when he has defined mathematics as the science whose subject matter is comprised of numbers and magnitudes and has also stated that mathematics "does not inquire into them as being in materials"?[17] Why are these sciences more worthy to be considered as mathematical sciences rather than as natural sciences?

Al-Farabl's justification may be summarized as follows. It is true that mathematics comprises the genus of numbers and magnitudes, but these entities are known to exist either as abstract or as concrete quantities. As abstract quantities, that is as pure numbers and magnitudes, they exist in the human mind as intelligibles that have been stripped of their accidental attributes and material attachments. As concrete quantities, they exist in or are associated with various kinds of material objects.

AI-Fârâbï's mathematics deals with numbers and magnitudes not only as pure and abstract quantities but also as entities which inhere in other beings. These "other beings" range from the celestial bodies, which he considers to fall outside the domain of natural science, to the natural bodies studied by natural science. Thus when he says that mathematics does not enquire into numbers and magnitudes as being in materials he must be referring to that part of mathematics which deals with pure quantities, namely theoretical arithmetic and theoretical geometry. However, as far as his other branches of mathematics are concerned, they study natural bodies only in so far as these bodies possess the mathematical "properties of measurement and orderly proportions, composition and symmetry" by virtue of the fact that either numbers or magnitudes or both are inherent in them.

For al-Fârâbl, the most fundamental of all mathematical objects are pure numbers, followed next by pure magnitudes. For this reason, he considers theoretical arithmetic and theoretical geometry to be the roots and foundations of all the sciences. His approach to the problem of defining the domain of mathematics is to start with pure numbers and magnitudes, which constitute its central domain, and then to investigate their presence in various kinds of things and how their presence results in those things acquiring such mathematical properties as measurement, orderly proportion, composition and symmetry.

On the basis of this investigation, al-Fàràbl comes to the conclusion that there are beings in which numbers and magnitudes are inherent essentially. What he means is that number and magnitude enter into the very definitions of these beings. This class of beings include light and the phenomena

of vision, the celestial bodies and melodies. To say that numbers and magnitudes enter into the very definitions of these beings is to say that their true natures can be known only mathematically. In this sense, these beings can be considered to attain the status of mathematical entities, and accordingly optics, astronomy and music are to be regarded primarily as mathematical sciences.

In al-Fârâbl's description of the various sciences, optics, which he considers to be a subdivision of theoretical geometry, is said to be concerned with the mathematical properties of light and vision; astronomy with the mathematical forms and properties of the heavens and also of planet earth, including its climatic zones; and music with mathematical proportions which characterize melodies and musical compositions. Al-Fârâbl is reaffirming here the Pythagorean idea of music as being essentially mathematical. As discovered by Pythagoras, the underlying nature of musical scales is mathematical. The definition of music as the science of proportions was generally accepted by Muslim philosopher–scientists.

It seems that even in the case of the remaining mathematical sciences – science of weights and mechanics (mechanical technology or
engineering) – although these sciences are concerned with material things in which numbers and magnitudes are not inherent essentially but in which they enter into certain relations with their physical properties, al-Farabl sees greater justification in treating them as mathematical sciences than as branches of physics. More specifically, he regards them as applied mathematics. His rationale is that the main basis of

existence of the two sciences is the application of arithmetic and geometry to certain kinds of physical problems.

In other words, the two sciences are viewed as having branched out of arithmetic and geometry, primarily the latter. This view was maintained by later classificationists of sciences like Qutb al-Dln al-Shlraz! (d. 712/1311) when he categorized the two as minor branches of mathematics in contrast to arithmetic and geometry which he described as its major branches.[18] Al-Farabl's science of weights deals with the principles of measurement of weights, the production of the balance as a scientific instrument for such a kind of measurement and the principles of movements of weights. All the principles in question are basically mathematical in nature.

His science of ingenious devices deals with "ways to make all the things happen whose 'modes of existence' were stated and demonstrated in theoretical mathematics". It employs mathematical principles in the design, construction and operation of various kinds of mechanical devices, gadgets and automata. The dimensions of the various parts of these engineering products and their interrelationships are based upon those mathematical principles. Moreover, such physical principles as the hydrostatic, aerostatic or mechanical that are embodied in these devices are usually defined in mathematical terms. For all these reasons, both the science of weights and mechanics have been included among the mathematical sciences.

There is a certain Pythagorean tendency in al-Farabl's approach to the problem of defining the domain of mathematics. His approach presupposes the idea that numbers

and magnitudes permeate the whole universe and that this permeation comes from above. This leads him to investigate numbers and magnitudes in their various modes of existence, and the corresponding mathematical properties, from their metaphysical existence in the cosmic mind (the active intellect) to their mental existence in individual human minds, and finally down to their concrete existence in natural bodies as well as artificial bodies produced through human will and art.

Al-Farabl's delineation of the scope and position of the mathematical sciences found wide and lasting acceptance in Islamic science. What makes his conception of mathematics still relevant today is the fact that there are contemporary scientists who contend that the universe revealed by twentieth-century science is very much mathematical in the sense he
has defined it. In the words of the British physicist, James Jeans, "the universe now appears to be mathematical … the mathematics enters the universe from above instead of from below".[19]

Similarly, we still find relevant today al-Farabi's idea of mechanical engineering as a mathematical science and the inclusion by Qutb al-Dln, about four centuries later, of several more engineering sciences as minor branches of mathematics in his classification of the sciences. Today, engineering sciences are no longer considered as branches of mathematics. However, it is interesting to note that, in modern engineering circles, engineering is usually described in terms of the application of mathematical processes to the solution of physical problems. This means that, even in the modern conception of engineering, it is hardly possible to

define it without making explicit reference to mathematical elements. Our modern world has not succeeded in offering a more satisfactory solution to the problem of the epistemic relation between mathematics and engineering than what has been presented in traditional Islamic philosophy of science.[20]

Perhaps the best attempt at distinguishing between the objects of mathematics and those of metaphysics on the one hand and between the objects of mathematics and those of natural science on the other came from Ibn Sina. In this attempt[21] Ibn Sina defines the ontological criterion underlying the distinctions between the three classes of objects of theoretical philosophy in terms of differences in their relations with either motion or matter, both in the human mind and in extramental reality. He understands "associations with motion and matter" as having one and the same meaning.

In the introductory part or Isagoge of his philosophical masterpiece, Kitdb al-shifd', perhaps the largest encyclopedia of knowledge ever written by an individual, Ibn Sina distinguishes the subject matters of natural science, mathematics and metaphysics from one another as follows:

The various kinds of sciences therefore either (a) treat the consideration of the existents inasmuch as they are in motion, both in cognitive apprehension [tasawwuran] and in subsistence, and are related to materials of particular species; (b) treat the consideration of the existents inasmuch as they separate from materials of a particular species in cognitive apprehension, but not in subsistence; or (c) treat the consideration of existents inasmuch as they are separated from motion and matter in subsistence and cognitive apprehension.

The first part of the sciences is natural science. The second is the pure mathematical science, to which belongs the well-known science of number, although knowing the nature of number inasmuch as it is number does not belong to this science. The third part is divine science [i.e. metaphysics]. Since the existents are naturally divided into these three divisions, the theoretical philosophical sciences are these.[22]

In Ibn Slnas ontological scheme, the three fundamental classes of existents are: those that are necessarily un mixed with motion and matter; those that afe necessarily mixed with motion and matter; and those that can mix with motion and matter but which can also have an existence separated from them. He mentions God and the soul as examples of existents belonging to the first group, which constitute the objects of metaphysics alone. The second class of existents, examples of which mentioned by him are humanity, horseness and squareness, is studied by natural science and mathematics. As for the third class of existents, Ibn Sina gives the examples of individual identity, unity, plurality and causality. It is this last group of existents which had been very little explored by Ibn Slnas predecessors as far as their status as the subject matters of the theoretical philosophical sciences is concerned.

With Ibn Sina came the clarification that all the three theoretical sciences share between them this last group of existents as objects of their inquiry. Although these existents can mix with motion and matter, they are treated as objects of metaphysical inquiry when they are regarded "inasmuch as they are the things they are", that is, when they are regarded in abstraction completely separate from matter as such. But when these existents are considered in their association with

matter, then, like the second class of existents which are necessarily mixed with motion and matter, they become objects of inquiry of mathematics and natural science.

Ibn Sina, however, has a way of distinguishing between the objects of these two sciences. They are treated as mathematical objects if they can be apprehended by the mind without looking at the specific matter and motion with which they are associated in the extramental world. Otherwise, they will be regarded as objects of natural science. Taking from Ibn Sina's own set of examples, existents like unity, plurality and causality are said to be investigated in natural science when that unity is considered inasmuch as it is an individual substance like fire or air, that plurality considered inasmuch as it is, for instance, the four elements (i.e. fire, air, water and earth), and that causality considered inasmuch as it is warmth or coldness. However, these same existents are viewed as objects of mathematics when that unity refers to the numerical one and that plurality refers to quantitative numbers greater than one on which we can perform arithmetical operations like addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, determination of square roots, cubing and so on.

These arithmetical operations themselves, which Ibn Sina calls "the states of a number regarded inasmuch as an accidental thing that has no existence except in matter has occurred to them"[23] form part of the world of mathematical objects. And finally, unity, plurality and causality will be investigated as objects of metaphysics when they are considered in total abstraction from matter. With specific reference to number, Ibn Sina states clearly in the passage quoted earlier that there is an aspect of it, namely, "the nature

of number inasmuch as it is number", which lies outside the domain of mathematics proper. Although he did not say in which science this meta-mathematical aspect of number is investigated, it is quite clear from his whole discussion that he considers it to be an object of metaphysical knowledge.[24]

Two other examples given by Ibn Slna help to clarify further the distinctions he makes between the objects of natural science, mathematics and metaphysics. Both squareness and the form of humanity, says Ibn Slna, cannot exist without matter, but whereas the former is a mathematical object, the latter is an object of natural science. This is because no special kind of matter is constitutive of the mathematical object and squareness clearly satisfies that condition. It is possible to know what squareness is without one having to pay attention to specific square objects or to some state of motion. In contrast, asserts Ibn Sina, one cannot understand the form of humanity or "man" without understanding that man is composed of flesh and bones.

The second example is the intellect. Ibn Slna maintains that the intellect in itself is a separate substance and is, therefore, an object of metaphysical inquiry. In fact, all Muslim philosopher–scientists maintain that celestial Intelligences, or what the Qur'an calls angels, are intellects (iiqfd) that can have an existence separated from matter and motion. But these intellectual substances can also mix with matter and motion as one finds in human beings. It is when this intellectual substance is considered inasmuch as it is in the soul, which in the Peripatetic perspective is a principle of motion, that it becomes an object of natural science. The intellect as it exists in the individual human soul is a principle of motion of the body. This example helps to explain why Ibn

Slna and his Peripatetic school of philosophy treat psychology as a branch of natural science.

The ontological foundation of science established by al-Farabl and Ibn Sina founds a secure place in the subsequent history of Islamic philosophy and science. Distinguished philosophers and scientists from among his later successors reaffirmed the truth and legitimacy of this foundation and accepted it as an integral part of the paradigm of Islamic science. In his popular encyclopedic work, Durrat al-tdj ("Pearls of the Crown"), modelled after Ibn Slna's Kitdb al-shifd' but written in the Persian language during the later part of the ninth/thirteenth century not long after the destruction of Baghdad and many other neighbouring centres of learning at the hands of the Mongols, Qutb al-Dln al-ShirazI, one of the leading scientists in the history of Islam, reproduced what must have been generally accepted definitions of mathematics and natural science well before his time.

Qutb al-Din defines mathematical objects as "those which cannot exist except in association with matter but which can be known without reference to matter".[25] He gives as examples numbers, squares, triangles, spheres and circles. As for the objects of natural science, he defines them as "those which are not separate from matter and which cannot be known except in association with matter". These are the natural substances: minerals, plants and animals. The different branches of natural science deal with one or more aspects of these three natural kingdoms.

It is not just the scientists and mathematicians who accepted these definitions and the ontological foundation on which

these definitions are based. Even al-Ghazzali (d. 515/1111), the greatest representative of the philosophical school of kaldm (dialectical theology) and the most famous Muslim critic of Peripatetic philosophy, defended the legitimacy of mathematics and natural science on both philosophical and religious grounds. His classification of mathematics and natural science[26] is similar to the ones given by al-Farabi and Ibn Sina except for slight variations in his enumeration of the natural sciences, especially with respect to the position of the hidden (khajiyyah) or occult (ghanbcth) sciences. While Ibn Sina had included sciences like oneiromancy (ta'bir), theurgy (nayran-jiyydt) and natural magic (talismdt) among the branches of natural science, al-Ghazzali had placed them among the metaphysical sciences. The interesting point here is the fact that Ibn Sina the scientist and al-Ghazzali the theologian both maintained that, ontologically speaking, there is a basis for accepting the reality of the hidden or occult sciences, although they might have questioned the pursuit of some of these sciences on ethical and moral grounds.

T   he   difference   between   al-Ghazzali   and   the philosopher–scientists in their classifications of mathematics and natural science is insignificant, as similar variations can also be found among the philosopher–scientists themselves. Al-Farabi has excluded from his classification not only the hidden or occult sciences but also disciplines like medicine, alchemy and agriculture. With Ibn Sina, medicine and alchemy appear among the natural sciences, while with Qutb al-Dln all the three sciences were treated as minor branches of natural science. In excluding these sciences from his classification of philosophy, al-Farabi was motivated not by ontological but rather by methodological considerations. It has been shown that al-Farabi's classification of philosophy is

limited to the syllogistic arts or sciences.[27] He had omitted the sciences in question from his list of the philosophical sciences as he considered them to be non-svllogisiie.[28]

Taken as a whole, however, al-Ghazzali's classification of mathematics and natural science clearly shows that he accepted the ontological foundation of science established by the Peripatetic philosophers. His quarrel with them is not over the issue of the legitimacy and usefulness of science but over something else which he had itemized into twenty philosophical issues in his famous work Tahdfut al-falasifah ("The Incoherence of the Philosophers"). He even defended their scientific methodology based primarily on the concept of the demonstrative proof Oal-burhdn) while reminding them of its limitations when it comes to the domain of religious and metaphysical truths, and rejecting their theory of causality since in his view there is no necessary connection between that theory and the demonstrative (scientific) method. Al-Ghazzall reproached those Muslims who opposed science just because it has been ascribed to the philosophers (falasifah).

In the western lands of Islam, the same can be said of the Andalusian jurist, theologian and historian and philosopher of religion, Ibn Hazm (d. 454/1064). Like al-Ghazzàlï, he accepted the legitimacy of the mathematical and natural sciences as scientific disciplines on both ontological and methodological grounds. In some ways, he was even more positive than al-Ghazzàlï in his attitude towards science and philosophy, partly perhaps because, unlike his younger contemporary from Persia, he did receive a relatively broad formal education in logic and science, especially in medicine.[29] In his work Risdlat al-tawdqif 'aid shàrï al-najdh

bi-ikhtisdr al-tariq ("Treatise for Setting Up the Way of Salvation in a Brief Manner"), Ibn Hazm praises philosophy as

a good and lofty science because it contains the knowledge of all the world in all aspects pertaining to genera, species, individual substances, and accidents. It also enables the individual to arrive at the scientific proof without which nothing can be certain, and which discerns what is believed to be a proof from what is not. The usefulness of this knowledge is great for discerning realities from non-realities.[30]

Late classifications of the sciences such as those of thefamous historian Ibn Khaldun (d. 808/1406) and Shams al-Dln al-Amull written during the ninth/fifteenth century after the numerous branches of Islamic science had undergone centuries of development and attained their full maturity further confirm the immutability of the fundamental ontological truths on which that science had been based. They also confirm the remarkably broad intellectual consensus reached by the various schools of thought in Islam concerning those ontological truths. Within this unity, however, there have been differences among the scientists themselves as well as between them and the religious authorities pertaining to the epistemic status and the scientific character of some of the sciences like astrology, alchemy, the science of interpretation of dreams and the occult sciences.

There were even a few attempts aimed at a critical re-examination of the position of particular individual sciences that have been traditionally considered as branches either of mathematics or of natural science.

The most significant of these attempts, particularly from the point of view of the modern philosophy of science, was the one made by Ibn al-Haytham (d. 430/1039) to take a fresh look at optics. In modern science, optics is considered one of the physical sciences whereas in Islamic science, ever since al-Farabl reproduced for Muslims Proclus' classic statement on the subject matter of Greek optics, it has always been treated as a mathematical science. The significance of Ibn al-Haytham's fresh examination of the position of optics as a scientific discipline lies in the fact that he was the first to have transformed that science into an interdisciplinary field of study and explicitly acknowledged the nature of that science as such.

In his Kitdb al-mandzir ("Book of Optics"), which has come to be acknowledged by present-day historians of science as the most complete and most advanced work on optics since Ptolemy's treatise on the subject, and also in his few other optical writings, Ibn al-FIaytham presented optics as a composite science. If optics were to develop into a truly complete science of vision, he says, then it must combine mathematics and natural science. Optics depends on natural science because "vision is the activity of one of the senses and these belong to the natural things". It also involves the mathematical sciences because "sight perceives shape, position, magnitude, movement and rest" and all these things are investigated by the mathematical sciences.[31]' In his attempt to place optics on new foundations, Ibn al-Haytham broadened its scope by redefining its subject matter so as to include all mathematical, physical and psychological existents pertaining to vision.

The synthetic character of its subject matter demands a corresponding synthesis in its methodology. Thus Ibn al-FIaytham speaks of a complete scientific investigation in optics as being composed of two distinct modes of inquiry, namely a physical inquiry into the nature of light, or of transparency or of the ray, and a mathematical inquiry into their modes of behaviour. Ibn al-Haytham's idea of a composite science does not involve the questioning of the ontological basis of either mathematics or natural science. Rather, it raises the interesting question of the possible existence of a science whose subject matter is comprised of phenomena which involve the objects of investigation of several distinct disciplines. With Ibn al-Haytham, optics was no longer just a mathematical science nor simply a natural science. Rather, it was a synthesis of the two sciences. However, optics continues after him to be considered a mathematical science by most Muslim authorities.

Methodology of Islamic Science

Islamic intellectual tradition upholds the idea of the hierarchy and unity of knowledge and of modes of knowing. There are many sources and forms of knowledge, and there are many ways of knowing. In Islam, all possible avenues to knowledge are duly recognized. Each avenue is accorded a legitimate place and function within the total epistemological scheme furnished by the revealed teachings of the religion. This has been the general view of Muslim scholars regardless of whether they are scientists, philosophers, theologians or Sufis.

Observation and experimentation, logical thinking, mathematical analysis and even rational interpretation of sacred Books, not just of Islam but of all humanity, all have their legitimate roles to play in the scientific enterprise of traditional Muslim scientists. If we look at the scientific treatises of famous scientists like Ibn Slná, al-Blrünl, Naslr al-DTn al-Tiisi and Qutb al-Din al-Shírází such as those dealing with astronomy, geology, medicine and cosmology, we will find them arguing not just on the basis of empirical and rational data but also on the foundation of revealed data. Far from generating theoretical conflicts that defy solutions, these different types of data, on the contrary, serve to complement and strengthen each other.

Ibn al-Haytham, for example, presented the principle which says, "Everything whose nature is made subject of inquiry must be investigated in a manner conformable to its kind."[32] Following this general principle, which, of course, was already known to and observed by Muslim scholars before Ibn al-Haytham, they came to hold the view that each discipline is characterized by a particular mode of enquiry, which can be either simple or composite. However, this broad agreement aside, there are points of contention between the different intellectual schools, much more so here in matters pertaining to methodology than in those pertaining to ontology.

Muslim Peripatetic philosophers and scientists have often referred to themselves as "men of logic and demonstration" (ah I al-mantiq iva'l-btirhdn). In their logical works they usually speak of a type of proof or reasoning which is not unique to science but which is common to all the philosophical sciences, including metaphysics. The technical

term they use to refer to this type of proof is al-burhdn, which means "demonstration". This method of demonstration may be described as their "scientific method", which is not to be equated with the modern scientific method since the former connotes a far wider meaning. The demonstrative method or proof is that method or proof by means of which one obtains new knowledge that is true and certain. In other words, the demonstrative method necessarily leads to rational or intellectual certainty.

This method is distinguished from other methods by the fact that it employs syllogisms or logical reasonings that make use of premises that are "true, primary and necessary". The certain nature of this category of premises, which may consist of empirical data provided by the senses or rational (intellectual) data furnished by intuition, revelation, logical reasoning or even spiritual experience, means that the conclusions will necessarily be true and certain knowledge, and this is what makes the demonstrative proof the most scientific of all proofs.

Philosopher–scientists take great pride in being associated with this method. Al-Fárábl, for example, maintains that this method is characteristic of the philosophical sciences alone and that it is on account of this method that these sciences must be considered superior to the religious sciences which at best employ dialectical proofs. Theologians like al-Ghazzálí deny the demonstrative method its competence to establish or arrive at the certainty of metaphysical truths, although in the domain of science itself they acknowledge the usefulness and excellence of this method. Interestingly, al-Kindl also speaks of the limitations of this method when he says that "we ought not to seek a demonstrative finding in the apprehension of

every pursuit for not every intellectual pursuit is found through demonstration, since not everything has a demonstration.[33]

The concept of demonstrative method is a broad one. It is still possible to analyse it into its different components, namely the physical or empirical method, the mathematical method and the metaphysical method. The mathematical method, for example, would make use of premises that are constituted of mathematical data regardless of the source from which they are drawn. Thus while in theory all philosopher– scientists acknowledge the possibility of various modes of knowing and inquiry, and accept the method of demonstration as the most scientific of all inquiries, in practice each philosopher–scientist may show a flair for certain types of demonstration. With al-Kindl, mathematics is the chief instrument of demonstration to the extent that even in medicine he made use of the mathematical method.[34] In his theory of the compound remedies, he based the efficacy of these remedies, like the effect of music, upon geometrical proportion.

With Ibn Rushd, demonstration is achieved primarily through physical or empirical inquiry. Thus in his Kitdb al-kulliyydt he criticized strongly al-Kindl's use of "the arts of arithmetic and music" in the art of medicine. With Ibn al-Haytham, both physical and mathematical inquiries play an equally important role in his demonstrative or scientific method.

In contrast to the Peripatetic philosopher–scientists who emphasize logic and demonstration, the Hermetic-Pythagorean scientists and philosophers, who also played an important role in Islamic science,

adopted a methodological approach that is based primarily upon a metaphysical and symbolic interpretation of things. This is the kind of approach used for example by Jabir ibn Hayyan in alchemy and by the Ikhwan al-Safa in the various mathematical sciences. Certain elements of this method are also to be found in the scientific methodology of those scientists whom we usually identify with the Peripatetic school such as Ibn Sina.

Aims and Role of Science

It is over the question of the aims and role of science in relation to both individual and social needs that there has been perhaps the least consensus among the different intellectual schools of Islam. All of them acknowledge the usefulness of science. Flowever, they differ in their views concerning the extent of that usefulness. Jurists and theologians generally maintain that science is useful only in so far as it serves as a tool for understanding and implementing the Divine Law. This view was much emphasized by scholars like Ibn Hazm and al-Ghazzall. In his The Book of Knowledge, al-Ghazzall describes many branches of science such as medicine, astronomy and arithmetic as praiseworthy intellectual sciences or as fard kifdyah sciences in the sense of being indispensable for the welfare of this world. Medicine is necessary for the life of the body, and arithmetic for daily transactions and the division of legacies and inheritances.[35]

In another work, Deliverance from Error, al-Ghazzall maintains that the mathematical sciences are purely quantitative or exact sciences which "do not entail denial or

affirmation of religious matters". It is quite clear that he does not see any role for mathematics in spiritual and metaphysical matters. The Ikhwan al-Safà' took a different intellectual stand. For them, numbers and geometrical figures, when seen as qualities and symbols, are not neutral with respect to spiritual truths but rather lend support to them. They affirmed the view of Pythagoras that "the knowledge of numbers and of their origin from unity is the knowledge of the Unity of God". Further, "the knowledge of properties of numbers, their classification and order is the knowledge of the beings created by the Exalted Creator, and of His handiwork, its order and classification".[36]

Peripatetic philosopher-scientists also recognized the role of science beyond its usefulness in practical and technological matters. They emphasized the idea that the theoretical philosophical sciences are pursued first of all for the sake of the rational soul. Science as a branch of theoretical philosophy is therefore useful in the quest for the perfection of the soul, which is a necessary condition for happiness in this world and in the life hereafter. According to Ibn Sina, "the purpose in theoretical philosophy
is to perfect the soul simply by knowing".[37] In general, they maintain that through science people can fulfil many of their rational and intellectual needs, like the needs for causality and rational certainty.

NOTES

1 Martin Plessner, "The Natural Sciences and Medicine", in J. Schacht and C. E. Bosworth (eds), The Legacy of Islam (Oxford, 1979), 2nd ed.: 428.

2 That ancient, pre-lslamic authorities, primarily Greek, are cited, invoked or quoted in abundance in works attributed to Jabir is well known. But, added to all these, a recent study of Jâbir's Book of Stones announces the discovery of a Jâbirian translation of Aristotle's Categoriae which is "totally and significantly independent of Ishaq's text". See Syed Nomanul Haq, Names, Natures, and Things: the Alchemist Jabir ibn Hayydn and his Kitdb al-AhJdr (Book of Stones) (Dordrecht, London and Boston, 1994).

3 S. H. Nasr, An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines (Boulder, 1978), 2nd ed. 14.

4 This treatise is found in Rasail al-Kindï al-falsafiyyah, ed. M. A. H. Abü Rldah (Cairo, 1950–3), 2. Discussions of al-Kindi's classification of the sciences may be found in G. N. Atiyeh, Al-Kindi: The Philosopher of the Arabs (Rawalpindi, 1966): 32–40; and L. Garder, "Le Problème de la philosophie musulmane", in Mélanges offerts à Etienne Gilson (Paris, 1959): 261–84.

5 See Alfred L. Ivry, Al-Kindï's Metaphysics: a Translation ofYa'qüb ibn Ishdq al-Kindï's Treatise "On First Philosophy" (Albany, 1974): 55.

6 See his "On the Definition and Description of Things", in Abü Rîdah, op. cit.: 173.

7 Ivry, op. cit.: 55.

8 Metaphysics, 1.3.9836.2.

9 Ivry, op. cit.: 59.

10 Ivry, op. cit.: 62. (Cf. Rasail, 1: 108.)

11 Ras d'il, 2: 10.

12 Ivry, op. cit.: 65.

13 See Majid Fakhry, A History of Islamic Philosophy (New York, 1983), 2nd ed.: 73.

14 I have discussed these criteria in great detail in my book Classification ofi Knoivledge in Islam: a Study in Islamic Philosophies of Science (Kuala Lumpur, 1992).

15 Al-Fâràbî, Risdlat fi fadllat al-'ulian wa'l-sind'dt ("Treatise on the Excellence of the Sciences and the Arts"). My translation is based on the Arabic text in F. Dieterici, Al-Farabi's philosophische Abhandlungen (Leiden, 1980): 105.

16 Al-Farabi's Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle, trans. and with an introduction by M. Mahdi (Ithaca, 1969): 18.

17 Ibid.: 19.

18 On Qutb al-Dïn's classification of the sciences, see O. Bakar (1992): chapter 11.

19 James Jeans discussed at length the theme of the scientific picture of the universe as being essentially mathematical in nature in his The Mysterious Universe (Cambridge, 1931).

20
Cf. Donald R. Hill's remarks on the mechanical engineering of Ibn al-Razzaz al-Jazarl (flourished c. beginning of the seventh/thirteenth century) in his translation with annotations of the latter's The Book of Knowledge of Ingenious Mechanical Devices (Dordrecht and Boston), 1974): 279.

21 Ibn Sina deals with the ontological basis for the division of theoretical philosophy into natural, mathematical and metaphysical sciences in several of his works. See, for example, both the logical (al-madkhat) and metaphysical (ilähiyyät) parts of his masterpiece of Peripatetic philosophy, Kitäb al-sbifa ("The Book of Healing" rendered as Sufftcientia in Latin); see also his treatise FT aqsaftt al-'ulüm ("On the Division of the Sciences").

22 Translated by Michael E. Marmura in his "Avicenna on the Division of the Sciences in the Isagoge of his Shifä'", Journal for the History of Arabic Science, 4(1 & 2) (1980): 246.

23 Marmura, op. cit.-. 245.

24 This view accords fully with the belief generally held in traditional Islamic philosophy of mathematics that numbers exist on three levels of reality: (1) as archetypes in the Divine

Intellect and, therefore, as metaphysical objects, (2) as abstract or "scientific" entities in the human mind, and (3) as concrete quantities in material things. See S. H. Nasr (1976): 88.

25 See Bakar, op. cit.: 252.

26 For the classification in question, see his al-Risälat al-laduniyyah ("Presental Knowledge") trans. into English by M. Smith in Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (1938), part 2: 177–200 and part 3: 353–74; also his Kitäb al-'Ilm ("The Book of Knowledge"), trans. N. A. Faris (Lahore, 1962). I have systematized and synthesized the two classifications to produce a more detailed classification. See Bakar, op. cit.\ chapter 9.

27 See Bakar, op. cit.-. chapters 3 and 5.

28 On the distinction between syllogistic and non syllogistic arts, al-Färäbl writes: "The syllogistic arts are those which, when their parts are integrated and perfected, have as their action thereafter the employment of syllogism, while the non-syllogistic arts are those which, when their parts are integrated and perfected, have as their action and end the doing of some particular work, such as medicine, agriculture, carpentry, building, and the other arts which are designed to produce some work and some actions." See D. M. Dunlop, ed. and trans., "Al-Färäbl's Introductory Risälah on Logic", The Islamic Qtiarterly, vol. 3 (1956–7): 231–2.

29 Ibn Hazm's teachers in medicine include the Jewish physician Isma'il ibn Yunus, the leading Muslim authority on surgery al-ZahrawI, and Ibn al-Kattäni, a prominent natural

scientist. It was Ibn al-Kattäril, however, who exerted the greatest influence on Ibn Hazm's scientific training. Some sources attributed as many as ten medical works to Ibn Hazm. On Ibn Hazm's education in science and philosophy, see A. G. Chejne, Ibn Hazm (Chicago, 1982). 37–41.

30 Ibid.: 152.

31 See Ibn al-Haytham: Optics, trans. with introduction and commentary by A. I. Sabra (London, 1989), 1: 4.

32 Ibid., 2: 4.

33 Ivry, op. cit. 65–6.

34
See Nicholas Rescher, Studies in Arabic Philosophy (Pittsburgh, 1967): 5–6; also T. J. de Boer, The History of Philosophy in Islam, trans. E. R. Jones (London, 1903): 100.

35 Faris, op. cit.: 37.

36 Nasr, Science and Civilization in Islam: 155.

37 See Marmura, op. cit.: 241.

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CHAPTER 54

Mysticism

Mahmud Erol Kilif

❧

Classical Muslim thought generally seems to regard the meaning of the word philosophia only in the sense of its second term sophia, distinguishing not only a literary difference between the two terms but also a difference in meaning and reference. Thus philosophia, the study of divine wisdom, is understood as sophia, divine wisdom in itself. This distinction emphasizes the necessity of the spiritual receptivity of the seeker rather than his mere conceptual comprehension. Since God is al-Haklm (The Wise), the source of all wisdom, a hakim (theosopher) is one who receives and participates in divine wisdom. Therefore to study hikmah (theosophy) is to undertake a journey towards God; towards divinity; in other words, to al-Haklm. The Qur'an says, "He unto whom the wisdom [hikmah] is given he truly had received abundant good" (2: 269). While this verse clearly states that wisdom is given by God and received rather than acquired by humanity, it also indicates that such wisdom is accessible to those prepared to receive it, those who undertake the journey towards Divine Perfection.

As we consider the following definitions of wisdom by some major Islamic figures of philosophy and gnosis, we shall see that they contain an essentially initiatic and esoteric meaning. For example, al-Kindï says:

Philosophy is the knowledge of the reality of things within man's possibility, because the philosopher's end in his theoretical knowledge is to gain truth and in his practical knowledge to be in accordance with truth … philosophy is to act like God's action.[1]

Al-Kindl goes on to tell us that the soul is a light from God, which when detached from the limitations of the body is able to know everything and therefore nothing is hidden from it. When ancient sages realized that it was not possible to attain to the true nature of things (haqâ'iq al-ashya) through the senses or by reasoning, their asceticism brought them to the point where the knowledge of the unseen could be revealed to them, and
they then attained to the mystery of creation.[2] "Philosophy is man's knowing himself … the art of arts."[3] Al-Farabl defines philosophy as "comprehension of Being", [4] and Ibn Slna as "to know the true nature of things as much as one possibly can".[5] Still, there is a distinction to be made between the falasifah of the Peripatetic school and the gnostics and Illuminationists. For example, Ibn 'Arab! defines hikmah succinctly as tasawwuf (Sufism)[6] and also as "knowledge of the special knowledge".[7] Suhrawardl says:

Those who have not yet detached themselves from the limitation of the body and made themselves available to undertake a spiritual journey cannot be regarded as hakim …. Do not pay any attention to the ideas of the materialists who

pretend to be philosophers; the issue is greater than they think[8]

Suhrawardl makes his mystical concern explicit when he says that Peripatetics "are those who do not depend upon initiadc experience but upon their reasoning in their quest for knowledge".[9]

Ibn Sina, about whom it has been said that he came to the gnostic path after having been affected by the powerful gaze of the Sufi master Abu Yusuf al-Hamadan! in the streets of Flamadan, is not at all rationalistic in his view of the soul and intellect. He says:

Al-nafs al-ndtiqah [the human soul] is empty in terms of intelligible forms. When it contacts the active intellect these forms pour into it and it eventually becomes the abode of the forms. All the intelligibles [ma'quldt] which are at once potential and veiled have been actualized by the illumination of the Active Intellect. When the soul contacts the Active Intellect and because of its nature participates in the Active Intellect's process of knowing, then naturally it can receive something from the Active Intellect according to its pureness. The soul receives the reflection of the First Being through the participation of the celestial world. Mystical knowledge is the continuation and perhaps the more advanced stage of natural rational knowledge. What distinguishes mystical knowledge from natural rational knowledge is not its forms but its objects … The revelation of the unseen [ghayb] can occur in intense thought. But sometimes it can come within the experiences of a gnostic \'drif\.[10]

Ibn Slna also observes in another text that "When an initiate [sdlik\ practises enough ascetic discipline and spiritual effort, his or her soul and secret [sirr] becomes a mirror which reflects the Real [al-Haqq].'[11]

Although we could present numerous examples indicating the mystical and inidatic nature of wisdom, the preceding passages sufficiently prove that many Islamic thinkers who possessed the authentic tradition,
even some who were Peripatetics, penetrated to the esoteric core of Islam. Even some of the so-called Peripatetics became very sympathetic to the initiatic path of knowledge in the later period of their lives. We have a striking example in the communication between Abü Sa'ld AbiTKhayr and Ibn Slna. It is said that Abü Sa'ld wrote to Ibn Slna, inviting him to "Come to the true path, a path of knowledge, come to true Islam!" Ibn Slna responded, "Ay bi kufr-i haqïqï wa bardy az isldm-i rnajdzf ("You should come from metaphorical Islam to a true infidelity!"). Upon reading these words, the Shaykh was overwhelmed by ecstasy and said, "During my seventy years of worship I have never experienced such a joy as for this response." It is this Ibn Slna who travelled through the "Stages of the Gnostics" (Maqdmdt al-'drifin) to attain the Oriental wisdom and become a real theosopher.

These examples illustrate that it is possible to state that the true Islamic philosophy is essentially a mystical philosophy. Any difference which arises is that between the approaches of the theoretical and initiatic ways of life. Regarding the attainment of knowledge, there are two groups: the possessors of theoretical knowledge, namely the falâsifah; and the possessors of real knowledge and maqdm, namely Sufis (gnostics) and muhaqqiqün, the true hakims of Islam.

The ontological position of those who possess hdl (spiritual state) is always higher than of those who possess qdl (conceptual knowledge). However, there are those who do not endorse the stages of qdl as possession of any metaphysical grade at all. The real difference between the two groups is that, while the possessors of hdl have their referent in vertical knowledge and experience, the possessors of qdl make their reference horizontal experience and rational and historical information. Real philosophers "are not those who would report any statements of the sages or the statement of others. In our works we set down only the result of revelation and dictates of the Truth to us."[12]

According to Ibn Arabl, who represents the gnostics rather than the falasifah, spiritual travellers, that is individuals engaged in the search for metaphysical knowledge, are of two groups. The first group travels toward God with their thought (afkdr) and rationality. They inevitably stray from the road, because they accept only the guidance of their own thinking. They are the philosophers and those who follow a corresponding course (mutakallimwi). The other group of those who travel are the messengers and prophets and the chosen saints. It is the possession of real knowledge that distinguishes one group from the other.

The sciences of reason derived from thinking contain an element of changeability, because they follow the temper [mizdj] of thinking in the intelligent individual. He considers only the sensible matters which may have existence in his imagination and
accordingly are his evidence. The result is that the theories with respect to one and the same thing differ or one and the same investigator differs with respect to the same things at

different times, because of differences in temper and mixture and combinations in their state of being. Thus their statements differ with respect to one and the same thing and with respect to basic principles upon which they construct their details. In contrast, directly inspired and legislative knowledge possesses one and the same taste, even if the perception of this taste differ, [13]

A contemporary Muslim gnostic also explains the "Oriental Wisdom" almost one thousand years after Shaykh al-Ra'ls ibn Sina, demonstrating that this concept is not geographical or national, but vertical, illuminative and metaphysical:

To comprehend universal principles directly, the transcendent intellect must itself be of the universal order; it is no longer an individual faculty, and to consider it as such would be contradictory, as it is not within the power of the individual to go beyond his own limits … Reason is a specifically human faculty but that which lies beyond reason is truly "non-human"; it is this that makes metaphysical knowledge possible, and that knowledge is not a human knowledge. In other words, it is not as man that man can attain it, but because this being that is human in one of its aspects is at the same time something other and more than a human being. It is the attainment of effective consciousness of supra-individual states that is the real object of metaphysics, or better still, of metaphysical knowledge itself … in reality the individuality represents nothing more than a transitory and contingent manifestation of the real being. It is only one particular state among the indefinite multitude of other states of the same being … Such is the fundamental distinction between "self" and "I", the personality and the individuality … so the individuality … is bound by personality to the principal

centre of being by this transcendent intellect … Theoretical knowledge, which is only indirect and in some sense symbolic, is merely a preparation, though indispensable, for true knowledge. It is, moreover, the only knowledge that is communicable, even then only in a partial sense. That is why all statements are no more than a means of approaching knowledge, and this knowledge, which is in the first place only virtual, must later be effectively realized … there is nothing in common between metaphysical realization and the means leading to it … [for example] concentration harmonizes the diverse elements of human individuality in order to facilitate affective communication

between this individuality and higher states of being. Moreover, at the start, these means can be varied almost indefinitely, for they have to be adapted to the temperament of each individual to his particular aptitudes and disposition. Later on the differences diminish, for it is a case of many ways that all lead to the same end; after reaching a certain stage, all multiplicity vanishes … it is from this human state, itself contingent, that we are at present compelled to start in order to attain higher states and finally the supreme and unconditioned state … This realization of integral individuality is described by all traditions as the restoration of what is called a primordial state … [this] second state corresponds to the supra-iindividual but still conditioned states, though their conditions are quite different from those of the human state. Here the world of man, previously mentioned, is completely and definitely exceeded … by the world of forms in its widest meaning…. Nevertheless, however exalted these states may be when compared with the human state, however remote they are from it, they are still only relative, and that is just as true of the highest of them. Their possession is only a transitory result, which should not

be confused with the final goal of metaphysical realization; this end remains outside being, and by comparison with it everything else is only a preparatory step. The highest objective is the absolutely unconditioned state, free from limitation; for this reason it is completely inexpressible … In this Unconditioned State all other states of being find their place.[14]

Muslim gnostics and Sufis claim that, since the hierarchical status of being requires a hierarchical status of knowing, then it is natural to envisage that there are different degrees of qualitative knowledge corresponding to different stages of ontological Being. And, according to the Sufis, a person who possesses the higher stages is regarded as a guide for those in the lower stages. The knowledge that belongs to the higher stages of reality is possible only through revelation. It is not the rational soul of the falsafah but the illuminated soul of the gnostic or Sufi which is capable of real metaphysical knowledge. Unlike the systematic logic of the Peripatetics, this metaphysical knowledge can be conveyed to the un-illuminated only through the language of symbolism. For this reason we can regard the Mathnawl of Rüml, some of Ibn 'Arabl's writings, Rüzbihân's Shathiyyât, Mawlânâ Jâml's Salâmân and Absâl, the I)iwan of Shaykh Ghàlib and other works of symbolic mysticism as philosophy according to its definition by the gnostics.

Flowever, the perspective of the philosophic perennis does not consider it relevant to distinguish between Islamic philosophers who are involved in Sufism and Sufis who are involved in philosophy. Both are
able to understand the one and the same Reality according to their degree of approximation to It. In this sense, every seeker

of the Truth is classified according to his or her correspondence with the Centre. Those who are close to the Centre are regarded as more similar to it than those who are far from the Centre. Since ontological status reflects epistemological standing, it is not surprising that the knowledge of one individual should be more esoteric and universal and another more exoteric and particular. The travellers of the esoteric path to Truth in the meta-philosophical domain are called wait» mutasawwif muhaqqiq and dnf according to their standing. Al-Ghazzall, who himself travelled these intellectual stages, presents a similar classification in The Niche for Lights.

According to him, the soul, in its upward sevenfold way to union with pure Deity, is at every stage stripped of these veils, the dark one first and then the bright ones. After that the naked soul stands face to face with naked Deity, with Absolute Being, with an unveiled Sun, with unadulterated Light. These veils are various according to varieties of the natures which they veil from the one Real.

Al-Ghazzall grades not only souls but also systems according to their proximity to Absolute Truth in the order of logic and the mathematical sciences and the sciences of Being. The most respected are the sciences of Being which deal not only with contingent beings but with Necessary Being in regard to its Names and Attributes.

You should know that intellectual sciences are holistic in their content, and from which theoretical knowledge issues. It is both theoretical knowledge and intellectual knowledge that form Sufi knowledge. There are many aspects of Sufi knowledge, such as hdl, waqt, shawq, ivajd, sukr, sahw,

ithbdt, mahw, faqr, walayah and iradah. Hikmah can be attained only through the given knowledge. Those who do not reach that stage cannot be named "sage" [al~hakfm\, since wisdom is a gift of God.[15]

Specific and very important to the Muslim gnostics is the dynamic and active "being" in the hierarchical structure called the Muhammadan Reality (al-haqiqat al-muhammadiyyah), considered the first manifestation of Supreme and Unconditioned Being. As the first manifestation, the Muhammadan Reality is thus also the highest locus of knowledge. According to the great Sufi Ayn al-Qudat Hamadam, the esoteric knowledge of the Muhammadan Reality is an epistemological stage which can lead to Divine knowledge.

There are three stages in the knowledge of the Truth. The first is the knowledge of God's action and his command which can be gained through the soul. The second is the knowledge of Attributes of God which can be attained through the

Muhammadan Soul [al-Nafs al-muhammadiyyah]. The third is the knowledge of the Godhead [al-dhat al-ildhiyyah] which is beyond any description. The grace of a person who possesses such knowledge is always hoped for. The Prophet Muhammad said,

"Whoever has seen me has seen the Truth." Therefore those who do not know themselves cannot know the Prophet Muhammad and whoever does not know him cannot know God. If one wants to know God in the deep sense, what one has to do is to make one's own soul a mirror and to see the

soul of Muhammad; through the soul of Muhammad only one would be able to know God Himself. Jam! says:

This world is a mirror, all things through the Truth exist.

In the mirror Muhammad, God is seen to persist.

One needs to acquire the knowledge of God in this world because what you receive by knowledge today is to be seen tomorrow. Jam! says:

Wisdom of Greece itself is a passion and inclination.

But the wisdom of believers is a command of the Prophet.[16]

As a traveller traverses each stage step by step, he or she is said to become a person of each particular stage who has the knowledge of that stage. A person of each particular stage remains in ignorance of the knowledge of the stage above. Certain Sufi masters teach the secret knowledge of the stages to those qualified by their inherent capacity to receive wisdom. Although the method of training differs from master to master, most of the Ottoman Sufi masters trained their candidates according to the following schema.

Knowledge descends from the upper stages to the lower. The recognition of the descending gradation of knowledge which establishes the ascending stages of wisdom is very important, itself constituting to the first knowledge. In their journey of the purification of the soul, the travellers toward Reality arrive first at the stage of the Lower Soul (, al-Nafs al-ammdrah), and then ascend in order through the Inspired Soul (al-Nafs al-mulhamah), the Soul at Peace (al-Nafs

al-mutma'innah), the Pleased Soul (al-Nafs al-radiyyah), and the Being-Pleased Soul (al-Nafs al-mardiyyah). The final stage in the purification of the soul is the Perfected Soul (al-Nafs al-kdmilah).

After passing through the degrees of the purification of the soul, the traveller begins the stage of the purification of the spirit (ruh). In this stage of purification the traveller reaches first the inner centres of the Heart (qalb), then the Spirit (riih), Secret (sin), Secret of Secret (sirr al-sirr), Arcane (khifd), and finally the Most Arcane (akhfa). The Most Arcane is directly receptive to Divine Reality, which illuminates the purified traveller. An illuminated person is therefore one who has passed through the stages of the self, the thorough cleansing of the Heart, the emptying of the Secret and the Illumination of the Spirit. According to the traditional perspective, only one of this degree can be called a theosopher, a philosopher or a sage.

According to Muslim gnostics, a sage is one who has passed through the various stages, also described in the following manner:

First stage. In this stage the abode of the spiritual traveller is lowliness; the invocation is "There is no god but God"; and the direction of travelling is "progress towards God"; the state is that of alternating spiritual optimism and pessimism. The realm of the traveller is that of sense perception.

Second stage. In this stage the abode of the spiritual traveller is blaming; the invocation is Allah, the esoteric meaning of which is "There is no aim but Allah." The direction of travelling is "progress to God"; and the state is "contraction

and expansion" (qabd wa bast). The realm is the Isthmus ('dlam al-barzakh). In this stage love for this world begins to disappear. The degree of certainty is certainty by knowledge (film al-yaqiri).

Third stage. In this stage the abode of the spiritual traveller is inspiration. The invocation is Flu, the esoteric meaning of this invocation is "There is none to be loved but Allah." The direction of journeying is "progress within God". The state is that of giving up everything. The realm is the realm of Majesty ('dlam al-hay bah). At this stage the traveller seeks only the love of God. He or she hears the invocation of every thing and of every creature, knows what is inside the heart, and has many secrets here. He or she becomes a place of manifestation of God's Action and Attributes, whose knowledge is composed of certainty by vision ('ayn al-yaqln).

Fourth stage. In this stage the abode of the spiritual traveller is confidence and peace. The invocation is Haqq, the esoteric meaning of which is "There is none but Allah." The journeying is the "journey with God". The state alternates between spiritual drunkenness and soberness. The realm is that of omnipotence ('dlam al-jabarut). The love for God is increased. He or she witnesses God everywhere in everything, and undergoes the second unveiling (fath al-mubin); however, the veil over things is not yet completely raised.

Fifth stage. In this stage the abode of the spiritual traveller is pleasing and satisfying. The invocation is Hayy, the esoteric meaning of which is "There is none but Allah, there is no aim but Allah, there is none to be loved but Allah." The state is the full absorption (fami) of the human qualities in the Qualities of God and His Attributes. The journeying is the

"journey in God" (sayr fi'Lldh), and the realm is the realm of Divinity ('dlam al-Ldhut). He or she is located in the Secret of Secrets (sirr al-asrar).

In this state he or she knows by direct tasting rather than inspiration. Here he or she is one loved by God.

Sixth stage. In this stage the abode of the spiritual traveller is Being Pleased (Mardiyyah). The invocation is Qayyum. The state is establishing (tamkin) and astonishment (hayrah). The journeying is the "journey from God ", and the realm is the realm of the Visible 'dlarn al-shahddah. In this stage the manifestations of the Names of God begin to replace the manifestation of the actions of God. Here the love of God informs the love of God's creatures. Although he or she lives among the creatures, he or she is always with God. This stage is also called "The Grand Vicegerent": one who returns from unity to multiplicity in order to awaken the people. The traveller can attain to this stage through his or her own effort and conduct, but they do not suffice to pass beyond it. Only Divine Grace can attract the traveller from the sixth to the seventh stage.

Seventh stage. In this stage the abode of the spiritual traveller is perfection. The invocation is Qahhdr. The journeying is the "Journey for God" (sayr bi'Llah). The state is subsistence (baqd'). The realm is the "realm of unity in multiplicity and multiplicity in unity". The degree of certainty is certainty by truth (haqq al-yaqln). This stage is also called ahadiyyah, jam ' al-jam \ 'ama, yaqin and by other terms. This is the beginning of the stage of the inner kingdom where all actions as well as inactions are worship. The breathing is power and favour, the face is ease, the words and actions are wisdom. He or she has become a real philosopher, and only one who has

reached this stage has the right to be called really a sage (sophos). Sainthood is the end of this sevenfold journey. At the completion of the stages of annihilation, essence and manifestation are one in the seeker after Truth and Reality. The beatitude of "as if it were not" is conferred at this station.[17]

Shaykh al-Akbar ibn Arabl, himself one of the real sages of Islam, defines the sage or "possessor of wisdom" (al-hakim), whether God or human, as "one who does what is proper lor what is proper is proper".

Wisdom is the hallmark of the perfect friends of God, possessed in its fullness only by the "People of Blame" [maldmiyyun], the highest of the perfect men. Since wisdom puts things in their proper places, it rules over tartib, that is, arrangement, order and hierarchy … The name "Wise" arranges affairs within their levels and places the things within their measures. It is the perfect combination of knowledge and practice. The name "Wise" has a face toward knowing \al-'ilm] and a face toward the governing [al-mudabbir\. The gnostics give each thing its due, just as God gives each thing its creation. The distinguishing feature of the gnostics is that they verify that which distinguishes the realities. This belongs only to those who know the order of God's wisdom
in affairs and who "give each thing its due … Know that the wisdom [al-hikmah\ in all things and in every single affair belongs to the levels, not to entities. The most tremendous of the levels is the Divinity, while the lowest of the levels is servanthood … So verify, my friend, how you serve your Master! Then you will be one of the men of knowledge who are "deeply rooted in knowledge" [Qur'an 3: 7], the divine

sages [al-hukamd' al-ilahiyyun], and you will attain the further degree and the highest place along with the messengers and prophets![18]

The capability to witness unity in multiplicity indicates the perspective unique to a man of wisdom such as Ibn 'Arab! himself:

O, you considering the study of the branch of knowledge [that is gnosis] which is the prophetic knowledge inherited from the prophets (may God bless them all), you should not be veiled when you find an idea that has been mentioned by the true Sufi [which has been] also mentioned by a philosopher or a mutakallim, or any other thinkers from any branch of knowledge and accuse such a true Sufi of being a rationalistic philosopher just because the philosopher spoke about and believed in the same idea. And do not accuse him of copying the philosophers, or say that he has no religion, just as the philosopher has no religion. Refrain from so doing … It does not necessarily follow that all his knowledge is false. This is perceived in the simple intellect ['M/1\ of every intelligent person. Your objection to the Sufi in this case led you away from knowledge, truth and religion on to the path of the ignorant, the liars and slanderers, those who suffer lack of intellect and religion, and the people of corrupt consideration and deviation.[19]

From our discussion we can conclude that, according to the perspective of the sophia perennis, Islamic philosophy in its entirety amounts to different explanations proceeding from different degrees of one and the same Reality. As we have shown, the Divinity makes himself known in descending gradation from Subtlety (latdfat) down to Density (kithdfat),

from the Hidden (al-bdtin) to the Manifest (al-zdhir). As Divine Knowledge and the nature and structure of that knowledge are revealed in descending gradation, so does the knowledge of the possessors of knowledge ascend along the same line, beginning with the merely rational and proceeding to the intellectual, and inward from the exoteric to the esoteric. This inward journey to the esoteric knowledge of Divine Reality constitutes tasaivwuf and he who attains to it is a gnostic, sage or Sufi (al-hakim). Since real knowledge is ultimately bestowed only upon those who are prepared to receive it, mysticism or tasaivwuf is a central theme in classical Islamic philosophy and philosophy on the highest level is not separated from mysticism.

Chism-i sar bd chism-i sirr dar jang büd Ghàlib àmad chism-i sirr hujjat namild.

(The eyes of the head with the eyes of the inner secret quarrelled. No need to prove that the eyes of the inner secret became victorious.)

Mawlànâ Jalâl al-Dln Rùmï

NOTES

1 al-Kindî, Rasâ'il al-Kindï al-falsafiyyah, cd. Abü Rïdah (Cairo, 1950), i: 124.

2 Ibid.: 21 A.

3 Ibid.: 173.

4 al-Fârâbï, al-Jam' bayn raÿay al-hakimayn, ed. A. Nader (Beirut, 1968): 80.

5 A. M. Goichon, Lexique de la langue philosophique d'Ibn Sinà (Paris, 1938): 281–2.

6 Ibn Arabi, al-Futühât al-makkiyyah (Beirut, 1970), 2: 296.

7 Ibid.: 259.

8 Shihabuddin Suhrawardl, al-Talwihât, ed. Henry Corbin (Istanbul, 1945): 113.

9 Ibid.: 111.

10 Ibn Sinà, al-hhâràt wa'l-tanbïhàt, ed. S. Dunyâ (Cairo, 1958,) 3; 251.

11 Ibn Slnâ, al-Najàt, ed. al-Kurdl (Tehran, n.d.): 268.

12 Ibn Arabi, op. cit., 2: 432.

13 Ibid., 1: 333.

14 René Guénon, "Oriental Metaphysics", in The Sword of Gnosis, ed. J. Needleman (London, 1986): 47, 49, 51.

15 Al-Ghazzâll, Risàlat al-laduniyyah, ed. M. al-Kurdl (Cairo, 1910): 22–31.

16 Ayn al-Qüdàt Hamadànl, Zubdat al-haqâ'iq (Tehran, 1962): 35.

17 This schema was originally laid out by Sayyid Yahyâ al-Shîrwânî al-Bàquwî and developed by Ottoman Sufi masters under the title atwâr-i sab'ah.

18 Ibn Arabi, op cit., 3: 69.

19 Ibid., 1: 32.

(We would like to thank Adnan Aslan for his help in the preparation of this chapter. (O. L. and S. H. N.))

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CHAPTER 55

Ethics

Daniel H. Frank

❦

Islamic ethics is to be found in an enormous range of materials from Qur'ânic exegesis to kaldm, from philosophical commentaries on Aristotle to Sufi mystical texts. One might present an historical overview, perhaps subdivided by type of theory. The most recent, comprehensive work on the subject proceeds in just such a manner. Fakhry (1991) divides Islamic ethics into four parts – scriptural morality, theological ethics, philosophical ethics and religious ethics – as he presents his version of the story. I propose, however, to proceed in a rather different manner, eschewing the history of ideas in favour of a more selective approach which will highlight in some detail the views of some major Muslim philosophers on a single philosophical problem: the nature of the human good and its relation to the political order. This problem is without doubt the most important one in the ethical/political tradition in which one must locate the Muslim philosophers, namely the Greek moral philosophical tradition. It is to this latter, thus, that one must turn to set the grounds for the later medieval Muslim elaborations.

The Greek Background

In understanding ethics as primarily a discussion about the human good, about happiness and its achievement, one needs to understand that this is already a particular way of approaching the subject. It is not the only way. One might be concerned with the grounding and subsequent establishment of a criterion for evaluating particular (types of) action, rather than with what constitutes the best human life overall. Or one might be concerned with metatheoretical discussions about the nature of ethical discourse, rather than with the development of a certain ethical disposition or moral outlook. In general, one might view ethics as a theoretical

rather than practical enterprise. But to so view it is not to do ethics in the "Classical" way. For Aristotle, ethics is a practical science, and this means that it subserves a practical end, namely how to live well and, thereby, to achieve the human good. One tends to describe a work like the Nicomachean Ethics as a work in ethical theory, but we need to understand that for Aristotle the treatise is not a theoretical work, at least in his sense. For him, it is treatises such as Physics, De caelo and the various biological works which are theoretical works, devoted to knowledge for its own sake. But in ethics "we are inquiring not in order to know what virtue is, but in order to become good" (NE, 1103b27–8). The goal which a science serves defines its nature. And given this, Aristotle's division of the sciences does not allow for ethics and political philosophy to be construed as theoretical sciences. Even when the goal is theoretical perfection, ethics and political philosophy are eminently practical sciences,

subserving a practical end, knowledge for the sake of achieving happiness.

The ultimate practicality of ethics, the signature of Greek moral philosophizing, was accepted throughout the medieval period. Supported by similar, not identical, divisions of the sciences, Avicenna (Ibn Sina), Maimonides and Aquinas all viewed ethics as a species of practical science. And their major questions in ethics are those of their great Greek predecessors. Indeed, there were some particular issues, such as the relation of religion to philosophy, which were of no obvious relevance to the pagan philosophers. But even such issues were discussed by the medieval philosophers with reference to Greek philosophical categories and, furthermore, were addressed solely to those who had some philosophical training.

To understand, then, the Islamic contribution to the discussion of the human good, we must first get a sense of the Greek background to the discussion. It was Socrates who initiated philosophical reflection about the human good, and it was because of his life (and death) that Plato began to memorialize his "teacher" in dialogues. For present purposes, the most important dialogue concerned with the summum bonum is the Republic. This great dialogue, known throughout the medieval period in Islam from al-Farabi to Averroes (Ibn Rushd), pits Socrates against two youthful opponents who want Socrates to defend the life devoted to justice, appearances notwithstanding. In due course, the defence reveals that the truly just individual is a philosopher, one who, unlike the mass of people, has an awareness of and an abiding commitment to non-sensible, transcendent realities. The philosopher is thus opposed to the worldly

masses, both in terms of epistemological insight as well as the resultant modus vivendi. But such attachment to non-sensible, supra-mundane realities would seem to entail a disengagement of the philosopher from the world and humanity at large, and from the political order. And so a deep and abiding problem emerges. What argument can be used to induce the philosopher, the pre-eminently happy individual, to take part in politics? Plato has an argument in Republic, 7 (519ff.), to my mind a not very convincing one, which is intended to motivate the philosopher to return to the "cave", to the political realm. But for present purposes, what is important to note is that argument is needed to convince the philosopher to return. By itself, philosophical contemplation and the life devoted to such activity seemingly entail no moral or political concern. So we have for the first time in Western thought a thoughtful articulation of the nature of the human good and whether or not it is commensurable with morals and politics.

In passing from Plato to Aristotle, we are passing from a more synoptic thinker to one less so, from a hedgehog to a fox. Aristotle was the first to draw the relevant distinctions between the different types of episteme (knowledge or science), between theoretical, practical, and productive knowledge. For him, learning how best to live was the primary subject of the practical science of ethics. Given the eminently practical nature of the subject for Aristotle, one might expect such an anti-theorist moral philosopher to plump for a most "practical" life, in our sense of the term, as paradigmatic. Indeed, the reader (the student) is not disappointed for the bulk of the Nicomachean Ethics. Therein Aristotle outlines a view of human excellence, based upon human nature, which includes prominently the exercise of the

moral virtues, virtues such as courage, temperance, and liberality. The human good is seemingly to be construed in quite "practical" terms. The contrast in views concerning the human good between Plato and Aristotle would seem to be marked. Whereas the former locates the human good in a life given over to philosophical contemplation and only secondarily (and hesitatingly) to moral and political activity, Aristotle seems to favour the practical over the theoretical. But such a conclusion on Aristotle's behalf is too quick. In the final book of the Nicomachean Ethics, such a view is no longer in place. In chapters 7 and 8 of book 10, Aristotle clearly rank-orders the life devoted to theoria (philosophical contemplation) over the life devoted to moral and political virtue. On grounds such as self-sufficiency, continuity of activity and pleasure (of a sort), theoria is the clear victor over the activity of moral virtue. In the final analysis, the vaunted difference between the "other-worldly" Plato and the "realist" Aristotle comes to little.

Now this is not to suggest that the contemplative ideal entails a monastic existence, far from the madding crowd. Aristotle is clear that we cannot be happy without family, friends and so forth; even Socrates carried forth his activity squarely within the polis. Nevertheless, such "material" aspects of human happiness are (merely) enabling conditions for the possibility of attaining the (true) human good.

Before we turn to some Muslim philosophers who were decisively influenced by this Greek conception of human flourishing, we should
note a corollary that follows from the aforementioned conception of human flourishing. Given that happiness consists in rational contemplation, an activity of the highest

intellectual order, human happiness turns out to be the attainable prize of but a few. Only the intellectual elite, according to both the Platonic and Aristotelian models, can be truly happy; only they can flourish in the highest degree. For those incapable of such feats of ratiocination, a secondary degree of human flourishing is possible. But even here, it should be noted, a certain elitism is evident, for to be able to engage in (Aristotelian) moral virtue, a level of material well-being is required for success. One cannot be liberal without adequate funds, and so forth. In sum, the Greek conception of human flourishing is manifestly aristocratic in its intent. Whether excelling in the highest of the intellectual virtues or in moral and political activity, (true) human happiness is open to some, closed to many.

Thus, we have in Plato and Aristotle an intellectualist version of the human good, with (1) varying discomfort about its connectedness to moral and political life, and (2) an unambiguous elitist propensity. As we turn to some of the Muslim philosophers, I suggest we bear these points in mind. We shall see how they creatively adapt Classical Greek views to their own time and place. The Muslim philosophers to be discussed are al-Farabl, Ibn Bajjah (Avempace), Ibn Tufayl and Averroes.

Islamic Discussions of the Human Good

Al-Farabl

It is hardly surprising that al-Farabl (259/872–339/950), an avid student of both Plato's Republic and Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics, should be influenced by his Greek predecessors for his own discussions of the human good. Note that I have used the plural "discussions of the human good", for, as Galston (1990) has recently pointed out, al-Farabl has disparate views of the human good in different works. Indeed, his views run the spectrum from identifying the human good with political activity, to identifying it with theoretical activity alone, to, finally, identifying it with some sort of combination of the two. I think it is fair to say, however, that the latter two are the most prominent in the extant works. And perhaps this is as it should be, given the influence of his Greek predecessors.

We have then in al-Farabl, generally speaking, two competing views of human happiness, an exclusively theoretical one in al-Madinah al-fadilah ("On the Perfect State") and al-Siydsah al-madaniyyah ("The
Political Regime"), and one which attempts in Platonic fashion to wed philosophy and politics in Tahsjl al-sa'ddah ("The Attainment of Happiness"). The former view suggests that human felicity is to be identified with the activity of that part of the rational soul which is separate or, at any rate, separable from the body. Such activity in its highest aspect

takes the form of ittisdl, conjunction with the active intellect, this latter a transcendent entity and the proximate source for the possibility of human intellection.

I cannot here dwell upon the nature of such conjunction, but shall merely note that, in those places where ittisdl is strongly underscored as true human felicity, al-Farabl thereby adopts a wholly apolitical conception of the human good. Such a view of the human ideal carries with it a (Greek-inspired) intellectual elitism, which allows true happiness to but a very few. Indeed, al-Farabi's elitism shines through when (in e.g. Siydsah: 56) he strongly distinguishes religion and philosophy, and asserts that the majority of men pursue an imagined (merely apparent) happiness, and not a theoretically grounded one. For al-Farabi, famously, religion is an image of true wisdom, of philosophy. The former deals with (mere) images in the form of stories and parables, and such "phenomena" are the means whereby the mass of humanity achieves such happiness as it is capable of. And though al-Farabi grants the mass of humanity a share in happiness, via religion, it is clear that he reserves his praise for the few, the philosophers. Philosophy stands to religion for al-Farabi, as philosophical insight stands to the unenlightened beliefs of the nonphilosophers for Plato.

But, as noted, there is another human ideal for al-Farabi. For all of his preference for the theoretical, apolitical ideal, he announces in Tahsil al-sa'ddah that:

when the theoretical sciences are isolated and the possessor does not have the faculty for exploiting them for the benefit of others, they are defective philosophy. To be a truly perfect philosopher one has to possess both the theoretical sciences

and the faculty for exploiting them for the benefit of all others according to their capacity. Were one to consider the case of the true philosopher, he would find no difference between him and the supreme ruler. For he who possesses the faculty for exploiting what is comprised by the theoretical matters for the benefit of all others possesses the faculty for making such matters intelligible as well as for bringing into actual existence those of them that depend on the will. The greater his power to do the latter, the more perfect is his philosophy. Therefore, he who is truly perfect possesses with sure insight, first, the theoretical virtues, and subsequently the practical.

(, Sa'adah\ 39, trans. Mahdi; my emphases)

This passage is as important as it is clear. Contra the theoretical ideal which we noted above, this passage presents a more "well-rounded" picture of the philosopher as prophet and of philosophy as prophecy. Whereas the previous picture paid no attention to the importance, indeed necessity, of "translating" theory into practice, this portrait sees such an important link between the two that it literally defines (true) philosophy as enlightened political rulership. Reminiscent of Plato, the true philosopher and the supreme ruler are, or ought to be, one.

Although this model of the human ideal is I think incommensurable with the wholly theoretical one, there is at least one point of agreement. We noted the inherent intellectual elitism of the theoretical paradigm, but one cannot deny that it is in place here in this picture of the Islamic supreme ruler. Although he returns to the cave and takes his place in the world, it is only he (the prophet) who has the requisite capacity to ground leadership upon theoretical

foundations. In this sense, then, there is a deep underlying unity in al-Farabl's thinking about human happiness and its possible achievement by humankind at large.

We cannot canvass al-Farabi's views on the human good more on this occasion, but we should note that he is an excellent point of departure. All subsequent philosophical reflections on the human good in medieval Islam are indebted to him. He is arguably the most Platonic of medieval Muslim philosophers, in so far as he often sees the pressing need to make philosophy and politics commensurable. And critical reactions to his views may be due to the less settled state of philosophy and philosophers in subsequent generations.

Ibn Bdjjah (Avempace) and Ibn Tufayl

As we turn from East to West and proceed through some two centuries, we come to two Spanish–Muslim thinkers whose particular conclusions concerning the human good stand in marked contrast to those of al-Farabi. Contra al-Farabl, who, as we have seen, often equates happiness with prophecy and, thereby, includes moral and political activity in the human good, both Ibn Bajjah (d. 533/1138–9) and Ibn Tufayl (d. 580/ 1185), each in his own way, strongly suggest the incommensurability of philosophy and politics. For them, the human good consists in philosophical (theoretical) activity alone. If one is to speak in Platonic terms, for both Ibn Bajjah and Ibn Tufayl, the return to the cave is so dangerous and fraught with posssible misunderstanding that the would-be happy individual is well advised to live in isolation, and in

Ibn Tufayl's allegorical tale Hayy ibn Yaqzdn such isolation is quite literally depicted.

Ibn Bajjah, in his Tadbir al-mutaivahhid ("The Governance of the Solitary"), addresses himself to the philosopher in the imperfect society,
the "real" world. Such men are isolated "weeds" (naivdbit) as Ibn Bajjah denominates them. They don't fit into their society. Whereas Plato faced the problem of the relationship of the philosopher to the perfect (virtuous) state and, as noted, concluded that the philosopher must return, albeit reluctantly, to the cave, Ibn Bajjah is not concerned with an ideal world and thus is not faced with one duty-bound to return to society. Ibn Bajjah's weeds exist in spite of the society they inhabit, and thus "they will possess only the happiness of an isolated individual" (Tadbtr: 11, trans. Berman). In this regard, they are rather like the Platonic philosopher (Socrates) eternally at odds with his society, of whom Plato says, "he is like a man who takes refuge under a small wall from a storm of dust or hail driven by the wind, and seeing other men filled with lawlessness, the philosopher is satisfied if he can somehow live his present life free from injustice and impious deeds, and depart from it with a beautiful hope, blameless and content" (Republic, 6.496d–e; trans. Grube). For both Plato and Ibn Bajjah (and, to be seen, Ibn Tufayl), the agenda and set of priorities of the philosopher and of real existent states are at odds. As a result, the philosopher must live in isolation, at least to the extent of not sharing in any way the goals of the state in which he dwells. For Ibn Bajjah, the weed dwells among men, but perfects himself by virtue of perfecting his spiritual nature, dissociating himself from "those whose end is corporeal and those whose end is the spirituality that is adulterated with corporeality" (Tadbtr: 78, trans. Berman).

Ibn Tufayl's allegorical tale Hayy ibn Yaqzan may well be read and understood as an elaboration on the thought of his predecessor, Ibn.Bajjah. As noted, Ibn Bajjah finds philosophy and politics incommensurable, with the result that the philosopher must live "apart" from the mass of humankind. This is precisely the lesson which Hayy, the protagonist of Ibn Tufayl's tale, learns, except that in his case the "apart", the solitude, is not metaphorical. Hayy learns that for his well-being and, equally importantly, for the well-being of humankind as a whole, he must live apart, physically distant, for in trying to persuade even the best amongst people on the basis of true (philosophical) wisdom "they recoiled in horror from his ideas and closed their minds … [And] the more he taught, the more repugnance they felt" (Hayy ibn Yaqzdn: 150, trans. Goodman). As a result of such dismal failure the reclusive Hayy returns whence he came, realizing that the compassion, born of inexperience, which impelled him from his island was woefully misplaced. Realizing that "most men are no better than unreasoning animals" (153), he departs from the political realm to seek wisdom.

The lesson Hayy has so painfully learned is that only a few can be truly happy, made so by philosophy; only a few can perceive the truth unveiled. For the others, the many, the truth must be veiled in the stories and parables of the law. The elitism is apparent. Only the philosopher
can ascend to the illuminative mysteries, and, having attained these truths, he must learn the painful lesson that they cannot be communicated to the world at large. Philosophy and politics are incommensurable, indeed to the detriment of both philosopher and non-philosopher, for the former must live in isolation and the latter cannot be enlightened. Quite contrary to al-Farabi, for whom philosophy was defective if

untranslatable, Ibn Tufayl (and Ibn Bajjah) are less exercised by the non-practical nature of philosophy. For them, pessimists as they are, humankind cannot be transformed. As a result, human happiness must be found in isolation.

So far, then, we have seen the Muslim philosophers take different sides on the issue of the commensurability of philosophy and politics, with al-Farabi being most optimistic (Platonic) in the matter, Ibn Bajjah and Ibn Tufayl considerably less so. But all are agreed that theoretical wisdom stands at the apex of human achievement, and in it resides human felicity. In such a belief the medieval Muslim philosophers join company with their Greek predecessors. Both Plato and Aristotle are likewise in agreement about the theoretical nature of the human good. As a result, the issue for all concerned, as moral and political thinkers, seems to be the elitist implications of the view. If only a few can achieve true happiness, what unites the community?

Averroes

Averroes (d. 595/1198) comes toward the end of the philosophical tradition we are discussing. A commentator on both Plato and Aristotle, Averroes is in many ways reminiscent of al-Farabi. Al-Farabi, Ibn Bajjah and Ibn Tufayl all discuss the human good and its relation to the political realm. But only al-Farabi does not give in to despair. Though he believes only a very few can achieve the highest good, al-Farabi is insistent that such an ideal must serve a political end, and if not, is defective. Averroes, for his part, seems to share the view that the philosopher must find a way to serve the community. In his Commentary on Plato's Republic,

actually a paraphrase of it, Averroes asserts quite straightforwardly that "the best perfection" (64:26) is to participate as a philosopher in a society which appreciates such a person. Indeed, for Averroes, like al-Farabi and his (Averroes') Jewish counterpart, Maimonides, such enlightened rulership is the mark of the prophet. And prophecy in this sense of enlightened leadership is the ideal. For Averroes, this ideal is in fact grounded in the law. His famous Fasl al-maqdl ("The Decisive Treatise") makes abundantly clear that the law obligates those capable of so doing to study philosophy (Fasl al-maqdl: 1–2), and given that the law was given to ensure the well-being of the entire community, including those (non

philosophers) in need of instruction, the obligation to study philosophy must perforce have a practical application.

What makes Averroes so important and quite unique in the story being told is his desire to ground philosophy and its study in the law. As bound by the law the philosopher lives as a prophet among people, and by virtue of his excellence in philosophical wisdom he is obligated to rule. The necessity which enjoins him to rule provides a rather neat conclusion to the entire issue before us. In Plato, we noted a hesitation in the philosopher's return to the cave. Overwhelmed by the beauty and order of his intellectual vision, it is difficult to motivate the philosopher to return to the political realm. Seemingly, on philosophical grounds the marriage between philosophy and politics cannot be consummated. But perhaps there are other grounds.

For Averroes, there are. And this is why the law is so crucial to his theorizing, much more so than to the theorizing of any of the other Muslim thinkers we have discussed. It is only the

law which can provide the grounds, the argument why the philosopher should return to the cave. Left to his own devices, Averroes seems to suggest, self-interest will prevail and the philosopher will jib at returning. This is hardly to suggest, as some theologians think, that in fact Averroes must have secretly believed that self-interest must prevail and that, as a result, philosophy and politics do not mix. For this overlooks the manifest fact that Averroes was a Muslim, not a heretic. For him, the law was binding, and it enjoins the study and practice of philosophy for all capable for the benefit of the entire community.

The human good, then, for Averroes is really no different from that of his predecessors. It entails the study of philosophy. He is as much an elitist as any of the other thinkers discussed. But the twist which he gives his discussion of the summum bonum is its inherently legal status. In achieving the human good one must return to the cave. The Platonic worry about the incommensurability of philosophy and politics is obviated.

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CHAPTER 56

Aesthetics

Salim Kemal

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In keeping with the traditional exegetical and normative method of Qur'anic and philological sciences, early aesthetic thought in Islam pursued a validation that may be called "argument by example and illustration". In this mode, critics advanced an account of the nature of poetry by examining the grammatical and philological rules present in works that were accepted as models of good poetry. They do refer to the different mental states of subjects, the play of different causal factors or the play of imagination, but these remain dependent on linguistic factors.

In a I-Bay an wa'l-tabyin al-Jahiz explains isti 'drah as calling one thing by the name of something else because of a similarity between two terms based on their contiguity and resemblance.[1] He maintains that it concerns single words or stylistic devices, [2] and warrants its legitimacy by analysing its linguistic structure.[3] Ibn Qutaybah proposes that majdz or figurative language underpins poetry, and in Ta'wll mushkil al-qur'dn explains the term through such linguistic terms as isti'drah, tamthil, inversion, omission and repetition.[4]

Tha'alibl, in Qawaid al-shi'r, [5] analyses the transference of meaning in isti'drah in terms of mental imagery, [6] which he explains through the language poets use to articulate imagery. Similarly, when in Kitdb al-badi' Ibn al-Mu'tazz sets out seventeen apparently new figures, his radical innovation is tempered by the facts that, firstly, earlier writers had already set out nine of these figures while in the other eight he proposes distinctions already present, if inadequately identified, in established and exemplary instances, [7] and, secondly, that he explains the figures by reference to the grammatical and philological rules governing their use. [8]

In al-Muwdzanah bayn shi'r Abl Tammdm wai-Buhturi al-Amidl argues that, since the purpose of discourse is to communicate something, if the borrowed word or phrase is not useful it also lacks justification and cannot claim to be aesthetic. [9] In order to preserve the inter-subjective validity of poetic discourse, he says, firstly, we cannot make poetic comparisons by using is Li 'drah that are far-fetched and, secondly, we must use familiar and traditional personification[10] because, thirdly, the audience must be able to grasp the point of any similarity. Otherwise putative poetic discourses become simply subjective, idiosyncratic and incapable of general appreciation.[11] In a parallel move, in al-Wasatah bayn al-mutanabbi iva-khusiimih al-Qadl al-JurjanT treats isti'drah as part of "the perfection of the artistic treatment" and of the creative ability of the poet, [12] which makes it a fundamental element of aesthetic discourse, [13] as contrasted with literal or cognitive expression.

In addition to the linguistic analysis of works, critics argue that the evaluation of poetic discourse must refer to the soul's response – the calm and peace it evokes or the antipathy it

causes.[14] Thus in Kitdb al-badt Ibn al-Mu'tazz distinguishes the presence of isti'drah, which makes the use of language agreeable or disagreeable, and shows that language is figurative rather than literal, [15] from the deployment or absence of kindyah and ta'rid, which make literary discourse beautiful or ugly. Similarly, al-Amidl validates the communicable meaning of poems by relying on (analogy) qiyas with accepted usages but insists on ijnuT or agreement in subjects' responses to explain their aesthetic value.

In this context, the critics' analysis of the same examples provides a body of exemplary cases which establish what is good poetry. Analysis displays what their value consists in, why newer works are also good so far as they use these or analogous rules, and how members of the audience can appreciate the work and come to agree, by having for themselves, in response, feelings of calm and peace[16] as factors that beautify.

With theorists like Ibn Paris, al-Tha'alibT and Ibn Rashlq, the philological character of their discussions consciously stems from issues raised in Qur'anic exegesis.[17] In any case, these critics relied on the linguistic exegetical method because that was a guarantee of validity. This grammatical analysis competed with another in which aesthetic validity had a distinctive logical cast. The principal representatives of this approach are the Aristotelian philosophers al-Farabi, Ibn Slna (Avicenna) and Ibn Rushd (Averroes). Grammar to them was limited to examining the rules of a particular language; by contrast logic examined the rules for reasoning generally.

Al-Farabi considers the logical nature of poetic discourses in at least five texts: The Canons of Poetry, Kitdb al-shi'r,

Catalogue of the Sciences, The Introductory Risdlah on Logic and The Philosophy of Aristotle. These see poetry as a distinctive "imaginative syllogistic proof by example" and argue that poetic discourse is rationally acceptable because we can analyse the syllogistic form lying at its basis.[18] In this al-Farabi relies on Aristotle's definition of a syllogism as a "discourse in which, certain things being posited, something other than what is posited follows of necessity from their being so".[19]

The imaginative nature of poetic discourse is crucial to its distinction from other syllogisms. In the Catalogue of the Sciences al-Farabl explains that poetic discourse brings to mind an image or imagined representation that lacks truth value yet, at a prerational but ratiocinative level, still has an effect upon us. Something happens to us "through the imaginative creation [representation, takhyil\ which takes place in our soul".[20] We "create an illusion" to a "circumstance or characteristic … of the object one speaks about".[21] We associate things in imagination that do not themselves have this association, for example the span of a day and the span of a life, thereby constituting poetic similes and comparisons that give objects and events new meanings.

In the Canons al-Farabl refers these constructions of imagination to the form of proof by example, which is a subset of arguments by analogy. Poetic similes are like examples that work by associating two objects that resemble each other in some respect, say because both possess a property P and extrapolating that, since they possess property P in common, both must also possess another property, Q. This extrapolation has the form of a syllogism so far as acceptance of the first association generates a disposition to

accept the second. Here imagination has the power to construct the association of representations which are present in examples and poetic similes and comparisons. It supplies the middle or enabling premiss that may be universal but only imagined or that associates elements so closely that they carry as much force of conviction for subjects as universal premisses do. The association between a day and a life seems so right that we infer for the life characteristics that we would normally associate only with the day, perhaps thinking of old age as the evening of a life, in which the restfulness felt at the end of a day spent in hard work is the relevant similarity. Other associations are also possible here, too, but the important thing is that for the comparison to be meaningful it must have rules, and al-Farabl explains the latter as having this form of an argument by example.

The inference secures our acquiescence as if it were a legitimate and warranted syllogism because once we find plausible and concede the initial representation of day and life we also accept the resulting association of evening and old age. The warrant for this plausibility is our ready acceptance of the imaginative construct. And al-Farabl suggests that we assess poets by their insight in making optimally remote but maximally convincing comparisons in their discourse.

There are problems with al-Farabi's theory. Firstly, the acceptance of the imaginative construct remains subjective and arbitrary. It is merely psychological, being dependent on how easily representations generate a conviction that may vary from subject to subject. It cannot then so much
secure agreement as obtain it only in those contingent cases where subjects' psychology coincides. Secondly, examples neither yield nor rely on propositions that are generally

applicable elsewhere; yet if poetic discourse is constituted by arguments by example and, if the premises of these arguments cannot be justified in the standard way by deriving them from other generalizations or categories, then all we can do is simply accept or reject the premises, where the psychological basis of such acceptance or rejection remains unjustified. But this arbitrariness of poetic syllogisms renders arbitrary the poetic discourse it sustains, and denies its legitimacy. Legitimacy implies an expectation we can have of how any subject must respond; but, because their success depends ultimately on a contingent and variable psychological conviction, arguments by example do not satisfy such expectations. Thirdly, arguably al-Fârâbl does not clearly explain the relation between aesthetic value and the logical form of the poetic syllogism. He mentions pleasure as a part of this value but gives little indication of how it gains validity.

These weaknesses in al-Fârâbi's theory find some resolution in the work of Ibn Slna. Relying on Aristotle's conception of demonstrative syllogisms Ibn Slna argues for the formal role of pleasure in constituting poetic syllogisms and for their moral value. He presents his theory in numerous works, including the Commentary on Aristotle's Poetics, Remarks and Admonitions: Logic, and Kitab al-qiyds.

For Ibn Slna poetic syllogisms are "composed of imagined propositions", or "premisses [having] a certain disposition and composition".[22] Poetic and literary utterances have a logical form which follows the pattern of demonstrative reasoning although, unlike demonstrative syllogisms, poetic ones use "premisses inspired by emotion" – our imaginative assent to a poetic syllogism being due to the pleasure and

wonder which we feel in response to understanding and thereby appreciating the harmony of its elements.

For Aristotle and Ibn Slna logical necessity is obvious and primitive: it is expressed in the first figure syllogistic, which consists of four perfect and self-evident conclusions, and lacks and does not need any more basic underlying principles to justify its validity. Logicians test the validity of statements, arguments and examples of informal reasoning by seeing whether these are reducible to the first figure without loss of meaning and sense. If they are not, then they involve meanings and connotations that are unruly, and their acceptability is merely a matter of the psychology of a subject rather than of the rules for rational thought.

However, a defence by reference to primitiveness and obviousness, even if it works for demonstration, need not work for poetic syllogisms. Meanings in poetic statements are cumulative and synthetic; their nuances and connotations depend on complex constructions and will be lost on being translated into simpler first figure terms. Thus, their meanings seem
irretrievably non-rational. Their openness to infinite interplay, embodied in their complex construction, suggests an irreducibility to first figure terms which, in turn, means that the validity of their syllogism cannot be tested: consequently their acceptance would depend on the psychology of the subject rather than the rules of rational thought.

To answer this doubt, Ibn Slna relies on a proposal with a long history that predates his work and is usual even in contemporary thought: the construction of meanings in figurative language involves a relation between terms that,

when it is harmonious, occasions pleasure. This proposal blunts the threat of incoherence and psychologism contained in the possibility of an infinite interplay. The occurrence of pleasure from understanding the meanings of terms shows that the mix of terms is not infinite because a harmony between an infinite number of elements is an implausible event: harmony presupposes some sense of a whole, of elements held in a known relation and found to have a harmony. The possibility of an infinite number of elements would disrupt any claim to harmony by always leaving open the possibility of unruly elements. The presence of pleasure and harmony suggests a meaningful order – that meanings are not open to the infinite interplay that threatens incoherence.

Ibn Slna limits the interplay of meanings also through the theme guiding the deployment of figurative language. These themes include tragedy, satire[23] and the motifs usual to Arabic poetry such as the naslbah, the caravan site and journey, and so on. The themes, once established, will exhaust all figurative language. However, they are open to rational argument and defence: perhaps one theme becomes outdated or there is need for a new "post-tragic epic" form, and so on. In any case, the theme and the pleasure in an harmony of terms provide for a meaningful order and relation of terms in poetic discourse.

By this account, it is important to note, pleasure is a part of the formal structure of the poetic syllogistic, being essential to the validity of the syllogistic because it establishes which meanings are relevant by restricting the interplay of associations to the ones that form a harmonious relation. The feeling is not a factor added externally or arbitrarily, but shows how poetic syllogisms work. They show that poetic

discourse is rule-governed; and while it cannot claim the certainty of demonstrative arguments, its emotive and ratiocinative quality is still valid because it is a pleasure in a harmonious relation of terms with given meanings.

The role of feeling also shows that the formal validity of poetry involves an essential reference to the subject and its participation in the aesthetic activity and also bars morally unjustifiable content from poetry. This may be made clearer as follows.

Poetic discourse imitates the subject in that it treats the subject as the end of the process of production of aesthetic discourse because its
experience of pleasure forms the ultimate ground for appreciating a poem. Only the occurrence of this feeling will validate aesthetic discourse. A subject appreciates a work when he or she has the appropriate feeling, not when someone else does so. Agreement can only be given by the particular subject, who thus becomes crucially important to the success of poetic discourse.

If subjects must give assent, then, by implication, evil poems cannot be aesthetically valuable. This needs explanation. Ibn Sina follows Aristotle in thinking of virtue as a balanced individual; he also adds that just political relations are partnerships "only achieved through reciprocal transactions" between individuals: when they contain a balance between individuals.[24] Moreover, the existence of a community is necessary for individual existence, for we recognize ourselves as human beings only through interaction with others like ourselves.[25] An unjust or evil society, then, excludes individuals from reciprocal transactions, especially, perhaps,

when they maintain a balanced and virtuous individual life. As an imbalance, evil mis-stresses some parts of ourselves over others, and cannot account for the qualities whose possession makes us virtuous human beings.

By this argument, an evil poem would be morally imbalanced and procure an aesthetically pleasing harmony between terms. Yet this remains impossible. Pleasure has to be given by a subject; however, the partial stresses in the evil poem connotes a divisive society that excludes the virtuous individual and moral mean. But those people excluded by the evil poem are also the ones who must appreciate it and constitute its aesthetic value by grasping its meaning and giving assent. To find the evil poem beautiful, not only would they have to thwart their own participation in the community just when they gave assent to a poem, but their assent would also be vacuous because they are excluded by the society subtended by the poem. Yet only their pleasurable response can validate the claim that the evil poem is beautiful. In other words, the poem's aesthetic value cannot be constituted except through their participation, yet if their participation is serious, it will restore the balanced community. In a parallel move, we may argue that an evil poem, even if found beautiful by the evil community (assuming that there can be such a thing), will not be beautiful in any serious sense because its aesthetic value has not been tested, so to speak, since the criteria for distinguishing the community are not defeasible. In either case, poetic discourse that is structured by the kind of syllogistic Ibn Sina proposes will also have moral connotations.

Perhaps the most important next development of this theory of logical poetical validity occurs with Ibn Rushd, whose

Commentary on the Poetics harks back over the intervening presence of al-Ghazzali to re-appropriate the tradition begun by al-Farabl and Ibn Sina.[26] Firstly, in
texts such as On the Harmony of Religion and Philosophy and in Kitdb al-kashf 'an manahij al-aditlah, Ibn Rushd considers metaphors in their scriptural use, arguing that we must consider the meanings of metaphors in the context of a search for truth. Truth and knowledge provide the most secure community because they can claim and sustain subjects' agreement. Only when the standard ways of arriving at truth prove inadequate, and in order to grasp the meanings contained in metaphors and allegories, do we use those criteria for explaining metaphorical meanings.

To examine the force, scope and validity of metaphors Ibn Rushd turns to the Poetics. His underlying concern for truth is not always clear, for he often distinguishes metaphors in "scriptural texts" from poetry;[27] but that cannot be the whole story. If poetic statements are implausible, [28] exaggerated, [29] incoherent, [30] loose[31] and some other cognates of truth, they will lack validity, he maintains, thus suggesting that truth is vital to poetic validity. We might explain this as follows.

As the structure of a poem or story is made up of such events, actions and character development, then any implausibility in it in this regard occurs as an incoherence in the depiction of events, actions and character. But such incoherence has other implications, for where a story is implausible because it misrepresents or fails to explain the actions, motivations and development of its characters, there we will find incoherence in the structure of the work. The story will be disrupted in the sense that the sequence of events will appear inconsistent, ambiguous or unexplained in some measure at some point in

the structure of the story. But this fault in the structure has yet other consequences, for it means that the work lacks cohesion or unity because the actions and events fail to follow the order of a plausible story. The implausibility of actions and events, which is seen in the incoherence of the depicted sequence of events and actions, leads us to doubt the unity of the sequence of events. But the latter make up the structure of the story. Moreover, "unity" or "harmony" is an aesthetic criterion also; so that its absence is a reason for finding a work aesthetically unsatisfactory. Accordingly the aesthetic evaluation of a work by reference to the presence or absence of harmony or unity is explained ultimately by the truths embodied in the actions and events depicted in the story. It suggests why we will find the story better aesthetically if it gives us a better understanding of its truths at the same time as the sequence of its events has a harmonious unity in the structure of the story. And the depth of a story will clearly be better the more truths it makes available. Thus the more successful the harmony of elements of our deeper access to the truth – that is, the deeper the truth and the more diverse the elements held in harmony in the story – the better we shall think it aesthetically. In other words, its truth is essential to the aesthetic character and value of the story; and this yields what we wanted
to infer: the aesthetic value of a work, far from precluding it from gaining access to the truth, depends on such access.

A similar situation holds in poetry. We can argue that where a poem is less than truthful – where it is implausible, exaggerated, one-sided, incoherent, etc. – there it is shallow and lacks unity. Thus a poem which misrepresents love is shallow and unlikely to satisfy anyone possessing or wanting a deeper understanding and experience of the subject – whether this understanding is philosophical, dialectical or

native to the masses. The poem will not be generally admired and will fail to generate a common response because it does not get at the real matter of love. Further, by contrast with that better understanding, where a poem's structure depends on a superficial understanding of love, there we will find it incoherent, because it is implausible, and therefore lacking in unity and so ill-constructed. The untruthfulness of the poem, then, determines its lack of unity, and so renders it aesthetically inadequate.

These references to truth allow Ibn Rushd to affirm the close relation between truth and beauty. Moreover, he can hold that moral approbation depends on getting closer to the truth and will of God. Consequently, he can argue, as a part of the logical organon of philosophy, poetiy will bring us closer to God in its distinctive way and so will possess a commensurate value. Poetics tells us of the sorts of demands we may make of each other on the basis of the truth-seeking and affective validity of poetry. Now Ibn Rushd maintains that we must use our reason; and we may suppose that moral justifications are open to rational examination. As Ibn Rushd also contends that rational philosophical justification and religion are equally capable of truth, the rational, philosophical justification of morality and revealed imperatives also give us insight into God's demands of subjects. Thus, as poetry is truthful and a part of philosophy, and as philosophy gives us insight into God's demands of subjects, the claim is that poetry too shares in this enterprise. Consequently, the demands we make of each other on the basis of poetic validity tell us also of the relation between human beings and God which poetry sustains. It tells us of the conception of human being which Ibn Rushd thinks is appropriate to Islam.

NOTES

1 Al-Jahiz, al-Baydn wa'l-tabyin, ed. A. M. Harun (Cairo, 1948–50), 4 vols, 1: 153ff' '

2 Heinrichs (1977): 29f.

3 Al-Jahiz, al-Bayan 153; Heinrichs (1977): 26.

4 Ta'wil mushkil al-qur'iin, ed. A. Sakr (Cairo, 1954): 15–16.

5 Ed. Abd al-Tawwab (Cairo, 1966), p. 57.

6 See Heinrichs (1977): 32–3, where he argues that "the meaning borrows a
mental representation" which for Tha'alibl constitutes isti'drab as a matter of borrowing "the mental image of the camel, and thus contains all the properties of the camel from which the appropriate ones can be selected to establish the [relevant] analogy".

7 For example, his discussion of husn al-khuruj min mana ild ma'nd at 60ff., which borrows from Tha'alibi, and of husn al-ibtida'ah at 75ff. – i.e., at the end of the book. Ibn al-Mu'tazz, Kitdb ttl bitdi, and Bonebakker, cited below.

8 Kitdb ¡il batll, passim.

9 Al-Mnwdzanah bayn shi'r Abi Tammdm wa'l-Buhturi, ed A. Sakr (Cairo, 1961, 1965), 1: 135.

10 Ibid.: 223, 250–9, 254.

11 Ibid.: 250–9.

12 Fourth ed., ed. A. M. al-Bajjawi and M. A. F. Ibrahim (Cairo, 1966): 33, 35–9, 164.

13 Ibid.: 319.

14 Ibid.: 320.

15 Al-Mu'tazz, Kitdb al-badi\ the tropes are discussed throughout the book.

16 Al-Qadl al-Jurjanl al-Wasdtah bayn al-Mutanabbi wa-khusumih, 4th ed. by M. A. al-BljawI and M. A. Ibrahim (Cairo, 1966), p. 320.

17 See Fleinrichs (1977): 45ff and 53–5.

18 Canons of Poetry, 115, in Cantarino 5, (1970), hereafter abbreviated as Canons.

19 Aristotle, Prior Analytics, 1, 24b 16

20 Catalogue of the Sciences, 1 18, trans. in Cantarino (1970).

21 Canons, 116.

22 Remarks and Admonishments: Logic, 148.

23 Commentary: 66–8.

24 Healing: Metaphysics, 10.110 (italics added).

25 Healing: Metaphysics, 10.

26 Ibn Rushd, Commentary on the Poetics of Aristotle, trans. and ed. C. W. Butterworth (Princeton, 1988). The issue of Ibn Rushd's conception of the relation between truth and poetry is treated by Mansour Ajami, The Alchemy of Glory: the Dialectic of Truthfulness and Untruthfulness in Medieval Arabic Literary Criticism (Washington DC, 1988): 57ff. I think the latter does not give sufficient weight to the tendencies in Ibn Rushd's commentary that militate towards associating truth and poetry positively, and instead, too often, takes the commentator at his apparent word and maintains that truth and poetry are incompatible. See also George F. Flourani, On the Harmony of Religion and Philosophy: a translation with Introduction and Notes of Ibn Rushd's Kitdb fad al-maqdl, with its appendix (Damima) and an extract fom Kitdb al-kashf 'an manahij al-adilla (London, 1976). A fuller translation of the Kitdb al-kashf is provided by Jamil Ur-Rehman, Averroes' Philosophy and Theology (Baroda, 1921).

27 Ibn Rushd, Commentary on the Poetics of Aristotle: 77–8, 92–4, 135, etc.

28 Ibid. For example at 83 Ibn Rushd suggests that "false invention" is not part of the poet's activity.

29 Ibid.: 84–6: Ibn Rushd criticizes those who in eulogy "exaggerate in praising."

30 Ibid.: 82–3, where he argues for a single purpose for poems.

31 Ibid.: 81–2, where Ibn Rushd suggests that explanations must be well organized and short.

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CHAPTER 57

Law

Norman Calder

Western scholarship (even when written by Muslims) has rarely presented Islamic law in such a way as to demonstrate its values rather than the values of the observer. It is legal practice in the Western sense (which admittedly corresponds to the special concerns of some Muslim jurists) that dominates the standard introductions to the subject: Schacht (1950), Linant de Bellefonds (1956) and Fyzee (1964). Certain features of Muslim juristic discourse, those perhaps which are most revealing of its nature and its intentions, are in such works disregarded in favour of a search for practical rules (certainly present, but strangely hard, sometimes, to find).

The problem may be exemplified by reference to two excellent works of scholarship which appeared in the late 1980s. Nabil Saleh, in his Unlawful Gain and Legitimate Profit in Islamic Law, pursues an aim which he shares with many modern Muslims, namely that of "reasserting SharVah as a valid and sensible corpus of commercial and civil laws" (1986: 4). What he wants to achieve is "a financial system based on Islamic ethics", the subject matter of his final

chapter. What stands in his way, and it does stand in his way, is the tradition of Muslim juristic writing. He goes through it honourably; but its variation, its complexity, its extravagant exploration of detail, its, constant citation of different authorities, its apparent irrelevance, sometimes, to practice, its cunning and witty accommodation, sometimes, to practice: all these things make his task difficult, and will alert his readers to the fact that "a valid and sensible corpus of laws" is not quite what these jurists had in mind. Baber Johansen's book The Islamic Law on Land Tax and Rent (1988) centres on a set of legal concepts which were exploited by (amongst others) the Ottoman jurist Ibn Nujaym (970/1563), in Egypt, as an expression of his opposition to certain government tax-collecting initiatives. (These were justified in turn by a different manipulation of the same concepts.) Johansen's depiction
of development, juristic manipulation and social consequence is revealing, but revealing of something that is particularly interesting to Western scholarship, namely the use of the law in a political situation.

Ibn Nujaym did indeed produce a treatise which had direct relevance to the politics of his day. But when he transferred the arguments of that treatise to his great compendium of the law, Al-Bahr al-rd'iq, the nature of the arguments changed. First, they took their place as a tiny part of the whole that is the law (by no means an insignificant message), and, second, they ceased to have an immediate activist import. They became a part of the tradition. They were thus of course preserved and might be used again, but, in their new context, they had become an element in a pattern, a pattern constituted primarily by citations from earlier authorities. (What a Muslim law-book characteristically reveals is the tradition.)

In cases of established dispute, Ibn Nujaym may have had preferences, but his literary procedure was such as to open up to his readers what the tradition had discovered, through a pattern of argument and counter-argument that represented centuries of juristic effort and juristic debate. The concepts of the law were explored through the tradition's provision of scholarly analysis.

The centripetal (if rather distant) focus of scholarly comment was revelation. That consideration suggests a preliminary definition of Islamic law: it is a hermeneutic discipline which explores and interprets revelation through tradition. The last two words of that definition are the most important. For the most obvious shaping factor, in any work of Islamic law, is its engagement with the past of a particular tradition, and its loyalty to it. So much is this true that the tendency of the following pages will be to modify that definition, and suggest rather that Islamic law is a discipline that explores tradition, and uses tradition to discover (and limit) the meanings of revelation.

No one would deny that the explorations of the law were intended to influence, and might be used sometimes to control, practice; but the great exponents of the tradition would not, I think, admit that their work was valueless just because no one paid (practical) attention to it. The impulse to explore the law was (also) for its own sake, as an act of piety complete in itself, and so intrinsically a part of the religious perceptions of the Muslim community, that they hardly gave it (what the modern analyst has none the less to discover) explicit articulation.

The connotations of the phrase "Islamic law" are in part a product of Western perceptions and have been introduced now to Muslim societies through linguistic caiques like Arabic al-qdnun al-isldmi. There is no corresponding phrase in pre-modern Muslim discourse. There, the two terms which expressed the commitment of the Muslim community to divine law were fiqh and Shari'ah. The first of these is the easier to define.

It always refers to the human, and more or less academic, activity of exploration, interpretation, analysis and presentation of the law, whether this takes place in books, in schools, in the mind or in formal response to a specific question. It is possible to write fiqh, to teach and study it, to think (about) it and to manipulate and apply its concepts. Shari'ah, on the other hand, is a word whose connotations are divine. It can be used very loosely and broadly to refer to the Muslim religion, because it is God's religion. It connotes God's law even when the details of the law are unknown or immaterial. It inspires loyalty and commitment in a way that the word fiqh does not. In a very narrow and specific sense it can refer to God's law as an ideal: that which is somehow contained within revelation, that which the fuqaha', practitioners of fiqh, are trying to find through their explorations and analyses. And it is sometimes used to denote the same things as are denoted by the word fiqh (books of fiqh, books of Shari'ah), but with that added sense of religious loyalty which comes from its association with God and truth. In modern academic analysis of Islamic law, the word Shari'ah is of little use: what we can study and describe is always fiqh.

Fiqh is most obviously available to us as a tradition of literature, though, behind this, there is a tradition of thought and of education, and some kind of aspiration to social control. There are two major types of fiqh literature, that known as furu al-fiqh (branches) and that known as usul al-fiqh (roots). The former sets out, or appears to set out, concepts and rules that relate to conduct, and arguments about them. Its headings are purity, prayer, fasting, alms, pilgrimage (the essential acts of worship, 'ibadat, and invariably the first five books of a work of furu) and then such topics as warfare, marriage, divorce, inheritance, penalties, buying and selling, judicial practice, etc., in variable order. The whole is a conceptual replica of social life, not necessarily aspiring to be either complete or practical, but balanced between revelation, tradition and reality, all three of which feed the discussion and exemplify the concepts. The literature of usiil identifies the divinely revealed sources of the law (Qur'an and Sunnah), auxiliary sources (like consensus – ijma), and the hermeneutic disciplines which permit the complex intellectual cross-reference between revelation, tradition and reality which is exemplified in a work offuru. The hermeneutic disciplines are historical and biographical (related to abrogation and to the reliability of those who transmit Sunnah), linguistic, rhetorical and logical. The linguistic and rhetorical sciences were in the developed tradition finely articulated, and presented usually under simple antithetical headings: command and prohibition, general and particular, absolute and qualified, metaphor and truth, etc. The application of logic to revelation usually meant analogy (qiyds) and was variously developed by different schools and individuals. The Shi'ite tradition was inclined to reject analogy as a systematic means to develop

the law, but shows a corresponding complexity in the application of other types of rational argument. Books of usul characteristically culminate in a discussion of ijtihdd, a term implying the exercise of the utmost effort to discover a particular item of the law through application of the hermeneutic rules (Calder (1983 and 1989); Hallaq (1984 and 1986)). It is probably true that the literature of furu is larger than the literature of usul, and more characteristic. (In the present chapter, and for reasons of space alone, the last two sections will be devoted exclusively to furu).

There is a third type of literature which has a role in the public presentation of Divine Law. It is that known as tabaqdt or "generations". Biographical in form, diachronic in organization, such books demonstrate the continuity of the tradition and the moral and intellectual status of its participating scholars. Their message is theological, though about history; it is that the lives and works of individual scholars derive meaning and significance from their place within an ongoing tradition of juristic thought. This is in fact the ubiquitous message of Islamic juristic literature: individual jurists are not engaged in a private dialogue with revelation, they are the heirs to a tradition. The discovery of meaning in revelation depends on conformity to that tradition. The tabaqdt literature defends, and of course defines, the tradition.

The five major schools of Islamic jurisprudence, the four Sunni schools (Hanafl, Malild, Shafi'l and Hanball) and the Imam! (Twelver) Shi'ites, have expressed themselves through the same three literary types. A broad formal description of the works produced within one school (or tradition) will suffice (to a degree) for all, in spite of the many points of

detail that mark their differences. All traditions also produced some specialist treatises and monographs, which can usually be accommodated within the three broad literary types identified above.

The tabaqdt literature has another, perhaps more prosaic, function. Books of this type vary from the extremely schematic list of names, dates, formal virtues, teachers, students and books produced which is the minimal requirement, to great sequences of anecdotes which, collected and juxtaposed on artistic principles, are intended to educate. (The Tabaqdt al-shdfi 'iyyat al-kubrd of al-Subkl – a Shafi'l jurist, d. 771/1370 – is an example of the latter type.) The education, reflecting the artistic impulse which works through contrived juxtaposition and variation, is miscellaneous, but is mostly about the law. Truths about the law which find academic, formal, complex articulation in works of film' or usul are rendered here through anecdote, sometimes witty, through poetic citations, through the recognition of scholar-heroes, through wondrous resolutions of tricky problems and through a vocabulary of description which carries subtle (or not so subtle) messages about the aims of the tradition.

Abu Hanlfah (150/767) was in the mosque one day, surrounded by a group of students who were shouting and arguing. "What, can't you
keep them quiet in the mosque?" muttered an irritable passer-by. "Leave them, " said Abu Hanlfah, "for only thus will they learn fiqh The historicity of the story is immaterial; its message is about the nature of the law – something to be argued about. The same Abu Hanlfah was holding a session one day in Mecca, when he was approached by a man from

Khurasan. "I am owner of considerable wealth, " said the man, "and I have a son. I am inclined to provide him with a wife and to set him up in comfort. But I fear he will divorce her and so squander my wealth. I could buy him a slave-girl and provide him thus with a household, but he might free her and so again squander my wealth. What shall I do?" "Take him to the slave-market, " said Abu Hanlfah, "and when a particular girl catches his eye, buy her for yourself, and then marry her to him. If, then, he divorces her, she returns to your ownership; and if he frees her … well, he can't, for she is yours." The teller of this story was delighted not just by the reply but by the immediacy of Abu Hanlfah's response (Dhahabl: 21, 22).

No conclusions may be drawn from this about marriage practice and family problems in third/ninth-century Khurasan. The story is a show-case for the exploration of concepts. It is generated by the dual system of acquisition of rights to legitimate sexual intercourse in Islamic law: marriage and slavery. A master has rights to intercourse with a slave-girl, unless she is married to another; he may in appropriate circumstances transfer those rights to another; only the owner of a slave can set her free; etc. The story can be explained by listing the relevant rules of law. It was preserved and valued because the legal concepts here set to work are embedded in a narrative fragment which has an earthy humour, and because they are neatly manipulated as a display of skill.

In developed Islamic societies (say, from the fifth/eleventh century onwards, but also before this) the only formal, public system of education had as its major components the teaching of revelation and the teaching of the law, that is the schools of law. There were ancillary disciplines, and various means of

secular and private education, but most educated members of Muslim society had as their primary currency of cultural exchange the concepts of the law. Through these they shared their leisure time, and created conversation, wit and public display; and through these they were able to analyse their society and their religion, to express their personal and their public piety and to devise various modes of social control. Fiqh was a multi-functional discipline. In the way that it possessed the lives of Muslims, it was challenged and in the end complemented only by the structures of Sufism. These two disciplines, at an intellectual and a practical level, were the primary modes of Muslim self-realization prior to the modern period. They could, without lack of piety, be experienced as humorous or serious.

There were of course differences of approach within schools and across schools. The Hanafl school in particular enjoyed the law, willingly explored its concepts through hypothetical cases and far-fetched problems and lent itself to cunning contrivances (hilah) which exploited the letter of the law in order to uncover its tolerant spirit (or not, as the case may be). All the traditions did this to some degree, the Hanballs being perhaps the most conservative and piously serious; and all were aware of the dangers of these attractions. The Malikls polemically frowned on the Hanafl predilection for hypothetical cases, but acknowledged the temptations even as they preserved (created?) the following story. An Iraqi (i.e. Hanafl) asked Malik (179/795) about a man who had sexual intercourse with a dead chicken, which then produced an egg, out of which came a chick; is it permitted for him to eat the flesh of the chick? Malik's recorded reply is remarkably mild, all things considered (al-Qadi 'Iyad (1967): 150–1).

Islamic law, in the thousand years or so of its cultural dominance, was the product of a highly sophisticated civilization. It was intimately related to an educational system which was more or less homogeneous throughout all pre-modern Muslim societies. Its long-term flourishing was due to the inherent flexibility of a conceptual structure which served to describe revelation, tradition and society. If the main aim of the structure was religious, indeed theological (an articulation of the hermeneutic relationship between the ongoing Muslim community and the ever more distant moment of God's direct intervention in human affairs), that does not exhaust the social functions it served. These might be explained in terms of the cultural needs of a sophisticated society, and probably cannot be explained in terms of the historical origins of Islamic law. None the less explanations in terms of origins have been characteristic both of the Muslim tradition and of the Western scholarly tradition.

The distant origins of Islamic law are strictly inaccessible, in the sense that they belong to a period for which we have no written records. The earliest surviving juristic texts are a number of works ascribed to named authorities of the late second/eighth and early third/ninth centuries. These works already show distinct school orientations, covering three major (and several minor) traditions, the Hanafl, the Maliki and the Shafi'1. Literary evidence for the existence of a Hanbali school of law is hardly available before the latter part of the third/ninth century, and for an Imam! Shi'ite school, the early part of the fourth/tenth. If the Muslim tradition has a historical theory (and it might be more accurate to say that the Muslim tradition offers a schematic paradigm whose function is educative) it is as follows. The words and deeds of the Prophet (his Sunnah) were preserved, in the form of discrete

anecdotes (Hadith), which were transmitted orally through the generations. These were the source of juristic

discussion which was eventually transformed, via the notably creative contributions of Abu Hanlfah, Malik, Shafi'1, Ibn Hanbal and, for the Shi'ites, such figures as the Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq, into the legal schools we now know. Development within the schools is acknowledged, e.g. by generalized reference to early scholars and later ones (al-mutaqaddimun, al-muta'akhkhiriin), but never explored. Each school is concerned to demonstrate that its tradition can be harmonized with revelation (which is not the same thing as asserting that Hadith are in fact, historically, the source of tradition). Historical considerations are almost entirely irrelevant to the aims of Muslim juristic writing.

By contrast, Western scholarship has amongst its foremost achievements Joseph Schacht's The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence (1950). (The epithet is justified perhaps by the Muhammadocentric nature of Muslim juristic discourse.) His key observation is simply that the earliest legal texts (especially those of the Hanafi tradition) are not notably interested in relating law to Prophetic Hadith, whereas later texts (especially those attributed to Shafi'T – 204/820) argue systematically that Prophetic Hadith are the only justification for juristic rules. Islamic law, he thought, emerged in local Muslim communities as a discursive presentation of local custom (which may well have been thought of as Prophetic), and was only later transformed into a hermeneutic discipline requiring constant cross-reference between rule and Hadith, i.e. between law and revelation (for Hadith, like Qur'an, is part of the revelation and quantitatively by far the greater part). A corollary of Schacht's theory is that much, indeed the bulk, of Hadith material will be found to be the result of a

search for justification, either of the pre-existent schools of law or of those who opposed them. This is perhaps confirmed by the fact that the literary production of Hadith collections is mostly posterior to the life of Shafi'l, the earliest collection of great authority being that of Bukharl (256/870).

Historically this means that the Muslim community was, from the late second/eighth to the early fourth/tenth centuries, engaged in a process of self-definition which was intensely focused on the components of and the relations between revelation (Qur'an and Hadith) and the various legal traditions. The literary witness to this process, according to Western scholars, was a number of juristic texts ascribed to early masters, an indeterminately large body of Prophetic Hadith, and – perhaps – the canonical text of the Qur'an (Wansbrough 1977). The stress on community creativity required by this model of historical development has been found theologically repugnant by many Muslims. It is none the less likely to be (broadly) true, and might not be intransigent to some developments of traditional theology. When the situation stabilized, so did the existential task. The Muslim community was committed to a number of divergent juristic traditions which, through polemical debate, had acquired a common sense of methodological purpose. That was the foundation of

Islamic law: a set of legal traditions more or less mutually self-recognizing (the ImamI Shi'ites never quite fully integrated) and committed to the task of justifying tradition (and developing it) by reference to revelation. The literary products of the formative, pre-Classical period, though held in great veneration, are not the greatest achievements of the traditions. In spite of an insistence (not just Western) on the

terminology of decline, the great achievements of Islamic jurisprudence are probably spread fairly evenly from the mid fourth/tenth to the thirteenth/ nineteenth centuries.

The literature of furu may be analysed as displaying two major types: mukhtasar and mabsut, the former term designating an epitome or digest of the law, the latter an expansum or broad exploration of the law's details. The terms are given by the tradition, where they figure frequently as the titles of specific books: the Mukhtasar of MarwazT (Hanafl, 334/946), al-Mukhtasar al-nafi' by'Allamah al-Hilll (ShT'T, 726/1325), the Mabsut of Muhammad ibn Hasan al-Tusi (Shl'! 460/1067) or of SarakhsI (Hanafl, 483/1090). They are also used by Muslim writers as I use them here, to designate types of literature. Even when the terms are not used, the typology is explicitly recognized and its components successfully indicated. Of the Yemeni scholar Ibn al-Muqri' (838/1434) it is recorded that he produced a work known as the Irshad. "It is a precious book on Shafi'i furu, elegant in expression and sweet in diction, extremely concise and dense with meaning. He himself wrote a commentary on it, in which he flew to the circumambient horizons" (ShawkanT (1929), i: 43). Shawkanl's contrast between the Irshad and its commentary indicates precisely what I have in mind by distinguishing mukhtasar and mabsut.

The earliest mukhtasars were produced in the fourth/tenth century. The four major Sunni schools all produced at least one significant mukhtasar in this period. They are generally useful works, not notably refined. Some of them (say, the Hanafl mukhtasars of Tahawi (321/ 933) and MarwazI (334/ 946)) have survived only because they were incorporated into later and more important commentaries (mabsut). Some have

a functional adequacy which has secured for them centuries of practical (educative) use, notably the Risdlah of the Maliki scholar Ibn Abl Zayd al-Qayrawanl (386/996). The Shi'ah produced no similar work earlier than the Nihdyah of TusI, whose late date reflects the relatively late emergence of the ImamI Shi'ah both as a definitive sectarian group and as a group committed to the normative Muslim discipline of the law. These early mukhtasars are significant in at least three different ways. Firstly, they are the product of authors who were consciously aiming at 'analytic control of their material, presentational elegance and some formal artistry. They were successful only to a degree but the sense of authorial personality and achieved personal control is of considerable importance. Secondly, and in some degree of contrast, these works are summaries of a school achievement and express a school loyalty. They rise above the polemical difficulties and the methodological complexities of third/ninth century debate to state the basic programme of concepts and rules which define their school, their tradition, their loyalty. Thirdly, they are functional: they serve the needs of a curriculum, being clearly intended as primers for students, and requiring elucidation and explication from teachers. These are the forerunners of a literary tradition, intimately associated with an educational programme and a social elite whose members, sharing their knowledge of the law, were enabled to analyse, enjoy and give formal religious dignity to the society they lived in.

The genre of mukhtasar was fundamentally educative. Such works explained the basic concepts and structures of the law, while giving only hints as to how these could be applied or explored. Initially, writers aimed only at a classical elegance of exposition. Their works are marked by restraint and by

sufficiency. Their concerns were to choose and to exemplify the basic concepts in order to create a vehicle that would successfully convey its educative message. Meticulous organization and careful recourse to divisions and subdivisions were prerequisites for successful literary production within the genre. It was a limited genre. The concepts of the law did not change through the centuries (though their application might). The (theologically guarded) sanctity of tradition ensured that the production of a single masterpiece, in Classical format, would dominate subsequent efforts, sometimes for centuries. Within the Hanafi tradition, the neatly decisive work of Qudurl (428/1037) lent in various degrees elements of form, order, structure and locution to the succeeding masterpieces of Mawsili (683/1284), Nasafl (710/ 1310, or 701) and Shurunbulah (1069/1659). Those who were trained in the discipline, who already knew the law, would find pleasure in such works in recognizing the formal skills of the writer, attested through neat deployment, subtle shifts in order, conceptual density and uncluttered precision.

Quduri, in his Mukhtasar, began his section on alms (zakdt) thus:

Zakdt is mandatory for the free man who is Muslim, mature and sane; if he owns a minimum quantity of goods, with exclusive ownership; and if he has had them for a year. Children, the insane, and slaves who are buying their own freedom are not subject to zakdt. One who is in debt for a sum that equals the value of his possessions is not subject to zakdt.

Shurunbulah, in his Nur al-iddh offers the following:

Zakdt is the transfer of specified wealth to a specified person. It is incumbent on the free man who is Muslim, subject to divine
command, and owner of a minimum quantity of goods, whether in the form of coinage, metal, ornaments or vessels; or in the form of trade goods whose value is equal to the minimum quantity; if he is free of debt and after provision of his basic needs; the minimum quantity being of goods which are productive, or potentially so.

Clause by clause the concept of zakât attracts layers of qualification which become densely suggestive of the problems that attend on God's command. It is highly unlikely for most Muslims, most of the time, that their actual performance of this duty conformed to this type of approach. A practical casualness is not at all incompatible with the conceptual search for qualified meaning and precise significance that is articulated by these carefully juxtaposed clauses. The grammatical and terminological density of the originals is weakened in the translations, which involve about twice as many words as are used in the Arabic texts. A careful reading however should induce some consciousness of how the later text has grown out of, and in some degree, away from, the first. The reader should be aware of the increased specificity, the thorough concretenes of "coinage, metal, ornaments, vessels", etc., and the neat placing of "provision for his basic goods". It is entirely appropriate to feel dissatisfied with "trade goods whose value is equal to the minimum quantity" (should it not be "equal to or greater than"?), and then to consider that the missing words would really, perhaps, be superfluous – as nothing at all should be in this kind of work. Between the first text and the second the law has not changed. What has bothered and interested the

jurists is their ability to catch the law in a network of words. The syntactic disjuncture that places the final clause in Shurunbulali's text is conveyed in Arabic by a variation in adjectival agreement which compels admiration for its marriage of concision and complexity. It is precisely this that the jurists wanted to achieve.

Clearly the genre lent itself to mannerism. With the passage of time, it inspired numerous masterpieces of structural, conceptual and syntactic dexterity that dazzle the reader as they invite him or her to share and delight in the writer's virtuoso mastery of a discipline. The mannerist works, unlike the "Classical" ones, do not have the immediate aim of explaining and elucidating the law; they are quite as likely to hide it, in order to entice the reader into that recreative exercise that consists in unpacking the meanings that have been meticulously – but never with recourse to vagueness or generalization – embedded in the intricate texture of language. One of the most successful such works (not in fact unduly tortuous) is the Mukhtasar of the Malikl scholar Khalil ibn Ishâq (776/1374). From the time of its production till the thirteenth/nineteenth century, it dominated the Malikl schools of North Africa and was universally recognized as a jewel.

Zakdt is mandatory / on the specified minimum / of flocks / subject to ownership / and the passing of a year / both complete / whether provided with fodder / or working / or product of breeding / but not of coupling with wild beasts; / increase is included / though before the year by only a day / but not on less [than the minimum] …

"Woven on a magician's loom" said Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani (852/1448), trying to convey this work's patterned complexity

(1966, 2: 175). The style is (part of) the message, and it should not be disregarded in a search merely for the rules. (These can be learnt elsewhere, and cannot be easily learnt from Khalil.) Such books say that the law is a delight and a pleasure, and that it is a tortuous and inextricable mystery; they create perplexity and the joy of achieved understanding; they lead the mind away from the messy and the mundane to at least a momentary vision of perfection; and they are witty. The last quality seems inherent in the distancing effect of any virtuoso performance, and owes much to the ironic gap that opens between life and its consciously contrived juristic image.

For centuries young Muslims, aspiring to be educated, had to learn such books off by heart. It might now be lamented that this was a sacrifice of young and enquiring minds. But this was also, potentially at least, an invaluable cultural provision, and, if the text remained in the mind as a recourse, it was a constantly available solace and pleasure.

The multi-volume mabsut, by contrast with the slim mukhtasar, is easy to recognize: their authors, like Ibn al-Muqri', "fly to the circumambient horizons". They multiply the details of the law. They may even (though it is not the most characteristic feature of these books) find the opportunity to relate the concepts of the law to the particular circumstances of their time.

Marwazi, Hanafl author of an early mukhtasar, distinguished between legitimate governors and "outlaws" (khawdrij). If the former collected zakdt, while providing the people with adequate military protection, the duty of the people to pay zakdt was thereby accomplished. If, however, the outlaws

despoiled the people of their goods, while claiming it was zakdt (but in fact using the ill-gotten goods for ill-advised ends), the duty of the people vis-à-vis God was not accomplished, and they should repeat their distribution of zakdt. This was hardly a friendly rule for the people, who, in the last case, were first despoiled, then had to pay their religious duties! Marwazi however may not have had "real" consequences in mind (he derived his rules in any case from the books before him). Engaging the concept zakdt with the additional concepts of governors and outlaws was a heuristic device, permitting exploration of the significance of zakdt.

The later jurist SarakhsT, in his Mabsut, a commentary on Marwazi, managed to free the people from their double burden.

As to the collections made by the sultans of our time, these tyrants … MarwazT did not deal with them. Many of the religious leaders of Balkh promulgate the ruling, with regard to these governors, that payment is required a second time, in order to fulfil the duty due to God, as in the case of land attacked and conquered by outlaws. This is because we know that they do not distribute the collected wealth as it should be distributed … The more valid view is that these illegitimate collections fulfil for the owners of wealth the duty of zakdt - as long as they formulate, at the moment of paying, the intention of giving alms to them [i.e. to the unjust sultans]. This is because the wealth that they possess is the property of the Muslims, and the debts they owe to Muslims are greater than their own wealth. If they returned to the Muslims what they owe them, they would possess nothing. Accordingly they have the status of the poor [and are therefore legitimate recipients of zakdt],

(SarakhsT (1986), 2: 180)

This is a htldh (a juristic contrivance), and a joke. At least a quiet smile is appropriate on recognizing how SarakhsT exploits the idea of debt to render the luxurious tyrants into the category of the poor, who are the rightful recipients of zakdt. Here he has clearly an eye on reality, and has arranged (and developed) his concepts for the achievement of particular ends. The development of the law by the discovery of new conceptual distinctions (tyrants, added to governors and outlaws) and by the acknowledgement of dispute (ikhtilaf) is characteristic of how the traditions, all of them, expanded.

Development in this sense, however, relating the concepts of the law to the particularities of the day, could be only a small part of any given book. In many works offum it is impossible to detect any responses that are particular to a given time and place. Formally such works are timeless. They have two major structural components. The first is the set of concepts that constitute the law. These are explored through the contrasting effects of terminological density and casuistic extravagance. The implicatory richness of a highly technical vocabulary is unravelled by making it work through cases, which may be hypothetical or practical, highly imaginative or trivially stereotyped. The casuistry is heuristic, a device for exploration, and it would, accordingly, be quite wrong to read such works as if they had immediate practical ends (though they sometimes did, and always contained that potential). The time-bound origins of a particular ruling are cancelled. The multiplicity of rulings thrown up by the tradition, or devised by the individual jurist, become

a means to discover the facets through which a legal concept is revealed. Where the tradition offers dispute (ikhtilḍf), it too becomes a device to achieve a finer and more qualified perception of what a concept implies.

The second structural component of a mabsut is revelation and justificatory argument. These are always integrated to some extent in a mabsut, but it is a matter of tradition and individual taste how much they are expanded and developed. Both concepts and revelation are theoretically static (in spite of some real development, at least of the former). This literary tradition too, therefore, in time, developed characteristics which might be described as mannerist. To attempt here a history of so large and long a tradition would be vain. The major illustration offered here is taken from the Muhadhdhab of the Shafi'i jurist, Shirazi (476/1083), a work emphatically Classical.

In the following passage, Shirazi considers the question how the owner of "hidden" goods (differing from "manifest" goods, flocks or crops, in not being easily accessible to government inspection) should organize the distribution of his zakdt. Paragraph division and numbering are mine, but the neatness of the fit is Shirazi's. Note how every paragraph is constituted by a rule and the argument which justifies the rule; how the ikhtilḍf of paragraphs 2.0–2.3 is unresolved.

Chapter on the distribution of alms

1.1 It is permissible for the owner of wealth to distribute zakdt on hidden goods by himself. Hidden goods are gold, silver, trade goods and precious stones. This ruling is based on the hadith from 'Uthman, that he said in the month of

Muharram, This is the month of your zakdt, so he who has a debt, let him pay his debt, then let him pay zakdt on the remainder of his wealth.

1.2 It is permissible for him to appoint an agent to distribute on his behalf. This is because zakdt is a claim on wealth, and it is permissible to appoint an agent to execute it, as with debts between men.

1.3 It is permissible that he pay his zakdt to the Imam. This is because the Imam is the representative of the poor. His status is like that of a guardian to an orphan.

2.0 On the question which is the best mode of conduct, there are three views.

2.1
The best mode of conduct is that the owner of wealth should distribute his zakat by himself. This is the evident meaning of the text [i.e. the hadith quoted at paragraph 1.1], Further he is secure in respect of his own paying, but not secure in respect of anyone else paying.

2.2 The best mode of conduct is that he should pay the Imam, whether the Imam is just or unjust. This is because of what is related concerning Mughirah ibn Sha'bah. Fie said to a client of his, who had the stewardship of his property in Ta if, What do you do about alms on my property? The client replied, "Some of it I distribute directly as alms, and some of it I give to the authorities." Mughirah asked what he knew about the latter portion. The client explained, "They buy land and marry women with it." Mughirah said, "Pay it to them; for the Prophet of God commanded us to pay them." Another reason:

the Imam is more knowledgeable about the poor and the extent of their need.

2.3 Amongst our companions there are some who say that if the Imam is just, payment to him is the best mode of conduct, but if he is unjust, then distribution by the owner of the wealth is best. This is because of the Prophet's words, Fie who asks for it as it should be, let him be given it; he who demands more than he should, let him not be given it. Further, the donor is secure in paying it to a just Imam, but is not secure in paying it to an unjust Imam, for the latter may spend it on his own desires.

(Shiraz! (1959), 1: 175)

In the ikhtildf of 2.0–2.3 there are three foci of concern: zakdt as a personal duty to God, zakdt as a communal duty implemented by the Imam and zakdt as a functional provision for the poor. The three "best modes of conduct" can be analysed as resulting from the elevation, in sequence, of each of these considerations to a dominant position. Shlrazi has effectively shown his readers how the Shafi'i tradition (his "companions") understood (in this context) the concept of zakdt, and how this understanding can be justified by arguments of revelation, of reason and of analogy. If the "best modes of conduct" emerged into the tradition because they were responses to particular situations (as is not unlikely), it is precisely that particularity that has been removed, so rendering the casuistry exploratory and not practical. In the distribution of zakdt it is necessary to consider the duty to God, the rights and duties of the governor and the legitimate expectations of the poor. The message is perhaps that no one of these considerations unequivocally overrides the others.

This is an abstract analysis of concepts and should not be mistaken for a set of practical rules. If, anywhere in Shirazl's work, we could learn anything about, say, the actual practice of his governors (and I think we can't), it would be an accident, and would not represent a part of his purpose in producing this book.

In a mabsut then, the concepts of the law are explored, often by varying one or several items in a "case" which, at a given point, reveals the significance of the concept. The result of course is that many different concepts are explored at once in a dense reticulation of argument. Here, in order to illuminate the concept of zakdt, Shïràzl relates it to the concept of "agent" (wakll) (1.2) and to the concept Imam (1.3), and that in turn to the concept of guardianship of orphans. Fully alert readers should begin to ask themselves about the significance of these judgments and might formulate further questions, or cases, which could illuminate the relationship between God, the individual (his or her agent, etc.), the Imam, the poor, etc. It is precisely this multifaceted and more or less hypothetical exploratory activity that constitutes the bulk of a work of furu.

There is none the less a distinguishable third component which is also constitutive of the material contents of a mabsüt. It is the tradition itself. The exploration of concepts and the relating of concepts to revelation is achieved through tradition, In the passage from Shïràzï above, we are not to imagine that he himself devised the three "best views"; they were given to him by the tradition, here the Shâfi'1 tradition. His role was to organize and present them in the neat schematic manner that permits the reader to perceive and register their implications. (That this role was creative is not

denied.) Often the role of tradition is rendered explicit by reference to named authorities. In the early centuries of juristic writing, the named authorities are likely to be, almost exclusively, the founding fathers of the school tradition, Abu Hanlfah and his two pupils dominate the Hanafl tradition, Shàfi'1, Màlik and Ibn Hanbal the other Sunni schools. For each of the last three it is commonplace to find that they had two or more opinions about legal problems, or that one of their pupils or colleagues had a well-defended alternative view, worth preserving. A multiple set of authorities and judgments was a prerequisite, for it permitted a concept to be viewed from a number of angles, so engendering complexity (a jurist's delight), and opening up different possibilities of development. The Shi'ite tradition too, when it began to produce juristic literature, called upon a constellation of authorities, as well as a large and diverse set of hadïth from the Imams.

With the passage of centuries, the quantity of tradition, the juristic literature itself, became immensely greater than the quantity of revelation. The symbolic importance of the latter was not diminished, but its place in the literature of the law became, necessarily, (even) smaller. Within the school traditions this was not perceived as a problem, though it did prompt, on occasion, fundamentalist reactions, amongst those who felt that revelation rather than tradition should be the immediate source of rules. The prime example of fundamentalist reaction is Ibn Hazm, the Literalist (Goldziher 1971), but the tendency recurred from time to time, within various schools, its most notable later representative being the Hanbah Ibn Taymiyyah. Generally, however, inside the schools, the meaning of revelation was discovered through tradition. There is no doubt

about the priority of the latter: the first loyalty of a jurist was to his school which alone revealed (!) to him the meaning of revelation (!). The theological implications of that fact can hardly be overstated.

In literary terms, the theological argument was expressed through a number of devices. In addition to those mentioned above, the most obvious is, perhaps, the use of commentary, supercommentary and gloss. These layered texts (increasingly present as the tradition got older) are in part product of a teaching device, in part reflect a delight in the contrasting effects of epitome and expansion, but mostly are a theological affirmation of commitment to tradition. The content of some early mukhtasar, embedded within a contemporary mabsüt, are thereby asserted to be identical with the full complexity of the law as it was understood in the later period. Serving the same purpose was the device of jigsaw puzzle composition. Ibn Nujaym's Al-Bahr al-raiq is an example. The text of this work is created out of larger or smaller fragments derived (and acknowledged) from the whole tradition of Hanafi juristic writing. Explicit authorial intervention is reduced to a minimum and always takes the form of commentary on a citation. What might interest a Western scholar, the chronological order of these things, is quite disregarded. Though there is no doubt that Ibn Nujaym's complex manipulation of the tradition created something new (if only, sometimes, in form, for that too is part of the message), his methodology was designed to affirm the timelessnes of his conceptual explorations. Cut into the tradition at any point and the whole complexity of the law is there.

The law is a timeless structure of concepts, justified by reference to revelation, and fully present, at least by

implication, in any articulation within the tradition, whether in a mukhtasar or in a mabsüt. Understanding of the law is achieved through understanding of tradition, not through independent or personal assessment of the meaning of revelation. A deeper understanding of the law (always the same as a greater delight in the law) can be achieved through consideration of the implications of ikhtildf and the possibilities of conceptual subdivision. Direct response to revelation or to reality, though always possible, and sometimes detectable, are not particularly characteristic of how the law as a whole develops. With regard to many aspects of social reality, the juristic traditions are marked not by their aspiration to control and understand reality but by abnegation and indifference to development. Jurists, for example, never considered it their business to analyse the real problems faced by real governments in the creation of administrative and financial systems that would work. The efforts made in that direction were few (e.g. by Mâwardï et al., see Lambton (1981)), the achievements limited and the results largely disregarded by the mainstream of all the juristic traditions (Calder 1986). In spite of some remarkable exceptions, the jurists on the whole preferred to analyse the concepts and problems they inherited, rather than to take

on or create new ones (Imber 1982). And they continued to analyse inherited concepts and problems even when these had no bearing on the practical life of ordinary Muslims. No Muslim who studied fiqh would fail to learn the taxonomy of camels (in the archaic and frozen vocabulary of the tradition), and the arithmetic of how to distribute zakdt on camels, no matter how little the personal need to know this. Knowledge counted. Shawkanl tells us, with evident admiration, that Ibn al Muqri', on one occasion, considered the implications of the dispute within the Shaii'T tradition as to the use of

sun-warmed water for ablutions: his heads of analysis reached thousands (Shawkanl (1979), 1.43). There may be exaggeration here, but the point is important: a jurist merits praise when he takes a single given problem or concept of the law and by minute analysis reveals its implications, its thousands (!) of facets. The diamond-cutting analogy is not inappropriate, for the effect of (good) juristic prose is one of crystalline clarity and of dazzling virtuosity.

I have said above that fiqh is a multi-functional discipline. It is not too difficult to concede that its primary function is theological, though it is not now easy to recover the theological message of these works. Modernist and fundamentalist Islam has lost the taste, and denies the priorities of traditional writing on the law. Sayyid Qutb (executed 1966), informal spokesman for the Muslim Brothers in Egypt, and widely acknowledged for his Qur'an commentary, on numerous occasions expressed what many Muslims now feel, namely that the tradition has somehow failed them. "The Shari'ah, " he says, "has been revealed in order to be implemented, not to be known, to be studied, and to be changed into culture in books and treatises" (Qutb (1971), 1: 746). The observation is pertinent because it acknowledges (correctly) that this, or something like it, is what the tradition did. There, again and again, the stress falls on the need to explore the law in order to know it better, and on the need to create elegant and self-consciously artistic literary forms that will reflect the law's complexity. Whereas the pre-modern writers affirm that tradition controls understanding of revelation, modernist Islam tends to say the opposite, that revelation is a means to get rid of the (burdensome and irrelevant) complexities of a tradition which, perhaps, it is implied, has not served the community

well. In the course of the thirteenth/nineteenth century, and largely as a result of Islam's confrontation with Western culture, the tradition had been interrupted, and its message lost. The tenuous continuation of the pre-modern juristic tradition was perhaps less tenuous amongst the Shï'ah, where it provided the concepts that inspired the jurists' intervention in the Iranian Revolution of 1978. Generally, however, the emergence of secular education systems and the divergence of the intellectual elite of Muslim societies to other (and frequently more pressing) matters has ensured that the law (or rather fiqh, for the
inspirational power of Shan'ah, a concept potentially devoid of detail or specificity, has increased) does not dominate society as it once did.

Qutb's remark shows that he thinks the Shan'ah (sic) exists to be implemented. That stress on loyalty and action, prior to (even independent of) exploratory thought, is part of an activist programme to which he was committed, but it has reverberations throughout modernist Muslim writing, and has affected the perceptions of Western scholars. F. M. Denny is not the only observer to imagine that Islam is better characterized as a religion of orthopraxy than as a religion of orthodoxy (Denny (1985): 98). This is not true, and was traditionally denied by Muslim jurists and theologians. For them, the definition of a Muslim, and the possibility of salvation, depended on faith, not works. For the whole of the Sunni tradition there was no dispute that faith (alone) guaranteed salvation. Works of course were important; Muslims might be punished, according to some temporarily, in Hell, for their failures to conform to God's law (though they might, even then, be saved through the intercession of their Prophet). In practical life, even the simplest, and

absolutely undisputed, parts of the law (say, to pray five times a day) are today (and were undoubtedly in the past) often disregarded by some Muslims who, though acknowledging their error, are not (as far as the casual observer can tell) unduly disturbed by their sins, nor rendered doubtful in their conviction of salvation. A Muslim did not have to be a qualified jurist to perceive the law as an ideal.

These remarks, and the general tenor of this chapter, are not intended to deny that the law, and all writing on the law, was expected, in some degree, to influence practice. No jurist was ever oblivious to the fact that conceptual exploration of the law, or theological affirmations about the importance of tradition, had implications for daily life. And every jurist acknowledged his duty, as a member of the learned elite, to provide explicit and unqualified guidance in respect of particular problems that were brought to him by the populace at large. If the jurist ShlrazI was approached by one who explained his financial circumstances, and enquired about payment of zakdt, ShlrazI would not then sit back to consider the possibilities of the law; he would, as a mujtahid, recognize the need to provide an answer. The need to make the law work, to some degree, was universally recognized, and generated bodies of literature distinct from those described in this chapter. Juristic responses to particular questions generated the literature of fatdwd (responsa). That literature has its own complexity, which cannot be discussed here. Some parts of the law were more than others integrated into the administrative structures of Islamic society, notably the office of the qddi and all that appertained to it. Monographs were produced in such fields in which the stress was less on exploring the law, more on the provision of practical advice and rules of expedient conduct. There was even a small and

marginal genre of monographs on the structures of government, little though these, on the whole, attracted the attention of the tradition. Many jurists however participated in government (while many others refused to do so) and tried to create some kind of link between the structures of the law and the structures of practical administration.

But practice, in whatever area or form, could never be more than a clumsy, partial and imperfect realization of the divine command. A fuller (if perhaps still inadequate) expression of that command could be achieved in literature. The literature of the law is an exploration of God's self-revelation to and within a particular human society. In all its forms, aspects and implications it is about a divinely sanctioned social order and the (consequent?) possibilities of human social integration. It is not a description of "real" society, nor the provision of a corpus of sensible, practical rules; it is at least the transformation of these things into a theological argument. As much for modern Muslims as for modern academics the task of mastering that literature and translating its implications into an idiom suited to (soon) the fifteenth/twenty-first century is one that has hardly begun. The cultural complement to juristic literature, with its stress on society, is, within Islam, Sufi literature, which provides a corresponding stress on the private devotional life of individuals. It is in the integration of these two structures that most Muslims – including the jurists, who were frequently also mystics – have, historically, found self-realization as Muslims.

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VIII

Later transmission and interpretation

CHAPTER 58

Medieval Christian and Jewish Europe

John Marenbon

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With the occasional exception (such as Leibniz, who annotated Maimonides' Guide of the Perplexed), Christian philosophers from the seventeenth century onwards have neglected medieval Islamic and Jewish philosophy. By contrast, from the late twelfth to the sixteenth century, Islamic and Jewish thinkers were among the most important influences on scholastic philosophers and theologians. The first two sections below will survey the extent of this influence by showing which works were translated and how much they were read; later sections will consider some individual examples of influence in a little more detail.

The Translations[1]

Philosophers of the Latin Middle Ages depended on translations for their knowledge of Islamic and Jewish thought. Although scientific works had been put into Latin earlier, translations of philosophy from the Arabic were first

made in Toledo in the second half of the twelfth century, by Dominic Gundisalvi (or Gundissalinus), a canon of the cathedral there. Gundissalinus translated with the help of Arabic-speaking assistants, one of whom is named as Avendeuth, a Jewish philosopher, identified by some with Abraham ibn Daoud, author of The Sublime Faith (Avicenna (1968–72): 91–103; d'Alverny (1989)). Gundissalinus and his helpers put into Latin the sections on the soul (De anima) and on metaphysics from the Book of Healing by Ibn Sīnā ("Avicenna" for the Latins), and were probably responsible for versions of a little of the logic and some of the Physics (d'Alverny (1961): 285). The same team, or members of it, also translated the De scientiis and De ortu scientiarum by al-Fārābī

("Alfarabi"); the Fons vitae by the Jewish philosopher Solomon ibn Gabirol ("Avicebron"/"Avencebrol") and probably an abbreviated version of Isaac Israeli's Liber de definitionibus. Probably from this milieu came the translation of one of the versions of al-Kindī's De intellectu, of the Liber introductorius in artem logicae demonstrationis wrongly attributed to al-Kindī, of the Intentions of the Philosophers (known as the Summa theorice philosophiae) by al-Ghazzālī ("Algazel"); and also perhaps the translation of AlFārābī's De intellectu. At the same period in Toledo, Gerard of Cremona, who concentrated for the most part on putting Arabic versions of Aristotle into Latin, translated the complete text of Isaac Israeli's Liber de definitionibus, works by al-Kindī (De somno et visione, probably De quinque essentiis and perhaps De ratione – a version of De intellectu), made another version of Alfarabi's De scientiis and put into Latin the Liber de causis, an Arabic compilation based on the Elements of Philosophy by the fifth-century Greek Neoplatonist Proclus.

The writings of Ibn Rushd ("Averroes") were not translated until a little later. In the 1220s, probably in Sicily, Michael Scotus produced Latin versions of Averroes' great commentaries on the De anima, Metaphysics, Physics and De caelo, of the middle commentaries on the De generatione et corruptione and Meteorologica 4 and perhaps of some of his epitomes (Gauthier (1982): 331–4). At much the same date, probably in France, a translation was made of Maimonides' Guide of the Perplexed. Executed with considerable freedom, the version was based neither on the Arabic original nor the earliest translation by Samuel ibn Tibbon, but rather on a looser though more stylish Hebrew version made by Jehudah al-Ḥārisī. Although this translation is anonymous, internal evidence suggests that it was made by a learned Jew in collaboration with a Latin-speaking Christian (Kluxen 1954).

By about 1230, then, the Islamic and Jewish philosophical works which were to be most important for Christian thinkers had already been translated. Over the following decades a few additions were made. Hermannus Alemannus, who worked in Toledo, made Latin versions of Averroes' middle commentaries on the Ethics (perhaps 1240) and the Poetics (1256); Johannes Gunsalvi of Burgos, helped by a Jew called Solomon, translated more of Avicenna's Book of Healing between 1274 and 1280: further parts of the Physics, and sections 2 (De caelo et mundo), 3 (De generatione et corruptione), 4 and 5 (d'Alverny (1961–72): 286–7). And, at some time in the thirteenth century – no more precise dating is possible – the middle commentaries by Averroes on Porphyry's Isagoge, and Aristotle's Categories, De interpretatione, Prior and Posterior Analytics were translated: the first two definitely, and the other three probably, by a certain William of Luna.

Not all the translations available to medieval scholars have survived. This is strikingly the case with regard to Alfarabi, whose great commentary
(otherwise lost) on the Posterior Analytics was certainly translated, and perhaps also commentaries by him on the Ethics and Physics (Salman (1939); Grignaschi (1972)). No doubt evidence of other lost translations will be uncovered by future researches.

From this survey it is clear that the works of Islamic (though not Jewish) philosophy translated into Latin were in almost every case closely related to the study of Aristotle. That this was not a matter of chance but a reflection of Christian thinkers 'interests is illustrated by an apparent exception to the rule. Averroes' Destruction of the Destruction was in fact translated early in the fourteenth century by the Jew Calonymos ben Calonymos for Robert the Wise, King of Naples. But the translation remained almost unknown (de Libera (1991): 110, 369).

Availability and Use

The earliest Christian writer to make use of Avicenna was his translator, Gundissalinus. Gundissalinus had the mentality of a compiler rather than an original thinker or a careful synthesizer. His De processione mundi ("On the Coming-forth of the Universe"), borrows from Avicenna, but also uses material from Avencebrol and Boethius (a late antique Christian thinker), and his De anima ("On the Soul") uses the same combination of authors and has an explicitly Christian conclusion. An even odder mixture is found in an

anonymous work of the early thirteenth century, De causis
primis et secundis ("On Primary and Secondary Causes"),
which brings together Avicenna's Philosophia prirma, the
Liber de causis and the Periphyseon of John Scotus Eriugena,
a ninth-century Christian Neoplatonist (cf. Jolivet 1988). By
then, Avicenna was already important in the University of
Paris. Indeed, the earliest writers there who seem to display a
knowledge of Aristotle beyond his logic turn out to be much
more familar with Avicenna. For example, John Blund's
treatise on the soul (De anima, c. 1200) makes passing
references to Aristotelian texts but follows Avicenna in the
main lines of its argument. Even in the 1230s or early 1240s,
William of Auvergne spent most of his energies in his De
anima attacking Avicenna's views which, despite his direct
acquaintance with Aristotle's texts, he consistently attributed
to Aristotle himself (Marenbon (1991): 53–6, 109–10).

Closer familiarity with Aristotle's own texts and the
availability of Averroes' detailed commentaries on them
deprived Avicenna of his preeminent position, but his De
anima and, especially, his Philosophia prima remained
enormously influential, helping to shape the metaphysics of
both Aquinas and Duns Scotus (see the following section).
The many manuscripts of the Latin Avicenna from the
fourteenth and fifteenth
centuries show that he continued to be studied in the late
Middle Ages (d'Alverny 1961–72).

Averroes came into use in the university of Paris in the 1220s,
despite the prohibition at this stage on the study of many
Aristotelian works and their commentaries in the Arts Faculty
(Gauthier 1982). When, in the 1250s, an Aristotelian
curriculum was adopted by the Arts Faculties in Paris and

Oxford, Averroes' detailed commentaries proved invaluable aids for the masters there. To the end of the Middle Ages and later, Averroes continued to play this part, uncontroversially providing scholars with the detailed help they needed to follow Aristotle's arguments. Just as Aristotle was called simply the "Philosophus", so Averroes was the "Commentator". Even in the Renaissance, when scholars reacting against the humanist emphasis on style wished to grasp the substance of Aristotle's thought, they turned to Averroes for help, as is illustrated by the 1520–2 Giunta edition of Aristotle's works, which brought together the best translations of Aristotle with more of Averroes' commentaries than had previously been collected (Schmitt 1979). In addition to this uncontroversial role, Averroes is often seen as the inspiration behind a distinctive (and perhaps heterodox) movement of thought: Latin Averroism (see below).

Algazel's fortune was closely tied to Avicenna's, of whose work his Intentions was taken to be an epitome. The fact that Algazel summarized the work of Avicenna and other philosophers only the better to attack it (in his Destruction – which was not translated into Latin) was generally ignored if not exactly unknown (Salman 1939). Avencebrol was used by his translator, Gundissalinus (see above), and in his De universe, written in the 1230s, William of Auvergne held him in high esteem, and conjectured that, despite his Arab name, he must be a Christian. Flowever, Avencebrol's theory of universal hylomorphism everything except God is a compound of matter and form – earned him sharp criticism from later scholastics, such as Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas. None the less, the occasional writer, such as Vital

du Four (c. 1260–1327) was ready to support him (Bertola (1953): 187–99; Wippel (1982): 408–10).

Maimonides's Dux perplexorum was first seriously studied by Albert the Great in the 1240s. The work was an important influence on Aquinas (see below). Duns Scotus occasionally refers to Maimonides, but makes little use of him; and most of the later scholastics ignored him entirely (Guttmann (1908): 140–208; Kluxen (1986)). But there was one important exception. Maimonides had a profound influence on Meister Eckhart (1260–1327), who repeated his arguments that positive attributes cannot be ascribed to God, even by analogy (Koch 1928).

Avicenna and Latin Metaphysics in the Thirteenth Century[2]

Although Islamic writers were seen by the Latin Scholastics almost exclusively as guides to interpreting Aristotle, their writings were far more than merely neutral instruments for transmitting the thought of another. Aristotle is a writer many of whose central texts have never received a single, generally accepted interpretation. Avicenna and Averroes provided their Latin readers with ways of reading Aristotle, which in many cases they would never have derived from the Aristotelian texts alone. These (often conflicting) interpretations set the framework for their discussions, nowhere more obviously than with regard to the Metaphysics.

Both Avicenna and Averroes had sought a coherence and definite purpose in Aristotle's chaotic and often inconclusive treatise. What, they asked, is the subject of the work? Avicenna argued that, since no branch of knowledge can demonstrate the existence of its own subject, and since the existence of God is demonstrated in metaphysics, the subject of metaphysics is not God, but being as being. By contrast, Averroes, who held that the existence of God was demonstrated in physics, considered that being in its first instance, the Prime Mover or God, was the subject of metaphysics. Thirteenth-century Christian thinkers, although aware of Averroes' position, tended to follow Avicenna here (Wippel (1982): 385–92). But there was an important difference. For them the question about the subject of metaphysics was linked to an even more important problem: what is the relationship between the study of God in metaphysics and the study of God on the basis on revelation?

Avicenna provided a starting-point not just for the definition, but for the content of metaphysical discussion. In his Metaphysics, Avicenna (1977–83: 43–8) distinguished between God, the one necessary being, and all other beings which are merely possible. In the case of possible beings, Avicenna (following Alfarabi) distinguished existence (esse: whether the thing in fact exists) from essence (what sort of thing it is). In Algazel's account (1933: 30–1), this distinction is taken to mean that existence is an accident of essence. From William of Auvergne onwards, the distinction played an important part in Western metaphysics and theology. Aquinas was among those who accepted a real distinction between essence and existence. However, he firmly rejected any notion that existence is an accident, and he transformed Avicenna's idea by seeing essence as potency and existence

as act. Essence and existence are thus complementary, in the same way as matter and form (in composite things); and everything depends for its existence on God, who is pure act, and in whom alone essence and existence are the same.[3]

Duns Scotus (who taught at the turn of the fourteenth century, and was probably the thinker most influential for the next hundred years) rejected the real distinction between essence and existence. Yet his discussion of being was even more deeply marked than Aquinas' by the teaching of Avicenna. Scotus applied to being Avicenna's idea that something (for example, horse) can be considered neutrally, as neither singular nor universal. He explicitly, though perhaps wrongly, attributed the resulting position – "that being [ens] is said in the same meaning [per unam rationem] of all that it is said of" – to Avicenna.[4] This theory of the "univocity" of being is a fundamental element in Scotus' thinking, contrasting with Aquinas' theory of analogy, and shaping both his proofs of God's existence and his analysis of objects in the world and their cognition (Gilson (1952): 84–115).

Latin Averroism?[5]

Aquinas directed his brief treatise On the Unity of the Intellect against the Averroists against masters at Paris who held the view (derived, they and Thomas considered, from Averroes) that there is only one "possible intellect" for all men. One of those attacked is usually identified as Siger of Brabant (c. 1240–84), an arts master who certainly did at one stage propose the view attacked by Aquinas. Siger's name is often coupled with that of his contemporary in the Faculty of

Arts, Boethius of Dacia, whose works advocate a sharp division between the field of the arts, which are based on reasoning from self-evident premises, and theology, which is based on revelation. Historians used commonly to call the ideas of Siger, Boethius and some of their anonymous contemporaries "Latin Averroism". But this description has been challenged: the arts masters were rather, it is argued, "radical" (or "integral") "Aristotelians" (Van Steenberghen 1977; 1978). What did the characteristic positions of Siger, Boethius and their colleagues owe to Averroes?

Whether Averroes himself really supported the unity of the possible intellect is arguable (Gomez Nogales 1976); but, in the 1250s, theologians such as Bonaventure and Albert the Great decided that this was Averroes' position – previously he had been regarded as championing the position that there is an active and potential intellect united in each individual human soul (Gauthier 1982). The theologians raised Averroes' supposed view only in order to refute it. Siger's innovation was to present it as correct, or at least as the correct reading of Aristotle. Boethius of Dacia's wish to emphasize the autonomy of reason within its own domain has no direct link with Averroes. In part, it may derive simply from Boethius' position as a master in the Faculty of Arts, the concern of which was exclusively the use of reason without revelation. In part, however,
it may be an indirect result of Averroes' interpretation of Aristotle. No one doubted that the unity of the possible intellect was a position incompatible with Christian doctrine, since no place is left for individual immortality and heavenly reward or punishment. What, then, was the Christian thinker to say, if he was none the less convinced that this Averroistic interpretation was in accord with Aristotle's intentions? In his

De anima intellectiva (c. 1273), Siger of Brabant tackled exactly this problem by insisting that his job is simply to expound his text, whether or not what Aristotle says is in fact true (1972: 70.11–15).

The characteristic ideas of Siger of Brabant and Boethius of Dacia did not exercise much influence on their immediate successors, probably owing to their inclusion (often distorted) in a set of condemnations issued by the Archbishop of Paris in 1277 (cf. Hissette 1977). But in the early fourteenth century, John of Jandun (1285/9–1328) championed the view that Averroes' supposed interpretation (unity of the possible intellect) is the correct reading of Aristotle, and combined it with a sharp division between the realms of philosophy and theology (cf. Schmugge 1966). His writings were widely read, and an "Averroism" in his mould was adopted in the following decades by scholars in Bologna and Padua, in Erfurt in the late fourteenth century, and Krakow in the mid fifteenth (Kuksewicz 1978). In sixteenth-century Italy, Averroes' supposed views continued to be an important element in discussions of intellect and the soul. Despite wider knowledge of Averroes' works – for instance, Agostino Nifo (1469/70–1538) commented on the Destruction of the Destruction) – Renaissance Averroism continued to be influenced by Siger of Brabant and John of Jandun.

"Latin Averroism", then, appears to have combined an interpretation (possibly incorrect) of one of Averroes' doctrines (which was taken not as true but as a correct reading of Aristotle), with a view about faith and reason based on the implications of this view. Although it would have been impossible without Averroes, its development was

determined not so much by his philosophy as by the internal tensions of thought in the Christian universities.

Maimonides and Aquinas[6]

Maimonides' influence on Aquinas was of a different kind from that of Averroes or Avicenna: less pervasive than theirs, but, in the well-defined areas to which it was limited, often far stronger, far less transformed by St Thomas' own thoughts. A striking instance is Aquinas' presentation of the reasons why it was necessary for God to have given in revelation a number of truths also graspable by reason alone (Synave 1930). As this example suggests, Aquinas tended to turn to Maimonides not for help
with understanding Aristotle, but when there was a problem about the relation between a philosophical (often Aristotelian) position and doctrine which Jews and Christians held in common. Another such area was the question of the eternity of the world.[7]

Jews and Christians believe not merely that the world is created but that it had a beginning in time. By contrast, Aristotle held that it was eternal. How should Jewish and Christian philosophers react? Already, in the sixth century, John Philoponus, a Greek Christian, had tackled the problem by devising a series of arguments which ingeniously attempt to use Aristotelian principles to demonstrate the very position which Aristotle himself denied – that the world had a beginning. Many of these arguments were adopted by the mutakallimūn in Islam, and by Christian theologians contemporary with Aquinas, such as Bonaventure.

Maimonides rejected these arguments, and in this (including some of his counter-arguments) he was followed by Aquinas. Moreover, on closer examination, Aquinas' position turns out to be even nearer to that of his great Jewish predecessor. Consider the following propositions:

(1) The world had no beginning in time (i.e. is eternal)

(2) It is possible to demonstrate (1)

(3) It is possible to demonstrate not-(1)

(4) (1) has been demonstrated

(5) not-(1) has been demonstrated

On a straightforward reading of the Latin translation of the Guide, such as Aquinas would have made, [8] Maimonides denies (1) in accord with Jewish teaching; and he also explicitly denies (2) and (3) (and so, by consequence, (4) and (5)). Aquinas, too, throughout his works denies (1)–(5). Maimonides also believed that Aristotle himself, whilst holding (1) and, of course, denying (3), also denied (2). His evidence was a passage in the Topics where Aristotle gives the eternity of the world as an example of a question for which there is no demonstrative proof on either side. In most of his works Aquinas followed Maimonides in this view.[9] Only towards the end of his life, when Aquinas wrote his detailed commentary on the Physics, did he acknowledge that Aristotle held (4) – he believed he had demonstrated the eternity of the world – and therefore (2). In this late period, too, an important new element emerges in Aquinas' thought.

In his brief De aeternitate mundi (probably 1270 or 1271), Aquinas devotes his attention to establishing:

(6) It is possible that (1)

Why was it only in this late work that Aquinas asserted (6)? One historian (Weisheipl (1983): 268–70) has linked the development to Aquinas' realization that Maimonides was wrong to think that Aristotle denied (2). But it is more plausible to see it as a result of a shift in the
focus of Aquinas' interest (cf. Wippel (1981): 37). (6) is quite unlike (2)–(5). They are all statements about what man can demonstrate, that is what, using self-evident premises and reason, he can show to be the case; (6) is, rather, a statement about what might absolutely be the case in the nature of things. Until his late years, Aquinas had usually viewed the issue of the eternity of the world in the terms of Maimonides, as a problem about the limits of human reasoning. In his De potentia (1265–60), he had already placed the problem in the context of divine possibilities, as the subject of that work invited; but he had not felt confident enough to assert (6). In the De aeternitate mundi, however, he argues that, given God's omnipotence, it will be possible for him to create something eternal, so long as there is no incompatibility between being created and being eternal; and he proceeds to show that the two notions are indeed compatible. This interest in God's absolute power has little to do with Maimonides, and is rare in St Thomas' own work; but it anticipates the concerns of Christian theologians in the three decades which followed Aquinas' death. It would add a further twist to the complex story of Islamic and Jewish influence on Christian thought were the elements which inspired the new interest in absolute possibilities to include the very arguments of the

mutakallimūn as set forth by Maimonides in order to refute them.

NOTES

1 For editions of the Latin translations, see Marenbon (1991): 194–7; and add: al-Fārābī, De scientiis, trans. Gundissalinus in al-Fārābī (1954); trans. Gerard of Cremona in al-Fārābī (1953); Liber exercitationis ad viam felicitatis in al-Fārābī (1940); complete (uncritical) edition of the Destruction of the Philosophers in Latin translation: al-Ghazzālī (1506); logical books from the Destruction in al-Ghazzālī (1965); al-Kindī, De somno et visione, De quinque essentiis, De intellectu (both translations) in al-Kindī (1897); Averroes, Destructio destructionunr: Averroes (1497); Maimonides, Dux seu director dubitantium vel perplexorum in Maimonides (1520) = the early thirteenth-century translation made from the Hebrew of al-Ḥārisī (Wolfgang Kluxen is preparing a critical edition of this translation). For a bibliographical survey of secondary material, see Daiber (1990).

2 Two valuable, concise introductions to thirteenth-century metaphysics are Wippel (1982) and de Libera (1989): 69–97. Many of their conclusions are followed here.

3 Cf. Summa theologiae, 1.q.3, a.4; Summa contra Gentiles, 1.22; 2.54.

4 Quaestiones subtilissimae in Metaphysicas, 4.q.1; cf. Ordinatio of Sentences commentary 2.d.3, pars 1.q.1, nn. 29–34.

5 A balanced survey of this problem is given by Nardi (1949).

6 Dienstag (1975) reprints many of the most important articles on this subject and provides full bibliography; see also Pines (1976) and Dunphy (1983).

7
For background, see Sorabji (1983): 191–283; for a careful presentation of Aquinas' views through the course of his career, see Wippel (1981).

8 Some interpreters have suggested that Maimonides' real, concealed view about the creation and non-eternity of the world was not that of Jewish teaching; but see Dunphy (1989).

9 See Topics: 1.11; Guide: 2.15; Aquinas, In 2 Sententias, d.1, q. 1, a.5; Summa theologiae 1.q.46, a.1; cf. Weisheipl (1983): 265–6.

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CHAPTER 59

Modern Western philosophy

Catherine Wilson

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According to a commonly held view of relations between Islamic culture and the Latin West, the Arabic philosophers absorbed, preserved, and retransmitted Greek thought, notably the legacy of Plato and Aristotle, to Europe during the Middle Ages, thereby ensuring the continuity of the Western philosophical tradition. Though helpful as a starting-point, this curiously teleological account is misleading in three ways. Firstly, the reception of Aristotle and Plato amongst the Arabs was not a matter of mere custodianship but of opposition and transformation. Secondly, in light of this fact, European philosophers from the seventeenth century onwards were increasingly concerned with separating original Aristotelian doctrines – the pentimento – from Arabic overpainting, a concern which had a political and religious as well as a scholarly basis. Thirdly, one aspect of the Arabic contribution to European philosophy was the heightened standard of philosophical discourse. The "Socratic rationalism" and logocentrism which is supposed to characterize European thought, whether or not it sprang from Greek soil, acquired its characteristic intensity and precision

in the Muslim countries between the ninth and thirteenth centuries.

We will need to distinguish in this brief survey between, on one hand, the reception of Arabic works by medieval philosophers who had access only to manuscripts and, on the other, the dissemination of Arabic philosophy in the age of print. Among the items which first reached a scholastic audience in Europe following the beginning of the Crusades in the early twelfth century were translations of al-Fārābī's logical works and Avicenna's (Ibn Sīnā's) commentaries on Aristotle's De anima by Johannes Hispanensis (fl. 1133–53); translations of al-Fārābī, Geber, and of other astronomical, medical, and mathematical works undertaken by Gerard of Cremona (1114–87); Michael the Scot's translations of Averroes' (Ibn Rushd's) commentaries on Aristotle's Metaphysica,
De anima, De generatione et corruptione, Ethics and Poetics, and other works on sensation, meteors and cosmology; and Avicenna's Sufficientia by Antonius Frachantianus Vicentius. The Fons vitae of Avicebron (Ibn Gabirol), though not strictly speaking an Arabic work, was translated by Gundissalinus, and Maimonides' Guide of the Perplexed was also known to scholars.[1] Also transmitted through the Arabs were two pseudo- Aristotelian works of considerable influence, the so-called Theology of Aristotle, actually extracted from Plotinus, and the Liber de causis, derived from Proclus, whose emanationist metaphysics provided a rival picture to creation ex nihilo up to the seventeenth century. These newly introduced works provided analytical discussions of questions of existence, modality, providence, causation, creation, the soul and freedom and the nature of God and religious truth which define the subject matter of medieval Scholastic

philosophy and indeed metaphysics generally up until the time of Christian Wolff. Indeed, Kant's quotational discussion of the antinomies of pure reason, [2] whose status as soluble problems he denies, might be seen as the last trace of Arabic influence, had not analytic philosophy enjoyed a renaissance in the twentieth century.

The second phase of reception, which has been subject to less investigation, occurred when Latin translations were edited and brought into print in the late fifteenth and the sixteenth century. This process was not, however, comprehensive and tended to favour scientific and medical works over speculative thought. Where al-Kindī is represented by only a few works on meteors, medicine and pharmacology, al-Fārābī is almost absent. His De intellectu and De intelligentiis are printed with Avicenna's main writings and an edition of De scientiis (Paris, 1638) is said to exist. For the most part, Avicenna is represented in his medical works, especially his Canon, his chemistry and natural magic. Significant editions of philosophy include his Opera printed in 1500, and a collection of his main writings translated by Spagna and Gundissalinus, including the Logica, the Sufficientia, De caelo et mundo, De animalibus (Venice, 1508) and a translation of Alpago, the Compendium de anima (Venice, 1546). Al-Ghazzālī has no independent listings in the World Catalog between 1490 and 1600 and only one non-philosophical listing from 1600 to 1700. Averroes' commentaries on Aristotle's Physics, Posterior Analytics, De caelo, De generatione et corruptione, De anima and Metaphysics are fairly well represented before 1600, often bound together with Aristotle's own works. Al-Ghazzālī's Incoherence of the Philosophers was translated into Latin as the Destructio philosophiae and published in Padua in 1497; it

was reprinted in Venice in 1527 and 1562. The Incoherence of the Incoherence, or Destructio destructionum, Averroes' response to it, which reproduces the original text, becomes a well-read edition of 1529 edited by Agostino Nifo. Maimonides' publication history is steadier.[3] De idolatria liber draws the attention of Gerard Vossius and is printed in 1641,
1668 and 1700. Popkin has argued that it was frequently edited and cited, reaching even Puritan theologians at Harvard and Yale.[4] The Guide of the Perplexed appears in Latin translations of 1520, 1629, and 1641 and 1642, though it does not seem to have been popular between 1700 and 1800.

The appearance in print of these texts coincided with the beginning of the decline of their direct influence, for print induced, as Eisenstein argued, a retreat from textual modes of knowledge, a reaction against Scholasticism and the commentary tradition.[5] The indexes of the early modern philosophers, who do not habitually name their sources in any case, are largely silent when it comes to the Arabs, and the publication record drops off sharply in the 1600s. Averroes boasts no new editions from 1600 to 1800, except an English Averroeana of 1695 and 1707, a "Letters from an Arabian philosopher", dealing with matters "philosophical, physiological, Pythagorical, and medicinal".[6] Bayle, who wrote a long article on Averroes in his Historical and Critical Dictionary, obviously had not read him.[7]

Nevertheless, the study of the positive and negative reception of Arabic philosophy in the early modern period sheds valuable light on its formation. This is so for several reasons. First, the Arabs had changed the presuppositions of Greek philosophy by exhaustively considering Platonism and

Aristotelianism vis-à-vis a monotheistic creator religion, thereby ensuring its relevance for Christian philosophy. Second, in the form of "Averroism" – whose relation to the teaching of the historical Averroes is admittedly problematic – it delivered a robust and intriguing heresy existing side by side with the Christian doctrine of personal immortality. Third, despite their lack of citations and explicit references, early modern authors drew on striking examples and argument forms which were passed down from the Arabic commentaries and which, together with the thematizations which carried over from medieval to modern philosophy, reveal a surprising unity in what might almost be called the Euro-Arab tradition. After surveying some of the main currents of direct transmission to the medievals, this will discuss direct and indirect readings and their incorporation in Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Malebranche and Hume.

Medieval Philosophy

The relation of Islamic philosophy to theology has both parallels and differences with the relation of philosophy to Christian doctrine in the Middle Ages. Islam is a monotheistic creator religion, but, unlike Christianity, whose doctrines were formulated in Patristic writings, it is without official creeds and dogmas which facilitate the definition of heresy.

The tension between philosophy as derived from the Greeks and theology appeared at several points nevertheless in Arabic philosophy. Averroes in his Decisive Treatise (Kitāb faṣt al-maqāl), and to some extent in his commentary on the Poetics of Aristotle, argued for the harmony of religion and philosophy. He found it possible to do so however only by

asserting that scripture must be interpreted allegorically where it conflicts with reasoning by demonstration and by distinguishing between privileged knowledge reserved for philosophers and doctrinal and literal adherence to the Qur'ān appropriate for the masses.[8] Roger Bacon refers frequently to Averroes, Avicenna and Algazel (al-Ghazzālī), [9] and Jeremiah Hackett has argued that the Decisive Treatise furnished the model for Roger Bacon's Opus maius, composed around 1266, sent to Pope Clement VI and secretly circulated but published only after a long delay.[10] The doctrine of "double truth", that philosophical truth can appear to be inconsistent with but does not actually contradict revelation, which therefore need not be interpreted in restricted fashion, is decisively rejected by St Thomas. It poses however an increased temptation for philosophers influenced by Cartesian rationalism, and is a focus of concern in Bayle's Letters to a Provincial, Leibniz's Theodicy and a host of lesser works dealing with the intrinsic reasonableness or paradoxicality of Christianity. A related issue is the problem of equivocal language: is the language adequate for human affairs capable of referring to God and his characteristics, or does He transcend not only the world but language as well?: the problem is discussed by Maimonides, and following his lead, St Thomas, [11] and later Spinoza.[12] Spinoza's scandalous Tractatus Theologico-Politicus, like his later Ethics, which proves that happiness consists in the wisdom and independence of the philosopher rather than the fulfilment of a religious task, defends privileged philosophical knowledge and regards the Bible as an ethically persuasive work rather than a repository of truth and is perhaps a descendant of the Decisive Treatise as it is of Boethius' Averroist Consolation,[13] Meanwhile, medieval Christian philosophy took its argumentative apparatus – the apparatus it

would use in defending the reasonableness of Christian doctrine – from the Arabic literature. Al-Fārābī's distinction between existence and essence and his theory of contingency organizes philosophical reflection down to the time of Sartre. Such questions as: Does God know only universals or particulars as well? Does His providence extend to individuals? Was the world created in time? Is there causal necessity in nature? are debated in uniform terms for the next three centuries. God's omnipotence, his power to do even what is logically impossible, was maintained by Ibn Ḥazm, defended by Descartes and rejected by Leibniz. The identity of indiscernibles, a key notion in Leibniz's metaphysics, is also discussed in the Incoherence, in connection with the problem of creation, as it is in Leibniz's correspondence with Samuel Clarke. The philosophers, al-Ghazzālī says, had sought

to prove the eternity of the world by "saying chat times are equivalent so far as the possibility that the Divine Will could attach to them is concerned, for what differentiates a given time from an earlier or later time … what differentiates one of the two possibles from the other for connection with the eternal Will?" Al-Ghazzālī rejects the proof but accepts the premiss: a man between two cups of water, he says, cannot take one unless he perceives a difference between them: "he can only take the one he thinks more beautiful or lighter or nearer to his right hand if he is right handed, or act from some such reason, hidden or known. Without this the differentiation of the one from the other cannot be imagined."[14] This problem surfaces in the medieval literature as the problem of "Buridan's ass". The problem of intrinsic and extrinsic definition, whether individuals must differ in the matter to be different or can be distinguished by external relations, is also discussed.[15]

Other major readers of Arabic philosophy included Albertus Magnus, Robert Grosseteste, John of Jaundun and Paul of Venice. Though, according to Gilson, there was no "Latin Avicennism" corresponding to Latin Averroism, Avicenna's Metaphysics furnished a theological cosmology more elaborate – and perhaps even more "Platonic" – than that of the Timaeus. The Christian philosophers from William of Auvergne to St Thomas desired to preserve the notion of the creation of an inferior by a superior and in some cases the notion of intermediary Intelligences, but to avoid Avicenna's emanationism which blurred the distinction between creator and created and his necessitarianism.[16] St Thomas refereed each of the by now well-formulated problems which forced Augustinian doctrine to face conflicting philosophical intuitions and arguments, and he did so with an eye directly on the Arabs, as any annotated edition of his works shows. He also seems to have employed Maimonides' Guide, with its delivery of the doctrine of the theological sect of the mutakallimūn, whom he calls the loquentes, or the speakers of doctrine, in the Summa contra gentiles. To their extreme voluntarism he opposes a specifically knowable Christian divine being and a dependent, but still operational, Aristotelian nature.[17] At the same time he attacks the major errors of Averroism.

Averroism and the Averroist Heresy

Averroes' comments on Aristotle's Metaphysics and De anima were especially troubling to Christian readers.

Averroism came to stand for the doctrines of the eternity of the world, the unity of the active intellect (based on the difficult passage in Aristotle's De anima, 3.5.430al8), denial of demons and the possibility of attaining perfection in this life, and so for a counter-Christian tradition in Scholasticism. "Arabic" commentary

was banned in Paris in 1210 and 1215, later permitted with censorship in 1231 and officially inserted into the curriculum in 1255.[18] The result was a flowering at the University of Paris from 1260–77 due to Siger de Brabant and Boethius, and a reaction. Bonaventure criticized Averroist doctrines in 1268; this was followed by the condemnations of Averroist and other heretical propositions of 1270 and 1277 by Bishop Tempier, who pronounced against the doctrine of double truth. Thomas Aquinas wrote his influential Tractatus de unitate intellectus contra Averroistas sometime between 1269 and 1272, central to his effort to produce a marriage of Aristotle and Christianity which would rationalize Christianity without confounding dogma.

The task of separating Aristotle from his commentators and recovering the pristine doctrine became an important one from this point onwards. Legend and invective attached to the name of Averroes. Duns Scotus refers to "that accursed Averroes" and his "fantastic conception, intelligible neither to himself nor to others [which] assumes the intellective part of man to be a sort of separate substance united to man through the medium of sense images". Averroes' person, he thought, is "nothing more than a kind of irrational animal which excels the other animals by reason of an irrational sensitive soul that is more excellent than other souls".[19] The scandalous but fictional book De tribus impostoribus (Moses, Christ, Mahomet) was ascribed to him, and the separation begun by

St Thomas of the good Aristotle from the bad commentator worked to his detriment. "Aristotle is not very religious but his interpreter Averroes is thoroughly impious," Du Plessis de Mornay was still saying in 1581.[20] Meanwhile, a theological literature calumnating Mahomet and decrying Islam enjoyed distinguished contributors from Martin Luther in 1542 to Hugo Grotius in 1676, relieved only somewhat by less polemical texts on manners, mores, monuments and Turkish military history. In the philosophical arena, we observe that Leibniz was still concerned in the Theodicy of 1710 about Averroism and the absorption of the individual's soul at death into an ocean of souls identical with God. The "monopsy-chites", Leibniz argued, influenced Spinoza through the Kabbalah, and Spinozism, married as it was to Cartesian rationalism, he found an exceptionally dangerous version of the heresy.[21] It was defended in his own time, Leibniz reported, by the freethinker M. de Preissac and, according to Gabriel Naude's letters, it was still popular in Italy in the late 1620s through the influence of Pomponazzi, who only pretends to dispute it in his On the Immortality of the Soul, and of Cremonini, the teacher of Galileo. Cesalpinus and Cardan had both regarded the world as having a single soul, with passive intelligence divided up into individual men, and Vanini, the unfortunate atheist burned at the stake in 1600, presented himself as a student of Averroes. Leibniz detected a profound undercurrent flowing through history: the Spanish neo-Scholastic Molina, the

German quietists, Erhard Weigel, and Queen Christina of Sweden were targets of suspicion in his Reflections on the Doctrine of a Single Universal Spirit.[22] On Renan's account Averroism was given life by the theological orthodoxy which opposed it, but died with the rise of science and thereby created a victory for orthodoxy. By 1630, Italy was in the grip

of reaction.[23] This was Leibniz's analysis too: "The corpuscular philosophy," he says, speaking knowledgeably of the Paduan Aristotelians, "appears to have extinguished this excessively peripatetic sect."[24]

Avicenna's Neoplatonic doctrine of creation by emanation portrayed the creation of the world as an outpouring or expression of the divine, rather than a materialization ex nihilo. Like the doctrine of the single universal spirit it was theologically heterodox, and attacked as such by al-Ghazzālī, but an important focus of interest to Christian medievals nevertheless. Arguably, it is a feature of St Thomas's theory of creation, where it arrives via Avicenna's Metaphysica and the Liber de causis, and traces have been argued to persist in Leibniz's picture of God as containing all possibilities within himself and of the monads of his Monadology as "outflashings" of the divine.[25]

Atomism and Causation: Malebranche, Leibniz, Hume

Atomisms of matter, space and time entered Arabic philosophy from India not, as might have been expected, from the Greeks. These ontologies were adopted by the philosophers of the kalām against the Aristotelian doctrines of form and matter, substances and natures, and they provided the foundations for occasionalism and a theory of continuous recreation which set the absolute power of God in the place of

Greek natural necessity, essence and causal efficacy. It is an unexplored question to what extent the revival of atomism in mid seventeenth-century Europe might have been affected by the clear formulation given e.g. by Maimonides in the Guide in addition to the popularity of Epicurus and Lucretius. The theologians, Maimonides says, considered the senses deceptive, both because they were subject to error, illusion and distortion and because they miss the subtlety of nature.[26] They

thought that the world as a whole … is composed of very small particles that, because of their subtlety, are not subject to division. The individual particle does not possess quantity in any respect. However, when several are aggregated, their aggregate possesses quantity and has thus become a body …

All these particles are alike and similar to one another, there being no difference between them in any respect whatsoever …

[Generation consists in aggregation, and corruption in separation.[27]

There is a void to permit motion, accidents are superadded to atoms and do not last during two units of time. The course of nature and all that we regard as natural law, is a habit of God's.[28] Any sequence of events which we can imagine to happen could in fact happen.

Much better understood are the Arabic sources of the occasionalist doctrines of the seventeenth century. Al-Ghazzālī, in the Incoherence of the Philosophers, attacks natural necessity in favour of absolute omnipotence of God.

Each of two things, he says, has its own individuality and is not the other,

neither the existence nor the non-existence of the one is implied in the affirmation, negation, existence and non-existence of the other – e.g. the satisfaction of thirst does not imply drinking, nor satiety eating, nor burning contact with fire, nor light sunrise, nor decapitation death, nor recovery the drinking of medicine, nor evacuation the taking of a purgative, and so on for all the empirical connexions existing in medicine, astronomy, the sciences and the crafts. For the connexion in these things is based on a prior power of God to create them in a successive order.[29]

Averroes argues against this that:

True knowledge is the knowledge of a thing as it is in reality.

And if in reality there only existed, in regard both to the substratum and to the Agent, the possibility of two opposites, there would no longer, even for the twinkling of an eye, be any permanent knowledge of anything, since we suppose the agent to rule existents like a tyrannical prince who has the highest power, for whom nobody in his dominion can deputize, of whom no standard or custom is known to which reference might be made.[30]

According to those who have studied the transmission of the problem, the doctrine that natural necessity is incoherent and the substitution of a doctrine of continuous creation reaches Descartes and Malebranche through St Thomas, who, for his part, endorses Averroes' position against the mutakallimūn, and the sixteenth-century neo-Scholastic Suarez. From

Malebranche, who expounds occasionalism in Elucidation XVI to his Search After Truth (1675), and in numerous other locations including the Dialogues on Metaphysics (1699), the doctrine passes to Hume, who converts the habits of God to the habits of men in his analysis.[31] It is also rediscovered by Leibniz, who finds the doctrines of the loquentes in book 2, chapter 73 of Maimonides, which he reads in a

Venice edition of 1629 some time between 1678 and 1695.[32] Breaking from Malebranche, Leibniz rejects occasionalism and voluntarism eloquently in numerous works, notably De ipsa natura of 1695. Atomism and the continuum problem were particular concerns of Leibniz, and one might wonder whether the singly quantityless atoms of the mutakallimun which aggregate to form substances are related to the unextended monads, whose aggregates, on some versions of the Monadology, are visible and tangible bodies.[33]

Philosophical Autobiography and Subjectivity: Descartes

According to V. V. Naumkin, it has definitely been established that Descartes read Al-Ghazzālī's works.[34] Which might have been relevant for him? Al-Ghazzālī wrote a short spiritual autobiography describing how his venture into the "vast ocean" of sects and doctrines from his adolescence onward left him distressed at conflicting and uncertain beliefs. "The thirst for knowledge was innate in me from an early age; it was like a second nature on my part implanted by God … No sooner had I emerged from boyhood than I had already broken the fetters of tradition and freed myself from

hereditary belief."[35] He then reflected as follows: "The search after truth being the aim which I propose to myself, I ought in the first place to ascertain what are the bases of certitude."[36] Certitude is, he says, "the clear and complete knowledge of things, such knowledge as leaves no room for doubt nor possibility of error and conjecture".[37] Certain knowledge is impervious to doubt: no experience, he says, could make him believe that three is more than ten. At first it seemed to him that sense-perceptions and necessary principles satisfied his criteria; however, some considerations persuaded him that sense-experience was not certain; stars look as large as a piece of gold but are far bigger than the earth. Yet he puzzled whether, as reason not overrule reason:

a reflection drawn from the phenomenon of sleep deepened my doubt. "Do you not see," I reflected, "that while asleep you assume your dreams to be indisputably real? Once awake you recognize them for what they are – baseless chimeras, Who can assure you then of the reliability of notions which, when awake, you derive from the senses and from reason?" In relation to your present state they may be real, but it is possible also that you may enter upon another state of being which will bear the same relation to your present state as this does to your condition when asleep.[38]

He remained, Al-Ghazzālī says, in a state of doubt for two months, finally delivered by God: "I owed my deliverance not to a concatenation of proofs and arguments, but to the light which God caused to penetrate into my heart – the light which illuminates the threshold of all knowledge." He is disenchanted by the exact sciences, which, associated with naturalism and materialism, bear a taint of impiety, and Sufism shows him that he must forsake his attachment to

worldly things. The parallel with Descartes' Discourse on Method and the first two books of the Meditations is unmistakable; so too is the divergence: Descartes's natural light leads not to fideism but to the exact sciences.

Whether Descartes' famous dualism, which constituted a bold and controversial departure from the prevailing Scholastic hylomorphism, was inspired by Arabic sources is a matter for speculation. Part of al-Ghazzālī's attack on natural necessity involves the point that there is no necessary connection between external events and immediate sensory experience; perception requires the assistance of God. This point is developed both in the sceptical portions of the Meditations and later in Malebranche's doctrine of vision in God, in the Search after Truth.[39]

Some attention has focused on the celebrated "flying man argument" of Avicenna, a thought-experiment intended not so much to prove as to drive home awareness of the immateriality of the soul in the one who performs it, much as Descartes' experiments in doubt are supposed to elicit knowledge of the self as an immaterial thinking thing. The Mu'tazilite and Ash'arite schools which Avicenna challenges on this point were materialists on the subject of personal identity. "Most people," he reports, "and many of the speculative theologians have thought that the human being is this body and that everyone refers to it when saying 'I'. This is a false belief, as we shall show."[40] The refuting experiment is described (in one of three versions) as follows:

The one among us must imagine himself as though he is created all at once and created perfect, but that his sight has been veiled from observing external things, and that he is

created falling in the air or the void in a manner where he would not encounter air resistance, requiring him to feel, and that his limbs are separated from each other so that they neither meet nor touch. He must then reflect as to whether he will affirm the existence of his self.

He will not doubt his affirming his self existing, but with this he will not affirm any limb from among his organs, no internal organ, whether heart or brain and no external thing. Rather, he would be affirming his self without affirming it for length, breadth, and depth …

Hence the one who affirms has a means to be alerted to the existence of his soul as something other than the body – indeed, other than body – and to his being directly acquainted with [this existence] and aware of it.[41]

The textual parallels with Descartes are suggestive; unfortunately his knowledge of Avicenna's text has not been established.[42]

Providence and Optimality

Theodicy was a topic handled at length in Islamic philosophy, and it is again to Al-Ghazzālī that we owe a clear formulation of the best of all possible worlds doctrine later associated with Leibniz and Wolff: "There is not in possibility anything more wonderful than what is."[43] This position raised both difficulties – was it an infringement of God's power? – and problems of interpretation. The sect of the Mu'tazilah had held that good and evil are independent of God's will, while

the mutakallimūn had adopted the voluntarist position, that God is absolutely free in his creation of good and evil. These stances provided two different approaches to defending the rightness of the actual. For the Mu'tazilah, the task was to show that, despite appearances, the world conforms to humanly acceptable criteria of goodness. For the Ash'arites, as goodness was determined by God's arbitrary and inscrutable will, the task was to humble and reconcile oneself to things as they are. The subject, as Eric Ormsby notes, is one left largely undiscussed by the medievals, reemerging as a topic with Malebranche, Leibniz, Hume, Kant and Schopenhauer.[44] But it was treated at length by Maimonides, and evidence is strong that Leibniz's reading of Maimonides – and indeed Pierre Bayle's – was critical in making it a focus of attention in his Theodicy. Maimonides argued at length in the Guide of the Perplexed that the perception of evil in the world results from people's anthropocentric supposition that Nature was made for them; they suppose that their personal sorrows implicate the whole of the universe. Bayle attacked Maimonides in the Letters to a Provincial; Leibniz defended him:

Maimonides is right in saying that if one took into account the littleness of man in relation to the universe, one would comprehend clearly that the predominance of evil, even though it prevailed among men, need not on that account occur among the angels, nor among the heavenly bodies, nor among the elements and inanimate compounds, nor among many kinds of animals … so also on consideration of the metaphysical good and evil which is in all substances, whether endowed with or devoid of intelligence … one must say that the universe, such as it actually is, must be the best of all systems.[45]

Leibniz appears to have borrowed liberally from the passages in the Guide which argue that evil in the world is an appearance produced by limited perspective and subjective wishes; his notes mention the Ash'arite and Mu'tazilite positions on the divine will and divine justice. Elsewhere in his writings, he protests against the moral and intellectual voluntarism of Descartes, later against the voluntarism of Samuel Clarke, defending choice, perfection and pre-established harmony in terms reminiscent of the old debates.

Magic, Imagination and Irrationalism

Most recent commentators have focused on the argumentative structure of Arabic rationalism. But the influence of the Arab and Jewish thought on the occult philosophy of the Renaissance, and on the pair of religious deviations of the mid seventeenth century – quietist mysticism and chiliasm – is not to be overlooked. Leibniz, for example, characterized the quietists of his day as Averroist-inspired. In his attacks on sectarian enthusiasm, the Cambridge Platonist Benjamin Whichcote comments, "Among Christians, those, that pretend to be Inspired, seem to be Mad: among the Turks, those, that are Mad, are thought to be Inspired."'[16] Maimonides' discussion of prophecy and imagination in the Guide, which Spinoza hearkens to in his Tractatus theologico-politicus, forms one current of influence; another can be found in the literature addressing kabbalism.[47]

With magic and sympathetic action there are important relations to be traced in the dissemination of the occult philosophy, along with alchemy, astronomy and medicine, into the Latin West. Avicenna's claim in book 4.4 of the Liber de anima that the imagination could operate at a distance in another body than its own, for example through the evil eye, was approved and developed by numerous later writers on magic, including Albertus Magnus, Paracelsus and H. C. Agrippa, [48] and his suggestion that the Intelligences which move the heavenly bodies confer the powers of prophecy and miracle-working is adopted by Marsilio Ficino.[49] Indeed, the theory of the imagination was a particular strength of Islamic philosophy. Pascal's frightened man on a narrow plank who exemplifies the root irrationality Pascal found in humankind and which he took to dispel its claim to self-sufficiency and importance is found in Montaigne and in St Thomas, but earlier in Al-Ghazzālī, and originally in Avicenna's Psychology and the Book of Directions and Remarks.[50]

Locke and Berkeley's man-born-blind-and-made-to-see makes his appearance in al-Gazzall's Incoherence, [51] and no doubt much of what we think of as empiricism – a reaction to Scholastic modes of argument and theological rationalism – might appear as originally interwoven with the
latter in medieval Islamic philosophy. Particular mention should be made in this connection of the book of Ibn Ṭufayl (d. 1185), Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān, the story of a solitary infant born or suddenly appearing on a desert island who, by observation and exercise of native reason, attains to religious and metaphysical truth in the absence of all social exchange. The story was translated into Latin by Edward Pococke the Younger in 1671 as Philosophicus autodidacticus, sive

epistola … qua ostenditur quomodo ex inferiorum contemplatione ad superiorum notiam ratio humana ascendere possit, and enjoyed numerous editions and translations in European languages afterwards. Its relationship to philosophical speculation about the roles of experience versus innate ideas in the emergence of abstract thought and to the innateness of religious concepts has attracted some attention.'[52]

NOTES

1 On early manuscripts and printed books and their translators, consult Moritz Steinschneider (1956).

2 Immanuel Kant, Critique of Pure Reason, A406/B433ff.

3 He enjoys forty-seven World Catalog listings from 1490 to 1600, fifty-two between 1600 and 1700.

4 See Richard H. Popkin (1988): 216–29.

5 Elizabeth Eisenstein, The Printing Press as an Agent of Change, 2 vols (Cambridge, 1979). Nicholas Rescher in a fine survey article (1966) stresses however their immediate importance in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

6 Avicenna drops from 150 entries in the World Catalog between 1490 and 1600 to twenty-four between 1600 and 1700. Averroes' listings in the same periods drop from seventy-four to two.

7 After the sharp drop, the publication curve for Islamic philosophy picks up again in the mid nineteenth century with the development of modern textual scholarship: the interest at this point is mainly historical and philological rather than philosophical.

8 Jeremiah Hackett (1988): 101.

9 Though, according to Gilson, medieval philosophers were not familiar with al-Ghazzālī's Incoherence, knowing only his earlier summary of the doctrines of al-Fārābī and Avicenna which he later tries to refute. Etienne Gilson (1955): 216.

10 Hackett (1988).

11 David B. Burrell (1988): 37–48.

12 Harry Austryn Wolfson (1958): 1,317.

13 On the problem of esoteric and exoteric writing and the philosopher's position with respect to religion, see George F. Hourani (1961). On parallels between Spinoza's position on biblical interpretation and the handling of "contradictions" and the Islamic and Jewish traditions, see Roger Arnaldez (1978): 151–73.

14 Al-Ghazzālī, The Incoherence of the Philosophers (Tahāfut al-falāsifah) in Averroes's Tahādfut al-tahāfut (The Incoherence of the Incoherence), trans. S. Van Den Bergh (London, 1954): 19. Cf. Leibniz, 5th Letter to Clark, "One must not say, as the author does here, that God created things in what particular space and at what particular time he pleased. For all time and all spaces being in themselves

perfectly uniform and indiscernible from each other, one of them cannot please more than another," trans. in Leibniz (1969): 707.

15 Incoherence of the Incoherence. 14.

16 See Gilson (1955): 373; 410.

17 St Thomas Aquinas, Summa contra gentiles, 3.69.

18 Stuart MacClintock (1967).

19 "The Spirituality and Immortality of the Human Soul", in Duns Scotus (1962): 138.

20 Phillipe Mornay (1581); see the classic study of Ernest Renan (1925).

21 According to Arnaldez (1972: 151), "One cannot detect any definitive sign of direct knowledge of Arabic thought in Spinoza's work, and … it is impossible under these conditions to speak of a real influence." He does not rule this out however; see, e.g., his comparison of Spinoza's third category of knowledge and Arabic mysticism and determinism (1972: 169ff.).

22 1702, reprinted in Leibniz (1967): 554–60. Leibniz often presented the monadology as a bulwark against monopsychism. He admitted the idea of a universal intellect had attractions, but believed that it should be interpreted in Augustinian fashion – God is the light of every soul. Cf. his Discourse on Metaphysics (1686) (Leibniz (1969): 321) and his argument in the fragment De realitate accidentium (c.

1688) Akademie Vorausedition, Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe (Münster, 1988) (7: 1608), which also treats Spinoza as an Averroist who believed that everything is a transitory mode of God.

23 Renan (1925): 116.

24 Leibniz (1985): no. 11, p. 81.

25 See Daniel Fouke (1994).

26 Moses Maimonides, The Guide of the Perplexed, trans. Shlomo Pines (Chicago, 1963), 1. 73: 213.

27 Ibid.: 197.

28 "When we, as we think, dye a garment red, it is not we who are by any means the dyers; God rather creates the color in question when in the garment when the latter is in juxtaposition with the red dye, which we consider to have gone over to the garment." Ibid.: 201.

29 Incoherence: 316. A similar argument was given by Sextus Empiricus and was used by Galen to justify the "empiricist" approach in medicine. On Sextus versus al-Ghazzālī as a source for Hume, see Leo Groarke and Graham Solomon (1991).

30 Incoherence: 325. See on the dispute, Barry S. Kogan (1985).

31 James Frederick Naify (1975).

32 His notes are printed in the Akademie Vorausedition Fasz. 10 (Münster, 1991): 2678–91. See Lenn E. Goodman (1980).

33 One early solution Leibniz considers to the problem of the continuum is the doctrine of the "leap" ascribed to al-Naẓẓām (see Majid Fakhry (1983): 215) which a body makes in passing from A to C avoiding B, Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe (Berlin, 1980), 6(3): 559–64.

34 This is proved, he says, by a note in the Cartesian collection of the Bibliothèque Nationale of Paris (Naumkin (1987): 124 n. 1).

35
The Confessions of Al-Ghazzālī, trans. Claude Field (Lahore, n.d.): 13–14. Cf. Descartes, Discourse on Method "I have been nourished on letters since my childhood, and since I was given to believe that by their means a clear and certain knowledge could be obtained of all that is useful in life, I had an extreme desire to acquire instruction … But so soon as I had achieved the entire course of study at the close of which one is usually received into the ranks of the learned, entirely changed my opinion … [A]s soon as age permitted me to emerge from the control of my tutors, I entirely quitted the study of letters" (1932, 1:83–6).

36 Al-Ghazzālī, Confessions: 14.

37 Ibid.: 15.

38 Ibid.: 18–19. Cf. Descartes, "I have often in sleep been deceived by similar illusions, and in dwelling carefully on this reflection 1 sec so manifestly that there are no certain

indications by which we may clearly distinguish wakefulness from sleep that I am lost in astonishment" (Meditation I, (1932): 146).

39 "It may happen to any of us that there should be in his presence birds of prey and flaming fires and immovable mountains and enemies equipped with arms, without his seeing them, because God had not created in him the faculty of seeing them." (Incoherence: 323).

40 See Michael Marmura (1986).

41 Ibid.: 387. The reference is to Avicenna's Psychology (part of the al-Shifā'): 13, 9–20. Cf. Descartes, Meditation II: "I suppose then that all the things I see are false; I persuade myself that nothing has ever existed of all that my fallacious memory represents to me. I consider that I possess no senses; I imagine that body, figure, extension, movement and place are but fictions of my mind … [But] I myself, am I at least not something? … I was persuaded that there was nothing in all the world, that there was no heaven, no earth, that there were no minds, nor any bodies; was I not then persuaded that I did not exist? Not at all" (1932: 150). The flying man appears too in the well-read Hume: "Suppose … a man to be supported in the air, and to be softly conveyed along by some invisible power; tis evident he is sensible of nothing, and never receives the idea of extension, nor indeed any idea, from this invariable motion: Even supposing he moves his limbs to and fro, this cannot convey to him that idea. He feels in that case a certain sensation or impression, the parts of which are successive to each other, and may give him the idea of time. But certainly are not dispos'd in such a manner, as is

necessary to convey the idea of space or extension" (1978: 1.2.5).

42 On the problem see Arnaldez (1972); G. Furlani (1927).

43 Eric Ormsby (1984): 32.

44 Ibid.: Iff.

45 Theodicy, no. 263. Cf. Maimonides, Guide of the Perplexed, 3.12, pp. 44lff. and Leibniz's Aus Maimonides Dux Perplexorum, Vorausedition, Fasz. 10: 2685–6.

46 Benjamin Whichcote (1969), no. 1182, p. 336. Locke too, according to Thomas Lennon, The Battle of the Gods and Giants (Princeton, 1992): 276, read Paul Ricaut's popular L'Etat present de l'empire ottoman, and commented on Turkish enthusiasm.

47 Kalman P. Bland (1991) On millenarianism as a stimulus to Jewish studies, see Richard Popkin (1990).

48
Van Den Bergh, Incoherence: 175.

49 D. P. Walker (1975): 162.

50 "When a man walks on a plank between two walls over an empty space, his imagination is stirred by the possibility of falling and his body is impressed by this imagination and in fact he falls, but when this plank is on the earth, he walks over it without falling" (Incoherence: 314). Cf. Montaigne, Essays, 2.1; St Thomas, Summa theologia, 3.103; on its

transmission, see Van Den Bergh, Incoherence: 174. Pascal's knowledge of Islamic philosophy, according to Henri Gouhier, was obtained at least in part through the influential Pugio fidei … adversus Mauros et Judaeos (1278) of Raymond Martin, edited in 1651 and reprinted several times thereafter.

51 Incoherence: 317. Such a man will not guess at the role of light but will think "that the actual perception in his eyes of the forms of visible things is caused by the opening of his eyelids".

52 Rescher (1966): 155 observes the powerful interest it awoke in the Quakers on its appearance. (George Fox, however, had earlier joined in the cultural–religious polemic against "the Turk".) Cf. the references to Vaihinger on Condillac in Furlani (1927): 65. Its probable influence on Defoe's Robinson Crusoe (1700) is also argued for by Rescher (1966): 156.

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CHAPTER 60

The poetic medium: A case study

Branko Aleksić

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It is interesting to note Averroes' effect on literature – from the medieval poetry of Guido Cavalcanti and Dante Alighieri, the two most distinguished representatives of the Italian "New School", through a single line by their English follower Geoffrey Chaucer, and up into the twentieth century in the writings of the American Ezra Pound (translator and interpretator of Cavalcanti), the Argentinian Jorge Luis Borges, the Lebanese Adonis and the French Jean-Pierre Faye.

At the time of the great upsurge of Arab poetry in Andalusia, through Provence and up to Italy – where the Florentine dolce stil nuovo school of poetry was created – Guido Cavalcanti (c. 1250–1300) defined the nature of love in the canzone "Donna mi prega" (seventy-five lines), using the philosophical terms of the Great Commentary of Ibn Rushd (Averroes) through whom Aristotle's Metaphysics was reinstated in the Western tradition, as well as the Middle Commentary on the De anima – works that Dante was also

familiar with. Aristotle, "the metaphysician" of Averroes, "explains the cause of animated substance" (Averroes (1984): 70), while the poet Cavalcanti, Dante's friend, searched for the cause of love: its force ("sua potenza"), its movement ("movimento"), the form of its condition and state ("suo stato si formato") and its constant changes (Cavalcanti (1960): 524–8). The distinctive attraction of this transference, "the possible intellect" – the concept asserted by Averroes and accepted in Scholastic philosophy from St Thomas Aquinas to Albertus Magnus – is quoted explicitly and paraphrased in Cavalcanti's poem, and that in the sense (along the lines) that Michael Scot translated it into Latin; the possible intellect, the potential intellect as the subject. Cavalcanti offers a definition of love that takes in the possible intellect as in the subject, its place and abode (lines 2Iff: "Amore … / Ven da veduta forma che

s'intende, / che prende – nel possibile intelletto, / come in subietto, – loco e dimoranza"). The cause of love equals the cause of animated substance in Aristotle's Metaphysics with a commentary by Averroes (textus etc.). The canzone gives ground to the passage of textus 8 (1,438–15, 1,439,1): "Aristotle says: And since being is elaborated in two manners, all that changes from potential being to actual being'' (Averroes (1984): 76). Love fits naturally into this poetic allusion of Cavalcanti to the problem whose generation was resolved by Aristotle, for, in the first book of the Physics, that which becomes comes from that which exists potentially, not from that which actually exists. Cavalcanti, as the ottimo filosofo naturale (in the words of the Dame in the Decameron, 6th day, novel 9), but also as a poet, opts for experience. This is the second decisive stamp of Averroes' lesson. De naturali philosophia: Renan in his history assesses the consequence of these words through a fresh religious condemnation. The

Council of Paris, which in 1209 fought for the first time against the rise of Arab philosophy, condemned Amaury de Bène, David de Dinant and their disciples, by these words: "Nec libri Aristotelis de naturali philosophia, nec commenta legantur Parisiis publice vel secreto" (Renan (1949): 178). In stating that the essence ("Tesser") of love has its origin in the form of the "possible intellect's" substance, which can be generated and yet remains incorruptible, Cavalcanti demonstrates its nature not as rational but as "that which feels" (line 31: "non razionale – ma che si sente"). We find here again the affirmation of intuitive thought, to which Averroes himself resorts in his polemic work Tahāfut al-tahāfut ("Incoherence of the Incoherence", chapter 1, 44). As the seat of love, Cavalcanti designates the potential intellect, "the material intellect", "the possible intellect", which in Aristotle (with Averroes' commentary) represents the link with matter, and is related to imagination and memory. With respect to Aristotle's short treatise De memoria et reminiscentia, Cavalcanti postulates that the experience of love, by its nature and its cause, belongs to Memory; he is always a poet-philosopher of natural demonstration ("natural dimostramento" – 1. 8).

Cavalcanti's poetical and spiritual disciple Dante Alighieri (1265–1321), in his treatise De monarchia, offers a direct commentary on Averroes' De anima, 3, and references to Averroist cosmological doctrines are detected in Dante's Convivio. In a metaphorical way, Dante applies the Averroist theory of collective intellect in his utopia of the "political corpus" governing universally. Dante's "operation adjusted to the human totality and to which this totality is ordered" (De monarchia, 1.3, 9), was attacked in the sixteenth century by the Dominican Guido Vernani, as an Averroist theory against

the religion of the state (Gilson (1953): 169). Another use of Averroes is found in Dante's Convivio, 4.13.8 (the title is based on Plato's Symposium):, the doctrine of brown lunar stains. Since the heroine of Dante's Commedia, Beatrice, discusses the human belief

that people see a human figure in these stains, using rare and dense explanations attributed to Ibn Rushd (Nardi (1966): 3–39), canto II of Dante's Paradiso (49 ff.) proves, in accordance with the Convivio, their common source. Finally, in the first part of the Commedia, that poetical summary of the medieval gnosis, the celebrated Islamic interpretator of Aristotle is named next to Avicenna (1. 143), in the concise manner which will remain for centuries as the trade mark in Western civilization: "Averroes, che 'l gran comento feo" (Inferno, 4.144) – "Averroes, who made a Great Commentary" – but Dante did not enter into how he made it. It was only seven centuries later that another poet and writer – Jorge Luis Borges – would talk precisely about the problematic way in which Averroes "who, closed within the orb of Islam, could never know the meaning of the terms tragedy and comedy", still successfully translated Aristotle.

Renan's study of Averroes, which dates from 1851, served for a long time as a source, even in literature. The American poet and critic Ezra Pound (1885–1972), in a long study of his translation of Cavalcanti's "philosophical Canzone", elaborated in 1910–31, quotes Averroes following Renan. The Argentine writer J. L. Borges (1899–1986), inspired by Renan's remark about "Averroes, wanting to imagine what a drama is without ever having suspected what a theater is" (Borges (1964): 155), wrote the paradoxical short story "Averroes' Search". The Lebanese poet Adonis, resident in France, wrote a long poem on Marrakesh and interpretations

weaved by space (published originally in Beirut, 1980), and recently accompanied it with a letter on Ibn Rushd and the alliance of poetry and philosophy, dated 1991, on the eight-hundredth anniversary of two Great Treatises by Averroes (1190). At the same time, French writer and essayist Jean-Pierre Faye (b. 1925) composed a long poem, "Le Vivant Ymaginant" on Averroes, where sequences by the philosopher are combined with quotations from Thomas Aquinas as well as William Blake and Georges Bataille. The search for the "moving subject" (Averroes), "or the subject of the moving night" (Bataille) is carried out in philosophy and in poetry, and it can find a final meeting point, resolving the dispute between the two approaches. Since Averroes, with his professional medical background, often used metaphors of spiritual medicine, the English poet Geoffrey Chaucer (c. 1343–1400), taking over from the Italian school of Dante, named him as such in his Canterbury Tales (General Prologue, 1. 433). The philosopher dispenses wisdom (ḥikmah, sophia); the poet dispenses Eros.

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IX

Islamic philosophy in the modern Islamic world

CHAPTER 61

Persia

Mehdi Aminrazavi

❦

The advent of the "School of Iṣfahan"[1] in the tenth/sixteenth century, and in particular the teachings of its distinguished member Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī known as Mullā Ṣadrā,[2] was a turning point in the history of Islamic philosophy in Persia. The outpouring during the Ṣafavid dynasty of philosophical activities, which went through a period of decline in the following period, was once again revived by the sages of the Qājār period[3] in the thirteenth/nineteenth century, in particular Mullā ʿAlī Nūrī, Mullā Ismāīl Khājū'ī and Hājjī Mullā Hādī Sabziwārā.[4] The philosophical activities in the fourteenth/twentieth century in Iran should therefore be viewed in the light of the influence of the. teachings of the grand master of the School of Iṣfahān, Mullā Ṣadrā, and his illustrious commentators and revivers, such as Hajjī Mullā Ḥādī Sabziwārī.[5]

In what follows we will discuss some of those Iranian philosophers who have kept alive the tradition of Islamic philosophy to this day. In doing so we deal with two groups of Iranian philosophers: firstly, those who have had a purely traditional education; secondly, those who are well grounded

in Islamic philosophy but have either studied in the West or been familiar with Western modes of thought.

Traditional Philosophers

Following the death of Sabziwārī (1289/1797), Tehran became the most important centre of philosophical activity in Iran and gained further significance when such masters as Mullā Abd Alīāh and Mullā Alī Zunūzī migrated to Tehran to promulgate the teachings of the School of Iṣfahān. In the latter part of the Qājār period in Iṣfahān itself, where Mullā Alī Nūrī had been active earlier, philosophy gradually began to wane and,

except for Jahāngīr Khān Qashqāī, the last notable survivor of the School of Iṣfahān and a remarkable philosopher and mystic and his student Ḥajjī Āqā Raḥim Arbāb, no other major figure can be mentioned. With the decline of Iṣfahān as the centre of philosophical activity, Tehran became the definite centre where significant work was done on Sabziwārī's interpretation of Mullā Ṣadrā as well as the philosophy of Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna) and Suhrawardī by such figures as the Zunūzī family (Mullā Abd Allāh and Mullā Alī), Mīrzā Abu'l Hasan Jilwah, Mīrzā Mahdī Āshtiyānī, Fāḍil- i Tūnī and Mīrzā Ṭāhir Tūnīkābunī, who was also a jurist. Abu'l Ḥasan Jilwah[6] was the only figure among them who wrote against Mullā Ṣadrā, accusing him of taking the Peripatetics' arguments and following the philosophy of Ibn Sīnā himself. Āshtiyānī and Fāḍil-i Tūnī were both attracted to Ibn Arabī's philosophical mysticism but also favoured Mullā Ṣadrā. Āshtiyānī, who wrote Asās al-tawḥīd and a commentary upon Sabzīwārī's Sharḥ al-manzūmah among

other books, trained a number of distinguished students, [7] the most notable of whom is Mahdī Hā'irī. Fādiī- i Tūnī however, committed himself mostly to the clarification of Ibn Arabī's works, in particular his Fūṣūs al-ḥikam, while he also taught at Tehran University.[8]

Among the philosophers of the last fifty years who have left an indelible mark upon Islamic philosophy in Iran, the following three figures stand out particularly: Sayyid Muḥammad Kāẓim Aṣṣar, Sayyid Abu'l- Ḥasan Qazwīnī and Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭabātabā'ī. Sayyid Muḥammad Kāzim Aṣṣār, the oldest of the traditional masters of Islamic philosophy of his generation, was one of the first traditional scholars who went to the West and having studied in France returned then to Najaf for some time. Following his return to Iran, he taught at Tehran University and the Sipahsālār madrasah. Aṣṣār, who was also a jurist, specialized in the philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā and Sabziwārī, gnosis ('irfān) and theoretical Sufism. Aṣṣār's influence upon Islamic philosophy was not so much through his writings as through the training of a number of fine students, among whom one can mention Seyyed Hossein Nasr. Some of his important writings are 'Ilm al-hadīth, [9] and Wahdat al-wūjūd wa badā'[10] and his most important published work, Thalāth rasā'īl fi'l- hikmat al-islāmiyyah.[11]

Sayyid Abu'l-Ḥasan Rafī'i Qazwīnī, [12] a great scholar of Mullā Ṣadrā was not a prolific author, but had a major influence on the revival and propagation of the "transcendental theosophy" (hikmat al-muta'īliyyah) of Mullā Ṣadrā. His title as an Ayatollah allowed him greater freedom to teach philosophy which was opposed by some of the jurists. Qazwīnī, who in addition to the religious sciences also

knew astronomy and mathematics, wrote Ittihīd-i ʿīqil wa maʾqūl, [13] which deals with the doctrine of the unity of the knower and the known, a treatise on the unity of being (waḥdat-i wujūd)[14] and a treatise on eternal creation (ḥudūth-idahrī).[15]

The most important contribution of Qazwīnī to Islamic philosophy in Iran, however, has again been the training of such outstanding scholars as Sayyid Jalāl ĀshtiyĀnī and Seyyed Hossein Nasr.[16]

Finally, Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥūsayn Tabātabā'ī, [17] who due to his piety and prolific authorship has gained legendary fame in Iran, should be mentioned. Being a native of Tabriz, "Alāamah" (the most learned) as he is called, studied philosophy in Najaf with Shaykh Husayn Wāhid al-'Ayn. Tabātabāī, who resided in Qom, taught mainly the Shifā' of Ibn Sīnā and the Asfār of Mullā Ṣadrā. He also taught Sufism to a smaller circle of people.

Amongst the more notable works of Alīamah Tabātabāī are the twenty-seven volume Qur'ānic commentary al-Mīzān, ʿAlī wa'l-hikmat al-ilāhiyyah, the new edition of the Asfār of Mullā Ṣadrā and two philosophical works written at the end of his life, Bidāyat al-hikmah and Nihāyat al-hikmah. finally, we should mention especially his Usāl-i falsafah wa rawish-i ri'ālizm[18] with the extensive commentary of his distinguished student Murtadā Mutahharī which was written as a response to the intellectual challenge of the leftist intellegentsia and more especially Marxism, in Iran after the Second World War.

Ṭābaṭābaī also carried out a series of annual discussions (1958–78) with Henry Corbin, the outstanding French

philosopher and scholar of Islam, in Tehran and Qom. In these meetings various philosophical topics were discussed from a comparative point of view and these discussions became the source of inspiration for a number of younger philosophers. S. H. Nasr, who studied both philosophy and 'irfān with the Alāamah, was the main translator of these sessions in both a linguistic and an intellectual sense.[19]

Among other philosophers of this era who are less known one can mention Muḥammad Sālih Hā'irī Māzandarānī and Ziyā al-Dīn Durrī both of whom staunchly defended the Peripatetics and remained opposed to Mullā Ṣadrā. In his book Hikmat-i Bū AIī[20] Ha'ir? Māzandarānī argued that Mullā Ṣadrā had been inspired by the Peripatetics more than he gave them credit for. Ziyā' al-Dīn Durrī wrote extensive commentaries upon the Asfār of Mullā Ṣadrā and also argued that Mullā Ṣadrā adopted certain strands of the Peripatetics' thought. Durrī mentioned one hundred and three texts which are the foundations of the Sadrian philosophy.[21] Also, we should include Māhdī Ilāhī Qūmsha'ī, the author of Hikmat-i ilālī khāss wa 'āmm, [22] Mīrzā Ahmad Āshtiyānī, well known for his mastery of gnosis and ethics and the author of Nāma-yi rahbarān-i āmūizish-i kitāb- i takwīn, [23] Abd al-Wahhāb Sha'rānī, the editor of Sabziwārā's Asrār al-hikam and the Sharh al-tajrīd, of Hillī, and finally Muḥammad Taqī Āmulī, the author of Dūrar al-fawā'id'.[24]

Beside the above figures who composed philosophical treatises, a group of scholars can be named who, although not strictly speaking
"philosophers", contributed towards the further enrichment of Islamic philosophy in Iran. Amongst this group can be named Maḥmūd Shahābī who beside his expertise in jurisprudence

wrote a fine work on Ibn Sīnā's al-Ishārāt wa'l-tanbīhāt, and a work on logic entitled Rahbar-i khirad[25] and Sayyid Muḥammad Mishkāt who wrote numerous short treatises on Ibn Sīnā, Qātb al-Dīn Shīrāzī, Hlilā and Kāshānī. In addition to his scholarship, Mishkāt gathered one of the most valuable libraries on Islamic philosophy and the sciences which he later donated to Tehran University[26]. One should also mention Jalāl Humāl, who is best known for his works on literature but also composed one of the most authoritative works on al-Ghāzzālī, the Ghazzālī-nāmah, and an important work on Mullā Ṣadrā, and Jawād Muslih who is known for his excellent translation of Mullā Ṣadrā's Asfār and al-Shawāhid al-rubūbiyyah into Persian. Finally, one can mention a mysterious woman from Iṣfahān who composed a number of works on gnosis and philosophical ethics and who would sign her name as Yak bānū-yi īrānī ("a Persian lady" but whose real name was Amīn. She composed a number of works on gnosis and religious sciences, including a major commentary upon the Qur'ān entitled Makhzan al- 'irfān, two works on eschatology, Ma'ādya ākharīn sayr-i bashar and Āghāz wa anjām, and a major philosophical work called Arba'īn-i hāshāmiyyah.

Among the next generation of scholars, the most outstanding and prolific figure is Sayyid Jalāl Āshtiyānī who is currently teaching at Mashhad University. Among his major works are Hast? az nazar-i falsafah wa 'irfdn, Sharh bar miiqaddamah-yi Qaysari dar tasawwufi isldmi, Sharh- i Hal wa drd–yi falsafi-yi Mullā Ṣadrā, an edition of Mullā Ṣadrā's al-Mazdhir al-ildhiyyah, an edition of Mullā Muḥammad Ja'far Lahljanl's commentary upon Mullā Ṣadrā's Mashair, an edition of Sabziwari's Majmiia-yi rasd'il, a critical edition of Mullā Ṣadrā's al-Shawdhid al- rubiibiyyah with the commentary of

Sabziwarl, and finally his edition of Mullā Muhsin Fayd KashanT's Usui al-ma'drif with a very long commentary on the philosophy of the school of Mullā Ṣadrā. Perhaps his greatest work, however, has been the editing of an anthology of Islamic philosophy in Persia from Mīr Damad to the present with the collaboration of Henry Corbin. All the Classical texts in the anthology have Ashtiyani's own commentaries and long introductions of great philosophical importance.[27]

Among other traditional philosophers we can mention Misbah Yazdl, who is the author of a two-volume book entitled Āmūzish-i falsafah, [28] JawādīĀmulāā and Hasan-zādah Āmulī, [29] All of whom teach Islamic philosophy in Qom today. The latter is regarded as the heir to Ṭāṭabā'īs chair in philosophy in Qom.

Among the other philosophers of this period, one must name Murtada MutahharT, [30] who was a student of Alīāmah Tabātaba'ī. Mutahharī was one of the few traditional scholars to devote a major part of his works to the exposition of Islam for young people. As a result,
most of his writings are of a popular nature, although he wrote some works of a highly scholarly nature such as his commentary upon Tabātabāī's Usul-i falsafah wa rawish-i riālīzm, his edition of Bahmanyar's Kitāb al-tahsil, Khadamāt-ī mutaqābil-i islām wa Irān in two volumes, and Sharh-i Manzūma-i Sabziwārī?[31]

Traditional Philosophers with Modern Training

Among the more prominent Muslim philosophers of the last few decades who have had traditional training and are also at home with Western modes of thought we can name S. H. Nasr, M. Ḥāirī, M. Mohaghegh and to some extent A. Fardld and D. Shayegan.[32] To this list one must also add Henry Corbin, who, although not an Iranian by birth, had made Iran his spiritual home and played an active role on the Iranian philosophical scene. It is by virtue of leaving an indelible mark upon the intellectual landscape of Iran that Corbin should be regarded in any discussion of traditional Islamic philosophy in contemporary Iran.[33]

S. H. Nasr, whose university education was in the West, became further acquainted with Islamic philosophy upon his return to Iran. Amongst the scholars with both traditional and modern training, Nasr is the most prolific. His contributions are numerous, the most important being the introduction of traditional Islamic philosophy to modern educated Iranians, as well as other Muslims, especially at a time when Western rationalistic philosophy had posed a challgence to traditional Islamic philosophy. Nasr should also be credited with making the work of Mullā Ṣadrā and Suhrawardī, in particular his Persian mystical narratives, better known to a wider audience.[34]

One of the greatest achievements of Nasr, however, has been his engagement with modern thought as an Islamic philosopher. The subjects treated by him range from man and

nature to traditional cosmology, arts and metaphysics. In his numerous works[35] he has provided a traditional Islamic response to the challgences of the modern world. Some of his works which represent the encounter of traditional Islamic thought and certain strands of modern thought are Man and Nature, Islam and the Plight of the Modern Man and The Need for a Sacred Science. Among the especially philosophically oriented works of Nasr we can mention Knowledge and the Sacred, Three Muslim Sages and An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrine. [36]

Nasr has not only influenced modern Islamic philosophy in Iran through his works, but his relentless efforts to sponsor conferences and establish centres[37] for the study of Islamic philosophy in the 1960s and
1970s contributed to the spread of Islamic philosophy among the younger intellectuals in Iran.

Mahdī Hāin Yazdī, a traditional master of Islamic philosophy, has written extensively on epistemology. Having studied at Qom, he went to Canada and America as the representative of the late Āyatollah Burūjirdī. He studied philosophy at the University of Toronto and, upon his return to Iran, resumed his teaching at Tehran University. He taught for many years in the West.

Hā'irī promulgates an Ibn Sīnan interpretation of Suhrawardī and Mullā Ṣadrā as well as the whole school of ishrāq. One of the central concerns of Hā'irī has been to provide an Islamic response to the philosophical questions posed by the Western analytic tradition. His interest in comparative philosophy has made him a unique figure of contemporary philosophy in Iran. Among his major works are Hiram-i hastī, Kāwishhā-yi

'aql-i nazar-i, and his latest work, The Principles of Epistemology in Islamic Philosophy: Knowledge by Presence with a foreword by S. H. Nasr.[38]

One can also mention Mehdi Mohaghegh, who has taught at Tehran and McGill Universities and is the author of several important works such as Filsūf-i Ray.[39] He is also the editor of the Wisdom of Persia series, a major scholarly project which has undertaken in-depth studies of various Persian philosophers, and has produced many volumes so far.

Ahmad Fardīd and Daryush Shayegan are strictly speaking not "Islamic philosophers"; however, they display great interest in Islamic philosophy from a comparative perspective. Fardld had thorough knowledge of German philosophy but was also well versed in Islamic philosophy.[40] Shayegan, who participated in the circle of 'Alīamah Ṭabaṭbā'ī and Corbin, is more of an independent thinker who has done some interesting work on Shi'ism and Corbin from the modern continental point of view and also on comparative philosophy as far as Islamic and Indian philosophies are concerned. Among his important works are Hindouisme et Soufisme, L'Homme h la lampe magique, Le sens du ta'wīl, Henry Corbin: la topographie spirituelle de 11 slum iranien, and his book in Persian, Āsiyā dar barābar-i gharb.[41]

Finally, there is Henry Corbin, an exceptionally prolific scholar and philosopher whose early interest in Heidegger was supplemented by his contact with Suhrawardī's Hikmat al-ishrāq and the whole school of hikmah. Corbin directed the Institut Franco-Iranien in Tehran for more than twenty years, wrote and edited dozens of books on the tradition of hikmah in Iran, and spent the last years of his life teaching at the

Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy. Amongst the major works which he edited are Suhrawardī, Oeuvres philosophiques et mystiques, AbīYa'qūb Sijistānī, Kashf al-mahjūb, Ruzbahān Baqlī Shīrazī, Abhār āl-'āshiqīn and Mullā Ṣadrā, Kitāb al-mashāir. Among the major works he wrote on
Islamic philosophy we can mention Avicenna and the Visionary Recital, Creative Imagination in the Sufism ofIbn Arabī, Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth: From Mazdean Iran to Shiite Iran, and En Islam iranien. In addition to these works we must mention what is perhaps his most important contribution to Islamic philosophy, namely the History of Islamic Philosophy written in collaboration with S. H. Nasr and O. Yahya, which is the only history of Islamic philosophy to consider fully the later developments of Islamic philosophy in Iran.

One of the most significant contributions of Corbin to the Islamic culture of Iran was to establish a bridge between the pre-Islamic gnostic world view of the Persians and Shi'ite spirituality and philosophy. The philosophical and esoteric aspects of Shi'ite Islam were thoroughly studied by Corbin, whose pioneering work and collaborations with S. H. Nasr and S. J. Āshtiyānī were partly the reason for the revival of the teachings of certain Islamic philosophers in modern Iran.

Among the contemporary younger Iranian philosophers who are currently teaching in Iran, one can mention R. Dāwarī Ardakānī, N. Pourjavādī, Gh. A'wānī, Gh. Haddād 'Ādil and A. Surūsh. The works of these philosophers, in particular R. Dāwarī Ardākanī, Haddād 'Ādil and Surūsh, who, following the 1978–9 revolution in Iran, joined the revolutionary process, represent a tension with regard to the direction that

Islamic intellectual sciences ought to take. As politically inclined thinkers interested in traditional Islam and its intellectual heritage, they have composed treatises interpreting in different ways the tradition of Islamic philosophy. Among the major works of Dāwarī ArdakanT on traditional Islamic philosophy are Fārabi: the Founder of Islamic Philosophy and The Civil Society of Fārābi. Surūsh's major works on traditional themes are Knowledge and Value, and a short commentary on Mullā Ṣadrās theory of trans-substantiality of motion entitled The Restless Substance of the Universe (Nahād-i nā ārām- i jahān).

There are, however, the challenges of the modern world and the difficulties of implementing the Shari 'ah in modern Iran. As an attempt to respond to the challgences of the modern world with which they are engaged, these younger philosophers have composed numerous works addressing the encounter between traditional Islam and the modern world. Among Dāwarī Ardakānī's major works in this regard, one can name Islamic Revolution and the Status of the World\ The Present Status of Intellection in Iran and The Theoretical Foundation of Western Civilization. The significant works of Surush are Industry and Human Sciences, Intellectuality and Religiosity and Masked Dogmatism. The above philosophers are now engaged in an intensive discussion concerning the philosophy of law which has been called "Fiqh-i pūyā wa faqh-i īstā (dynamic and static jurisprudence). Using philosophical arguments, the supporters
of dynamic jurisprudence argue that the legal codes of the Sharī'ah must be reinterpreted within the immutable principles of Islam.

Political Philosophers

Beginning in the 1950s, a number of clerics as well as modernist scholars of Islam began to pay more attention to the political philosophy of Islam which was generally absent in the works of the traditionalists. Some of these scholars were not strictly speaking philosophers or at least not only philosophers, but had traditional training in philosophy. Among the most prominent figures were Ayatollah Ruhallah Khumaynī[42] who wrote Wilāyat-i faqīh and a number of short treatises on political philosophy in addition to his work Kashf al-asrār which is on rituals and prayers. Ayatollah TaliqanI, who offered a leftist interpretation of Islam, is the author of Partaw'ī az qū'rdn, a commentary upon the Qur'an, and a book on political economy in Islam entitled Islam wa mdlikiyyat, both of which became popular in post-revolutionary Iran; and Ayatollah Muntaziri, who was more of an activist than a scholar, wrote a number of short treatises on Islamic political philosophy. Murtada MutahharT, whose activities prior to the Iranian Revolution were directed at confronting the domination of Western culture, should also be mentioned. It is for this reason that he undertook the writing of an extensive commentary upon 'IabatabaT's work Usul-i falsafah wa rawish-i ri'dlizm, which was a response to the challgences of Western intellectual thought.

The second group of political philosophers during this period consists of those who have had some training in the West as well as in Iran and who properly speaking should be called "liberation theologians". Some of the well-known figures among them are A. Sharīatī, Y. Sahābī, M. Bāzargān and H.

Ḥabībī, who despite their hostile attitude towards traditional Islamic philosophy were engaged in speculative theology to defend the more radical interpretations of Islam. The latter group, whose very outlook is fundamentally different from the traditional Islamic philosophers, have produced a great deal of popular literature which offers a new interpretation of Islam.

Whereas traditional Islamic philosophy emphasizes the implementation of the Sharī'ah within society, the modernists rely on the "spirit of Islam" to bring about socio-political change while they question and often reject the relevance of many tenets of traditional Islamic law in the modern world.

A Summary of the Central Issues

Later Islamic philosophy in Iran is primarily concerned with such ontological issues as wujūd (existence) and mahiyyāh (quiddity) and epistemology.[43] Whereas the mashsha'ls advocate the "principiality" of māhiyyah, the Ishrāqīs have supported the "principiality" of wujūd. Central to the concern of mashshā'ūs are also such themes as God's knowledge of the world and whether knowledge belongs to the Essence of God or His Attributes. The problem of how multiplicity came from unity and the structure within which this problem is explained (tashkīk) is also central to Islamic philosophy.

The Sadrian philosophers for whom existence and essence are central have also paid special attention to the unity of the

intellect ('aql), agent of intellection ('aqit) and subject of intellection (ma'qūl).[44] It is in this regard that in later Islamic philosophy in Iran ontology and epistemology became intertwined. This is best exemplified in the theory of "knowledge by presence" (al-'ilm al-hūdūrī) in which cognition and the presence of one's being are interrelated.[45]

Finally, of some interest is the discussion of change or motion and its philosophical implications. Whereas traditionally motion was perceived to belong to the category of accident, it was Mullā Ṣadrā who argued for the existence of motion in the category of substance. His theory, which came to be known as "trans-substantial motion" (al-harakat al-jawhariyyah), has come to be a controversial theory upon which many philosophers such as Alīamah Tabītaba'ī have commented.

Among the other philosophical topics, ethics has been extensively treated. Such a figure as Mīrzā Āhmad Āshtiyānī developed the kind of spiritual ethics within the context of Sufism that views ethical purity as the salient feature of mysticism.

The tradition of Islamic philosophy rests on the concept of continuity and not change and therefore the philosophical problems treated by Persian philosophers remain the same. What changes, however, is their methods of treatment. It is on the basis of their methodology and not the issues that we can divide them into four different schools.

Firstly, the "Sadrians", who are the avid propagators of Mullā Ṣadrā and his school of "transcendental theosophy" (al-hikmat al-mutī'dliyah). The Sadrians offer a neo-Ibn

Sinan reading of Islamic philosophy which is at the same time rational and conducive to intellectual intuition. Mullā Ṣadrā's major work, the Asfār, is studied not only as his magnum opus but also as a source for the history of Islamic philosophy. The thrust of the Sadrian school is the "priority" of wujūd over māhiyyah.[46]

Secondly, the "Sadrian–ishrāqi" school represents a synthesis of rational knowledge and intellectual intuition. This school is based on a series of principles that are attained through intuition (al-dhawq) and
therefore are axiomatic. This school maintains that mastery of discursive reasoning is a necessary condition whereas asceticism is also necessary for the intellect to know the true principles of philosophy which Mullā Ṣadrā calls "the Oriental Principles" (qāidah mashriqiyyab). Knowledge, accordingly, is not attained through sense perception or logical deductions (husūlī) but is obtained through an unmediated mode of cognition between the subject and the object (hudūrī).

Thirdly, Peripatetics (mashshā'is) who follow al-Fārābī, Ibn Sīnā and Ibn Rushd do not take the more intuitive part of the Sadrian school seriously; they consider it to belong to the domain of mysticism and not philosophy. Relying on a process of rationalization, attempts have been made to revive Ibn Sinan philosophy.

finally, there is philosophical gnosis ('irfān-i falsafi), whose propagators adhere to the teachings of Ibn 'Arabī, Qunawī, Fanārī and other members of the Akbarian school. Amongst the more prominent figures of this tradition one can name M. Qumshā'ā and Muḥammad 'Alī Hakīm, a mysterious

philosopher–gnostic who chose a hermetic life and disappeared from the scene in the 1970s. The pivotal axiom of philosophical gnosis centres on the concept of unity (tawhīd). Various themes such as emanation, the relationship between unity and multiplicity, unity as related to necessity, etc. are all examined in the light of Divine Unity.

One should mentain also the efforts of a number of modern thinkers and translators to develop the philosophical vocabulary drawn from traditional Islamic philosophical terminology for use in dealing with modern philosophy. The delicate task of finding the vocabulary that can represent the philosophical concepts of one linguistic tradition compared to another is a difficult one. This, however, was done in a masterly fashion by such figures as Muḥammad ʿAlī Furūghī, Yaḥyā Mahdawī Ghulām Husayn Sadīqī, Manūchihr Buzūrgmihr and Ahmad Ārām.[47]

Conclusion

The pivotal point of Islamic philosophy in the last few decades in Iran has been the philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā and Suhrawardī. During this period there has been an upsurge of interest in the works of these two giants of philosophy and gnosis, and many of their works have been translated from Arabic into Persian as well as the European languages.[48] Also during this era Suhrawardī's Persian mystical narratives as well as his philosophical treatises and their significance have been introduced to the philosophical community at large.[49]

Islamic philosophy, which traditionally was taught exclusively at the madrasahs and private circles, became an important part of the educational curriculum of modern universities in addition to research centres
and foundations in Iran. Islamic philosophy and ʿirfān continue to flourish and remain an active and integral part of the intellectual life of Iran today.

NOTES

Beside the references that are Alluded to in the notes, the author has benefited by two interviews with Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Mahdī Hā'irī Yazdī.

1 For more information on the "School of Iṣfahān'' see S. H. Nasr, "the School of Iṣfahān ", in A History of Muslim Philosophy, ed. H. M. Sharif (Wiesbaden, 1966), 2: 904–32, and "Spiritual Movements, Philosophy and Theology in the Safavid Period", in The Cambridge History of Iran, ed. P. Jackson, (Cambridge, 1969–91), 6: 656–97.

2 For more information on Mullā Ṣadrā and his influence on Islamic philosophy in modern Irān see S. H. Nasr, "Sadr al-Dīn Shlrāzī", in A History of Muslim Philosophy, 2: 952–61.

3 For more information on Islamic philosophy in the Qājār period see S. H. Nasr, "The Metaphysics of Sabzal-Dīn and Islamic Philosophy in Qājār Irān", in C. E. Bosworth and C. Flillenbrand (eds), Qājār Irān – Political, Social and Cultural Changes 1900–1925 (Edinburgh, 1983): 177–98.

4 For more information on Sabziwārī and his influence on Islamic philosophy see the introduction by Izutsu to The Metaphysics of Sabzāwāī, trans. M. Mohaghegh and T. Izutsu (New York, 1977): 1–25., and The Fundamentals of Sabzāwdrī's Metaphysics, trans. and ed. M. Mohaghegh and T. Izutsu (1973). See also Nasr, "Sabziwari", in M. M. Sharif (ed.) A History of Muslim Philosophy. 1543–56.

5 For a list of later Islamic philosophers and their biographies see: Manūchihr Sadūql Suha, Hukamd wa 'urafã-yi muta'akhirin-ī Sadr al-mutāAlīihīn (Tehran, 1980).

6 For more information on Mīrzī Abu'l-Hasan Jilwah see ibid.: 159–72.

7 For more information on Mahdī Āshtiyānī see the extensive introduction by T. Izutsu in Sharh-i Āshtiyānī bar sharh-i manzūmah (Tehran, 1973) and Flukamā wa urafd-yi: 64–6.

8 Hukamd wa 'urafã-yi: 68.

9 Sayyid Muḥammad Kāzim Aṣṣār, 'Urn al-hadīth (Tehran, 1975).

10 Sayyid Muḥammad Kazim Aṣṣār, Wahdat al-wujud wa badd' (Mashhad, 1971). Critical edition and introduction by Sayyid Jalāl al-DTn AshtiyanI.

11 Sayyid Muḥammad Kazim, Aṣṣār, Thaldth rasd'ilfi'l-hikmat al-isldmiyyah (Tehran, 1961).

12 For more information see S. H. Nasr (ed.), Mullā Ṣadrā Commemoration Volume (Tehran, 1961).

13 Sayyid Abu'l-Hasan RafTi Qazwīnī, Ittihad-i 'dqil wa nia'qu.1, introduction and glossary by Hasan Hasanzadih Amull (Tehran, 1982).

14 For more information on this see S. H. Nasr, "Mullā Ṣadrā and the Unity of Being", in his Islamic Life and Thought (Albany, 1981): 174–80.

15 Huduth- i daān is a term used by Mār Dāmād concerning the problem ot eternity
(qidam) and createdness (hudūth) of the world. For more information on this see the introduction by M. Mohaghegh to Mīr Damad's Qabasdt (Tehran, 1989): 11–14.

16 Hukarnā wa 'urafā-yi: 69.

17 For more information on Alīamah Tabataba'l see Yad ndma-yi Alīamah Tabdtabd'i (Tehran, 1983), introduction S. H. Nasr to his Shiite Islam, trans. and ed. Nasr (Albany, 1975), and Kayhdn-i farhangi, 6(8) (Nov. 1990): 1–16.

18 Alīamah Tabataba ā, Usuī-i falsafah wa rawish-i ri'ālizm (Qom, 1953).

19 Among other scholars who participated were D. Shayegan, M. Mutahharī, B. Furuzanfar, 1. Sepahbodi and A. Manaqībī. For more information on these intellectual sessions see D. Shayegan, "The Spiritual Quest of Flenry Corbin: From Heidegger to Suhrawadī", Part 1, Irān-nāmah, year 7(3) (1989): 479, and D. Shayegan, "Le Sens du Ta'wil", in /.' lerne-IIemy Corbin (Paris, 1981): 84–5; as well as his Henry Corbin-, and S. H. Nasr, "Henry Corbin Revisited", Irdn-ndmah, year 9(4) (1991): 665–81. Also, an edited

version of these discussions has been published in two volumes.

20 Muḥammad Salih Hā'irā Māzandāranī, Hikmat-i Bu Alī, 3 vols (Tehran, 1956–8).

21 For a brief discussion concerning Durrī and other critics of Mullā Ṣadrā see A. Q. Qaraguzlu, "Intiqad bar Mullā Ṣadrā dar 'asr-i ma", Kayhdn-i farhangi, 8(7) (1991): 20–3.

22 Ilāhī Qumsha'l, Hikmat ildhi khdss wa 'amm (Tehran, 1966).

23 Mīrzā Ahmād Āshtiyanī, Ndma-yi rahbardn-iī khirad (Tehran, 1995).

24 Muhammād TaqI Amull, Durar al-fawii'id, 2 vols (Tehran, 1957).

25 Maḥmūd Shahabl, Rahbār-i khīrad (Tehran, 1961).

26 See Fihrist-i kitābhā-yi ihāī'i-yi Sayyid Muḥammad Mishkdt (Tehran, 1957), prepared by M. T. Danechepazuh. This catalogue is a mine of information for Islamic philosophy provided by Danechpazuh, who is one of the most outstanding living scholars on Islamic manuscripts, especially those pertaining to philosophy.

27 S. J. Āshtiyānī and H. Corbin, Anthologie desphilosophes iraniem, 4 vols (Tehran, 1972; 1975). For more information on S. J. AshtiyanI see his interview in Kayhdn farhangi, year 2 (1985): 5–18.

28 M. T. Misbah Yazdl, Amuzish-i falsafah, 2 vols. (Tehran, 1989).

29 See the extensive commentary and the introduction of Hasan Hasan-zadih Amull to Sayyid AbuTHasan Rafl'i Qazwīnī, Ittihad-i 'aqil wa ma'qul (Tehran, 1983).

30 M. Mutahharl, who had joined the Iranian Revolution, was also a member and in fact head of the Revolutionary Council. He was assassinated shortly after the Revolution in 1979.

31 Bahmanyar, Kitdb al-tahsjl, ed. with commentary by M. Mutahharl (Tehran, 1971); M. Mutahharl, Khadamdt-i miitdqdbil-i isldm wa Iran, (Tehran, 1976).

32 vols; M. Mutahharl, Sharh-i manzumah, 2 vols (Tehran, 1982).

33 Nasr in his Islamic Philosophy in Contemporary Persia: a Survey of Activity During the Past Two Decades (Research Monograph, no. 3, Middle East Center, University of Utah, 1972), indicates that the following are among the most active philosophers of the last lew decades in Iran: "Yahya Mahdawl, Ghulam Husayn Sadlql, Mehdl Mohaghegh, S. H. Nasr, Alī Murad Dawudl, Sayyid Abuā-Qāsim Pur-Hūsayī, Ridā Dāwarī, Sayyid Ja'far Sajjadi, Muḥammad Taqī Danechpazhuh, Ahmad Fardld", etc. For a list of contemporary Iranian philosophers see ibid.: 8.

34 For more information on Corbin's life and thought see S. H. Nasr (ed) Henry Corbin Commemoration Volume (Tehran, 1977). See also D. Shayegan, Henry Corbin – la topographie spirituelle de I'Islam iranien (Paris, 1990). For a list of

Corbin's works see S. H. Nasr, ibid, '. 32–3 and L'Herne – Henry Corbin (Paris, 1981): 360–543.

35 Suhrawadī, Oeuvres philosophiques et mystiques 2, ed. S. H. Nasr (Tehran, 1970).

36 For a complete list of Nasr's works up to his sixtieth birthday see M. Aminrazavi and Zailan Moris, The Complete Bibliography of the Works of Seyyed Hossein Nasr (Kuala Lumpur, 1994).

37 S. H. Nasr, Knowledge and the Sacred (New York, 1981) and An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrine (Albany, 1993) and Three Muslim Sages (New York, 1976).

38 One of the most important centres devoted to the study of Islamic philosophy which Nasr had established was the Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy. The Academy had commissioned many interesting projects and undertook the publication of a great number of traditional texts as well as a scholarly journal on published regular basis entitled Jāvīdān khirad (Sophia Perennis). The centre is still very active and operates under the name of the Iranian Academy of Philosophy.

39 M. Hā'irī Yazdī, The Principles of Epistemology in Islamic Philosophy: Knowledge by Presence (New York, 1992).M. Mohaghegh, Fīlsūfi ray (Tehran, 1970).

40 Fardid, who died recently, wrote little but is known especially for his translation of Corbin's Les Motifs Zoroastrietis dans la philosophic de Sohrawardi (Tehran, 1946).

41 D. Shayegan, Hindouisme et soufisme (Paris, 1979); "L'Homme a la lampe magique", in Melanges, (ed.) S. H. Nasr (Paris, 1977); "Le sens du ta'wil", in L'Herne – Henry Corbin (Paris, 1981) and Henry Corbin (Paris, 1990).

42 It should be noted that Khumayni was also a traditional philosopher who taught gnosis and Mullā Ṣadrā. His love of 'irfiin and philosophy is said to have continued until his death in 1989. It was in 1963 that he turned to politics and wrote treatises of a political nature. He is also the author of a number of works on gnosis and metaphysics including commentaries on some of the traditional texts such as the Fusils of I bn Arabl.

43 For a very useful analysis of the subject matter see S. H. Nasr, "Existence (wujud) and Quiddity (mahiyyah) in Islamic Philosophy", International Philosophical Quarterly, 29 (116) (1989): 409–34.

44 This view, which is central to the Sadrians as well as to Islamic gnosticism ('irfdn), is referred to as the "Doctrine of the Unity of the Knower and the Known" (ittihad-i 'dqil wa ma'qul). See S. A. Qāzwrnī, "Ittihād-i 'āqil wa ma'qūl", trans. Alī Qūll Qarai, al-Tawind, (1950): 85–92.

45 For a complete discussion of the theory of "knowledge by presence" see M. Hā'irī Yazdī, Epistemology in Islamic Philosophy, (Albany, 1992). See the preface by S. H. Nasr on Hā'irī and his works.

46
For more information on the Sadrian philosophy see S. H. Nasr (ed.) Mullā Ṣadrā Commemoration Volume (Tehran,

1961) and The Transcendental Theosophy of Sadr al-Dīn Shīāzī (Tehran, 1978); F. Rahman, The Philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā (Albany, 1976); The Wisdom of the Throne: an introduction to the Philosophy of Mullā Ṣadrā, trans. James Morris of al-Hikmat al-'arshiyyah of Mullā Ṣadrā (Princeton, 1981).

47 The works of these figures who were familiar with European philosophers should be regarded as the earliest attempt at comparative philosophy between Islamic philosophy and modern European philosophy. M. A. Fūrūghi's Sayr-i hikmat dar urīpā and A. Aram's many translations of European philosophical treatises are among such works.

48 For a translation of Suhrawardī's main works see H. Corbin, Le Livre de la sagesse orientate by Shihaboddin Yahyā Sohrawardi, traduction et notes par H. Corbin (Paris, 1986). Also, Parvin Peervani's translation of the Hikmat al-ishrdq into English (forthcoming) should be noted. For translations of Suhrawadī's Persian works see Thackston, Mystical and Visionary Treatises of Suhrawadī (London, 1982). For translations of Mullā Ṣadrā see James Morris' translation of the Hikmat al-'arshiyyah entitled Wisdom of the Throne (Princeton, 1981). Also, Mehdī Hā'irī Yazdī is currently translating Mullā Ṣadrā's al-Masha'ir under the title Stages of Wisdom

49 In recent years there have appeared numerous articles and books on Suhrawardī. For more information on some of these works see M. Aminrazavi Suhrawardī's Theory of Knowledge, (Ph.D. dissertation, Temple University, 1989); M. Bylebyle, The Wisdom of Illumination: a Study of the

Prose Stories of Suhrawardī (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1976) K. Tehrani, Mystical Symbolism in Four Treatises of Suhraivardi (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1974); G. Webb, Suhraumrdi's Angelology (Ph.D. dissertation, Temple University, 1989); H. Zia, Suhrawardi's Philosophy of Illumination (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1976). Also see S. FL Nasr, "Suhrawadī" in M. M. Sharif (ed.) A History of Muslim Philosophy, pp. 372–98; and "Suhrawadī" in his Three Muslim Sages, CHAPTER 3: 52–83.

CHAPTER 62

India

Hafiz A. Ghaffar Khān

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Introduction

The Indian subcontinent has been very rich with regard to religion, culture, science, and civilization. It has been the birthplace for various major religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism. It also accommodated some alien religions such as Zoroastrianism, Islam and Christianity.

The Indian subcontinent has been the seat of many great civilizations since the Stone Age. The pre-Vedic Dravidian civilization, brought to light by archeological discoveries,equalled and possibly surpassed in splendour the civilizations of ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt. Subsequent to the Dravidian civilization, the Vedic civilization (developed about 1200 B.C. by people of Indo-Aryan stock) was also notable in many respects. The Brahmanic civilization reached its peak during the Mauryan dynasty (322–185 B.C.) founded by Chandragupta. Again it was during this period that Asoka (273–232 B.C.), the grandson of Chandragupta, extended his kingdom to the farthest corners

of the continent. During his rule, Buddhism became the state religion and the Buddhist culture the most prominent in the region. The Mauryan dynasty was followed by the rule of Kushans, the Guptas, the Huns and the Turks in the subcontinent.

But the most powerful and durable civilization which the Indian subcontinent ever experienced was Islamic civilization. Islam as a religion and civilization found its way into the subcontinent, first in 92/711 under Muḥammad ibn Qāsim and then, in 390/1000 under the leadership of Mahmūd of Ghaznah. It was established in the region gradually and remained as a dominant political, cultural, religious and social force there for more than eight centuries. Islamic civilization reached its peak during the Mughul period and imprinted an indelible mark on Indian civilization and culture as a whole.

In India Islam encountered the Brahmanic and Buddhist cultures and civilizations which were deeply rooted in Hinduism and Buddhism, basically philosophical in nature. In order to cope with this dilemma successfully, the Muslims were obliged to adopt philosophical and dialectical methods for explaining Islamic dogmas and principles. The Muslims, being acquainted with Greek methods, dealt with the situation with ease. A strong philosophical and theological tradition had been established long ago, first in Baghdad and then in Khurasan and Central Asia. The established Islamic intellectual traditions were transmitted into the Indian subcontinent gradually through various channels. Different elements of Islamic society played a significant role in this transmission of the Islamic intellectual tradition into India. For the purpose of our study we will divide this process of

transmission into two distinct phases: the pre- Moghul period and the Moghul period.

The Pre-Moghul Period

Before the invasion of India by Maḥmūd of Ghaznah, it was the Ismāʾīlī propagandists who introduced Islamic philosophy in India. In 270/883, the famous Yamanī Ismāʾīlī leader, Abuʾl-Qāsim ibn Hawshab sent his nephew, al-Haytham, from Yemen as a dai (missionary) to Sindh. He was followed by other Isma'ih dais who propagated IsmAlīism in the area with great zeal and enthusiasm. In less than a century, they succeeded in converting the local ruler of Multan to IsmAlīism. Later on, Jahm ibn Shayban, an Ismāʾīlī commander, was commissioned to Sindh along with a military force by the Fatimid ruler of Egypt, and succeeded in gaining control of Multan in 366/977. An Isma'lli state was founded which remained under their influence until Maḥmūd of Ghaznah, the famous ruler of Central Asia, invaded Multan in 401/1010. The Ismāʾīlīs then moved to Mansurah, another stronghold of IsmAlīism in Sindh, and established themselves as an organized community.[1]

The Ismāʾīlīs, from the beginning, had based their world view on esoteric teachings. Their radical theological ideas, deeply influenced by Neoplatonic and gnostic teachings, separated them from even the orthodox Shi'ites.[2] They have always been inclined towards philosophical thinking, and whenever they established themselves as a community they developed philosophy and other intellectual disciplines within their circles. So it is easy to presume that during Isma ill rule in

Multan and Mansurah, Sindh (348/960–417/1026) philosophy and other intellectual sciences would have been encouraged.

The Ghaznavids

Maḥmūd of Ghaznah (ruled 388/998–421/1030), the founder of the Ghaznavid dynasty, conquered the western part of India in 412/1021, and appointed Qadī Abu'l-Hasan Shīāzī, a Persian official, as governor in Lahore.[3] Thus Lahore became the capital for the newly established state, and replaced Multan and Mansurah as the cultural and intellectual centre of the region. It is because of this achievement that many adMīrers of Maḥmūd consider him as a munificent patron of the arts and the founder of Muslim culture in the Indian subcontinent.

There is no doubt that Maḥmūd had an antagonistic attitude towards philosophy and the esoteric sciences because of his political and ideological differences with the IsmAlīls and their patrons, the Samanids. But it is also a fact that he was a great adMīrer of knowledge and the 'ultima'. He tried to gather poets and scholars around him, even by force if necessary. He brought back to Ghaznah whole libraries which fell to him in the course of his conquests of various kingdoms and sultanates, and thus was able to have a valuable collection of books in various disciplines.[4]

As far as his son, Mas'ud (ruled 421/1031–432/1041) is concerned, he like his father Maḥmūd was a patron of knowledge and the arts. He Alīowed the growth of philosophy and other intellectual sciences in his kingdom. It is said that when Mas'ud defeated Ala' al-Dawlah, the ruler of Iṣfahān,

some of the philosophical and scientific works of Ibn Sīnā were found in the booty which he preserved in the royal library.[5] He was respectful towards philosophers and poets. During his reign, philosophical thought was transmitted from Ghaznah and Khurasan into India. The Persian secretaries who came to Lahore with the Ghaznavids played a significant role in this elevation of thought. These secretaries brought into India the works of the early Muslim philosophers such as al-Kindl, al- Farabi and Ibn Sīnā.

Likewise Sultan Ibrāhīm ibn Mas'ud (ruled 451/1059–492/1099), and then his son and successor, Mas'ud III (ruled 492/1099–508/1115), were instrumental in making Lahore the seat of culture and learning. By the time of Shīzād (ruled 508/1115–509/1115), grandson of Ibrāhīm and viceroy of Lahore, Abu Nasr Farsi, a distinguished secretary of Shīzād, established a Khānqdh (Sufi commune) which attracted scholars from all over the Muslim world. Because of its cultural and intellectual activities, Lahore was called, at that time, Ghaznayn-khurd ("smaller Ghaznah").[6] Scholars as well as students were provided with ample opporTūnīties for the free exchange of knowledge. Students from throughout the Islamic world visited Lahore and benefited from the intellectual atmosphere of the capital.[7]

The later Ghaznavid rulers continued their patronage and adMīration of knowledge and of scholars. They also reconciled themselves with
philosophy and other intellectual sciences. Their courts had always been a meeting place for scholars and poets. The greatest philosopher and thinker in the court of Khusraw Malik (ruled 555/1160–582/1186), the last Ghaznavid ruler of India, was Yusuf ibn Muḥammad al-Darbandl. He was called

Jamal al-falasifah ("the beauty of the philosophers") because of his profound knowledge of the rational sciences.[8] Similarly Shaykh Safi al-Dīn Gazrunl (350/962–399/1007), Shaykh Yusuf Gardlzi Multan!, Shaykh Ismail Lahorl, Salar Mas'ud GhazT and Imam Hasan San'anl Lahorl are personalities of the Ghaznavid period worth mentioning.

Few of the philosophical and intellectual writings of the Ghaznavid period are accessible. The works related to that period available at the present time are mostly in Persian, which replaced Arabic as the lingua prima. The Persian Dīwān of Abu'l-Faraj Rūnī, for example, was published in Tehran. Mas'ud Sa'd Salman composed poetry in Arabic, Hindi and Persian. His Hindi and Arabic poetry has been lost, but the Persian still survives.[9] In prose we have Kashf al-mahjūb ("The Unveiling of the Hidden"), the only work of Shaykh Abu'l-Hasan Alī al-Hujwairī known as Dātā Ganj Bakhsh, one of the greatest mystics of the Ghaznavid period.[10] The subject matter of this work is mysticism, its history and principles. It also deals with metaphysical issues such as the theory of knowledge, the Essence and Nature of God, His Attributes, the soul, eschatology, etc.[11]

The Ghūrids

The Ghaznavid rule in India came to an end in 583/1186 when Muḥammad Ghūrī succeeded in getting control of Lahore. He also captured Ajmair, Delhi, Multan and Patnah, and established a strong Muslim empire in India.[12]

The Gūrids not only maintained the Ghaznavid standard of learning but made remarkable inroads in the field. They

established new centres where eminent scholars taught the rational sciences. The founder of the Ghūrīd dynasty, Sultan Ghiyāth al-Dīn (ruled 558/1163–599/ 1203) was a great patron of knowledge and science. Scholars of various schools of thought were welcomed in his court. Many works were dedicated to him, among them the Mawdqif of Qadī 'AdLid al-Dīn and the Lata'if of Imam Fakhr al-Dīn Raz! are notable.[13]

Sultan Shihab al-Dīn Muḥammad Ghurl (ruled 599/ 1203–602/ 1206), brother and successor of Sultan Ghiyāth al-Dīn, had also a sympathetic attitude towards the intellectual sciences. His court was a meeting place for the scholars of Islamic learning. Imam Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī, the most eminent theologian and thinker of the time, was among Muḥammad
Ghūrid's favourites. The Sultan used to attend the weekly sermons or lectures of the Imam with great respect, In 601/ 1205, when Muḥammad Ghūrī visited India for the last time, Imam Fakhr al-Dīn accompanied him, staying in Lahore for about six months.[14] This was a visit to India of a distinguished Muslim scholar from Central Asia in the Ghūrīd period. During his stay at Lahore, the local scholars and students of Islamic sciences benefited from contact with the Imam. Thus intellectual sciences flourished in India during the Ghūrīd rule under imperial patronage.

The Slaves

These were generals of Muḥammad Ghūrī who were brought from all over Central Asia, often members of ruling families that had been defeated.

Muḥammad Ghūrī was assassinated in 602/1206. His Turkish slave- governor and General, Qutb al-Dīn Aybak (ruled 602/ 1206–607/1210), succeeded him and became the sole ruler of the vast Muslim empire in India. Aybak established the empire on a strong basis. The capital was moved from Lahore to Delhi, Delhi then became a centre of intellectual and cultural activities where, under imperial patronage, Islamic sciences flourished. Because of his sympathetic attitude, many prominent scholars such as Hasan Nizami and Fakhr-i-Mudabbir dedicated their works to Qutb al-Dīn Aybak.[15]

Iltutmish (ruled 607/1211–637/1236), the successor of Qutb al-Dīn Aybak, who had deep interest in mysticism, was also a patron of knowledge and scholars. It was because of his mystical and philosophical inclinations that metaphysical and Sufi literature became popular within intellectual circles. By this time Fadil Mu ayyid JurjanT had translated Ihyāal-ʿulūm, the famous work of Imam al-Ghazzali, into Persian and dedicated it to Sultan Iltutmish. Likewise, the Sirri maktum of Imam Fakhr al-Dīn Razi was translated into Persian at the insistence of Rukh al-Dīn Fayra Sultan Iltutmish built two traditional madrasahs (religious schools), called Moze ibn Iltutmish.[16] and Nasiriyyah, in the capital for the teaching of religious and rational sciences. Moreover, a great centre was established at Badayun (India) in the name of his master, Muḥammad Ghūrī.[17]

After Iltutmish, his successors Nāsir al-Dīn Muḥammad Shah (ruled 644/1246–664/1266) and Sultan Ghiyāth al-Dīn Balbān (ruled 664/1266–686/1287) both encouraged wholeheartedly the cultivation ol both the religious and philosophical sciences. The Madrasah-i Fayrūz Shahl and Nāsiriyyah were

the greatest centres of learning in the region at that time. Nāsir al-Dīn invited Alīamah Qutb al-Dīn Kāshānī, an eminent philosopher, mystic and theologian, from Persia to Multan and

built a madrasah for him where the shaykh worked as shaykh al-jāmi'ah ("head of the institution").[18]

The most important role in cultivating the sciences during the Ghūrīd and Slaves period was played by those scholars and philosophers who migrated to India from Iraq, Iran, Transoxiana, Samarqand, Bukhara and Ghaznah because of the Mongol invasion of those areas. Balban, the successor of Iltutmish, not only provided shelter for them but also extended to them all possible opporTūnīties and facilities for the teaching of religious and philosophical thought. Thus, speculative philosophy, gnosis and Scholastic theology entered a new phase in the subcontinent. The works of well-known philosophers, mystics and theologians such as Imām al-Ash'arī, Imām Abū Mansūr al-Māturīdī, Imam al-TahawI, al-Kindi, al-Farabi, Imam al-GhazzAlī, al-Biruni and Imam Fakhr al-Dīn RazI, along with commentaries on their works, reached India through these immigrants and began to be studied throughout the empire. Balban assembled, in the capital city, scholars of various schools of thought and made Delhi a seat of intellectual and cultural activities in the Muslim East.[19] A. L. Srivastava has drawn a brief but an informative sketch of the intellectual activities of the Slaves dynasty:

When Delhi became the capital of the sultanate (empire) it rivalled Lahore. Flere were established a number of madrasahs to which Muslim scholars from other countries outside India were attracted as teachers … Iltutmish was the

first to lay down the foundation of a madrasah at Delhi. After the name of Muḥammad Ghurl he built another center of learning at Badayun. During the reign of Nasir al-Dīn Muḥammad (ruled 1246–1260 CE), his minister, Balban founded a madrasah and named it Madrasah-i Nasiriyyah. The celebrated author of Tabaqāt-i nāsirī, Minhāj al-Sirāj, was appointed principal of this madrasah. Balban's court was famous for scholars, theologians, poets and philosophers who had fled from the fury of the Mongol invasion in Central Asia and had taken shelter at Delhi. Two of the most celebrated Indian poets in Persian, named Mīr Hasan and Amīr Khusraw, adorned the court of Balbān and enjoyed the patronage of his eldest son, Prince Muḥammad.[20]

The Slaves period has a special significance for metaphysics and mysticism. The two famous Sufi orders, Chishtiyyah and Suhrawardiyyah, reached India during this period. Khwajāh Mu'īn al-Dīn Ajmerī (d. 631/1234), founder of the Chishtiyyah order, came to India in 586/ 1190, but his influence spread mostly during the Slaves dynasty. His successors, Qutb al-Dīn Bakhtyar Kakl, Babā Farīd al-Dīn Shakarganj and Nizam al-Dīn Awliya, lived during the Slaves' rule. Shaykh Baha al-Dīn Zakariyya Suhrawadī, founder of the Suhrawadī order in India, and
his famous disciple Hamid al-Dīn Naguri, came to India in the early seventh/thirteenth century and established the order there.[21]

As far as mystical and metaphysical writings of that period are concerned, the works of Khwajāh Gesūdarāz of the Chishti order and those of Shaykh Hamid al-Dīn Naguri and Shaykh Husayn Amīr Husayni of the Suhrawadī order are considered the most valuable. Khwajāh Gesūdarāz composed

Asmd' al-asrdr, Sharh-i risdlah-yi qushayri, Sharh-i mashdriq, Khata'ir al-quds, Ma'arif Sharh-i Jusus al-hikam, Sharh-i adab al-muridin, Sharh fiqh al-akbar and Hawashi-yi qut al-qulub. Shaykh Hamid al-Dīn Naguri introduced the famous metaphysical and mystical work of his Shaykh, Shihab al-Dīn Suhrawadī, called 'Awārif al-maārif He also wrote Tawāli' al-shumus and Lawā'ih, among the most important works in the field of metaphysics and mysticism. Shaykh Amīr Husayn Suhrawadī wrote Nuzhat al-anāh, Sirāt al-mustaqīm, Tarab al-majālis and Kanz al-rumūz.[22]

The Khiljīs

In 690/1290, the Khiljīs succeeded in getting control of the Muslim empire in India. The reign of Ala' al-Dīn Khiljī (695/1296–715/1316) had particular significance for the cultivation of intellectual sciences. Delhi by that time was called the metropolis of the Muslim East. Scholars of religious sciences, poets, Sufis, philosophers and administrators were well received in his court. Amīr Khusraw (a distinguished poet, philosopher and mystic), Sa'd Mantiqī (a well-known philosopher), Bārānī (a famous historian) and Nizām al-Dīn Awliyā (a notable Sufi and metaphysician) were some of the well-known personalities of that period. Their philosophical, mystical, theological, historical and poetical writings are considered the most precious heritage of the Khiljī period.[23]

Ala al-Dīn Khiljī built an important centre of learning called Madrasah-yi hawd-i khāss ("School of the special pool") because of its location near the famous pool excavated by the order of the emperor. Branches of the central school were

built in almost all the provincial centres where religious and rational sciences were taught under imperial.[24]

supervision.

Among the noteworthy works of the Khiljī period are Qirān al- sa'dayn, Mifiāh al-futuh, Khazinat al-futuh, Nūh sipihr, Tughluq-nāmah and the Diwdn of Amīr Khusraw; Fawā'id al-fu'ād of Amīr Hasan; Malfuzāt of Nizām al-Dīn Awliyā' and Tūtī-nāmah of I)iya Bakhsh.[25]

The Tughluqs

The last ruler of the Khiljī dynasty, Mubarāk Shah (ruled 716/ 1316– 720/1320), was killed by one of his confidants, Khusraw Khān, for political reasons. Ghazi Malik, a frontier general of 'Ala al-Dīn Khiljī, rebelled against Khusraw Khān and completely destroyed his forces. He seized power under the name of Ghiyath al-Dīn Tughluq in 720/1320. The Tughluqs then ruled the country for about ninety-six years (720/1320–818/1416).

Sultan Ghiyath al-Dīn Tughluq, having a strong religious background, was very sympathetic towards Sufis, religious scholars, poets and philosophers. Religious life was visible even in the imperial court, and the emperor himself was very punctual and regular in discharging his religious duties and obligations. He rectified all those religious aberrations which became prevalent during the Khiljī rule. He supported the advancement of knowledge and science through all possible means. That Ghiyāth had great respect for the intellectual sciences is clear from the fact that he appointed Mawlana 'Ilm

al-Dīn, the eminent philosopher and logician of the time, for the training of his son, Muḥammad ibn Tughluq, in philosophy and logic.

This son Muḥammad (ruled 725/1325–752/1351) was a ḥāfiz (one who knows the Qur'ān by heart). Like his father, he was punctual and regular in discharging his religious duties. He studied logic and speculative philosophy under a distinguished scholar, Shaykh 'Ilm al-Dīn. The famous logician of the Tughluq period, Sa'd Mantiqi, and the poet of the time, 'Ubayd, had access to the emperor and thus the latter was deeply influenced by the liberal and intellectual ideas of these two thinkers. It was because of this background that the Sultan had always been inclined towards speculative philosophy and used to spend most of his time in studying philosophical works and discussing cogitative and rational issues with other scholars. Narrowly religious scholars as well as Sufis were not well received in his court. By this time the study of intellectual sciences had become prevalent throughout the country, while the study of religious sciences declined and deteriorated.[26] He deputed 'Alīamah Mu'īn al-Dīn to bring Qadī Adud al-Dīn, author of the famous theological and philosophical work al-Mawāqifi from Shiraz. But the latter declined to come and, on the insistence of the ruler of Shiraz, preferred to stay there.[27]

The famous Muslim explorer Ibn Battutah came to India during the reign of Muḥammad ibn Tughluq. He was well received by the Sultan as an imperial guest and, later, was appointed the qadī of Delhi. Afterwards, he was sent to China as an ambassador. This opporTūnīty enabled Ibn Battūtah to travel through northern and central India and to visit Malabar,

Ceylon, Ma'bar, Bangalah, Arakan, Sumatra and the coastal localities of China.[28]

Fayrūz Shah Tughluq (ruled 752/1351–790/1388), the cousin and successor of Muḥammad Tughluq, continued the tradition of cultivating the rational sciences. In 775/1373, he founded a new city, Junpur, in the eastern part of India after the name of his master (Muḥammad Tughluq). Junpur surpassed even the capital with regard to the study of the intellectual sciences.[29] It was called Delhi-i-thānī (second Delhi) at that time because of its intellectual activities. Shah Jahān (ruled 1037/ 1627–1069/1658), the great Moghul Emperor, later named it Shīrāz-i Flind. Fayrūz Shah Tughluq built forty mosques and established about thirty new colleges in various parts of the empire. He was also interested in Indian philosophy. Some of the works which were discovered during the conquest of Kangra in 762/1361 were translated into Persian from Sanskrit on his orders.[30]

The period of Ibrāhīm Shah Sharqī (ruled 804/1402–844/ 1440) was the golden age of Junpur. During his reign, scholars and philosophers of great repute settled in Junpur. Qadī Shihāb al-Dīn Dawlatabadl, Sayyid Ashraf Jahāngīr SimnanI, Qadī Nasīr al-Dīn Dihlawl, Shaykh Abu'l-Fattah Abd al-Muqtadir, Shaykh Fath Allāh Awdī Ansarī, Shaykh Khidr ibn Hasan Balkhl and Sayyid 'Uthman Shīāzī were among the distinguished scholars of that time. Significant works were composed in theology, mysticism, logic and philosophy. For instance, Sayyid Ashraf Jāhāngīr SimnanI wrote Sharh-i 'awārif al-ma'ārif, Sharh fusūs al-hikam, Qawaid al-qawa'id, Bahr-i adkhar, Ashraf al-fawā'id, Tanblh al-ikhwdn, Bashdrat al-dhākirīn, Mīr'at al-haqīqah, Irshad al-ikhwdn, Latā'if al- ashrafiyyah and Bahr al-ansāb. Qadī

Shihab al-Dīn Dawlatabadl composed al-Irshdd, al-Bahr al-mawwāj, al-Misbāh, Hidāyat al-suadā', Sharh-i Qasidah burdah, Risdlah taqsim al-'ulum, Jā'mi' al-sanā''ī', Aqīdat al-shihābiyyah, and Risālah mu'arādah.[31]

The Lodhī's

In 816/1413, Maḥmūd Tughluq, the last ruler of the Tughluq dynasty, died and the Sultanate (empire) passed into the hands of the Sādāt who ruled the country for about forty years. In 855/1451, Buhlul Lodhī (ruled 855/1451–894/1489), founder of the Lodhī dynasty, gained control and became the sole ruler of India. Because of the political changes, the economic and social life of the country was disturbed, yet intellectual activities continued as before. The centres of learning at Delhi, Junpur, Deccan and KashMīr remained open. During the reign of Sikandar Lodhī (ruled 894/1489–932/1517), new educational centres were established and renowned scholars were invited to teach there. In 881/1504, Sikandar Lodhī laid the foundation of a new city, Agra, and made it his capital as well as a seat of learning and culture.[32]

Sikandar Lodhī was inclined towards the intellectual sciences. During his reign, philosophy and other intellectual sciences flourished. He invited Shaykh 'Abd Allāh Tulunbī and his brother Shaykh 'Azīz Allāh Tulunbī, well-known metaphysicians of the time, from Multan to Agra. These two philosophers introduced the systematic study of the intellectual sciences in India. Shaykh 'Azīz Allāh later served as Shaykh al-jami'ah (director and head) in the famous madrasah of Sambhal. Shaykh Abd Allāh Tulunbī remained in the capital, where he taught the intellectual sciences for

years. More than forty students specialized in the field of philosophy and hikmah (Islamic theosophy), and they passed on the intellectual tradition to the next generations. He composed many works related to logic and philosophy, of which Badi' al-mizdn, a commentary on the famous work on logic, Mīzān al-mantiq, is worth mentioning. It was by his recommendations that al-Maivāqif and Matāli the famous theological and metaphysical works of Qadī 'Adud al-Dīn were included in the syllabus of the educational institutions and thus studied throughout the country. A traditionist and a philosopher of great repute called Alīamah Raff al-Dīn Shīrazī (a student of 'Alīamah Jalāl al-Dīn Dawānī and Alīamah Sakhawi) was invited from Shiraz to teach Hadīth, philosophy and related subjects. The Shaykh, abiding by the imperial invitation, migrated to India where he taught Hadīth for the rest of his life.[33] The profound knowledge, eloquence and teaching method of Shaykh 'Abd Allāh Tulunbī attracted even the emperor to his lectures on philosophy and hikmah.[34]

Sikandar Lodhī was also interested in other philosophical traditions. On his insistence, many works of Hindu philosophy were translated into Persian. The Hindus were encouraged to learn the Persian language. People of other traditions were treated equAlīy in education and learning in the madrasahs of Mathurah and Narwarl which Sikandar had established. It was also during his reign that the works of later Persian philosophers and thinkers were introduced in India through their students.[35]

The Moghul Period

The ancestors of the Moghuls were patrons of science and knowledge. The culture which Muḥammad Zahīr al-Dīn Bābur (889/1483–937/ 1530), founder of the Moghul dynasty in India, brought to India had flourished long before in Transoxiana and Khurasan. Amīr Taymūr (Tamerlane, d. 807/ 1405), the predecessor of Bābur, made Samarqand a meeting place for distinguished philosophers, theologians, poets and artists. It was at his court that ʿAlīamah Saʾd al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī and Mīr Sayyid al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī, the eminent philosophers and theologians of the time, lived together.[36]

The immediate successors of Taymūr continued the tradition and made many advances in the field of science. Learning centres were established at Herat, where rational and religious studies flourished. Bābur himself grew up in this intellectual environment, and was given the best education available at that time. He eventuAlīy transmitted this intellectual and cultural heritage to India after assuming power in 933/1526.[37]

Bābur was succeeded by his son Humāyūn, who was soon defeated and replaced by Sher Khān Surī, a famous Afghan leader, in 947/1540. Sher Khān had a profound knowledge of Persian and Arabic literature and he had studied the intellectual sciences at Junpur (one of the greatest learning centres of that time). Having this intellectual background, he gave special attention to the cultivation of philosophical, theological and metaphysical sciences. He founded a madrasah at Narnaul, where the curriculum and teaching method of Junpur school were followed. This madrasah later became a famous seat of the intellectual sciences.[38]

Humāyūn regained power in 950/1550, with the help of the Persian army. This incident opened a new chapter in cultural activities in India. Distinguished scholars, artists and administrators such as Bayrum Khān, Sayyid 'Alī and 'Abd al-Samad came with him to India from Persia. These scholars brought with them the newly developed philosophical tradition of Persia and introduced it in India.

But the golden age of the intellectual sciences in India begins with Jalāl al-Dīn Akbar, son of Humāyūn, who ruled the country for half a century (961/1556–1014/1606). By that time philosophy and other intellectual sciences dominated even the imperial court. The meetings, of the 'Ibadāt khānah (the place of worship which Akbar built within the imperial palace) were eventuAlīy devoted to philosophical and theological discussions. Philosophers and scholars of other traditions, particularly Hinduism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism and Christianity, were also welcomed to participate in the intellectual activities of the court. Mīr Fath Allāh Shirāzi, Shaykh Mubarāk Nāgūrī, his sons Shaykh Abu'l-Fadl and Shaykh Faydi were the eminent exponents of Aristotelian and Illuminationist philosophy and Ibn 'Arabī's gnosis in Akbar's court. Outside the court, there developed learning centres in various parts of the country, among which Delhi, Junpur, Siyalkot, Sirhind, Deccan and KashMīr are worth mentioning.[39]

During the late Moghul period, especially by the time of Jahāngīr and Shah Jahān, philosophical learning continued to flourish. Dara Shikoh, son and successor of Shah Jahān, had a strong background in Islamic metaphysics and Hindu philosophy. He composed some valuable works which deal with metaphysics and rational philosophy. His Safīnat

al-awliya, Sakīnat al-awliyā', Risālah haqrnamā, Majma' al-bahrayn and Hasandt al-'driftn are of great value. He also translated the Upanishads into Persian under the title Sirr-i akbar ("The Great Secret") or

Sirr-i asrār ("The Secret of the Secrets"). The Bhagavadgita and the Yoga Vasistha were also translated into Persian at his insistence.[40] The most important feature of the Moghul period is that by that time there had arisen a theo-logico-philosophical and metaphysical school of great repute which was of Indian origin. It was reAlīy the consequence of the intellectual activities of the past few centuries. Many eminent philosophers, theologians and metaphysicians contributed to the newly established intellectual school. A brief account of a few of the main philosophers of the Moghul period is given below.

Mīr Fatḥ Allāh Shīrāzī

Mīr Fath Allāh Shīrāzī (d. 998/1590) was one of the most outstanding philosophers of his time. Fie was born in a scholarly Sayyid (descendent from the Prophet) family in Shiraz, Persia. Shiraz at that time was famous for intellectual and religious learning. Mīr Fath Allāh Shīrāzī was provided with the best available education at that time. Fie studied under distinguished philosophers, theologians and mystics such as Jamal al-Dīn Maḥmūd, a student of Jalāl al-Dīn Dawānī, Mawlana Kamal al-Dīn Shīrāzī, Mawlana Kurd and the famous philosopher Amīr Ghiyāth al- Dln al-Mansur ibn Mīr Sadr al-Dīn al-Dashtakl Shīrāzī.[41]

Upon completing his formal study, Mīr Fath Allāh Shīrāzī started his career as a teacher of the intellectual sciences at

Shiraz. He also served as an adviser to the ruler of Shiraz. Then, at the request of Ādil Shah, governor of Bijapur, he left Shiraz for India. He worked at Bijapur as an adviser to the ruler as well as principal of the official state school. After the death of 'Ādil Shah, Mīr Fath Allāh Shīrāzī moved to the imperial court in 991/1583 at Akbar's invitation. He was well received in the court and was put in charge of religious affairs and endowments (awqāf). Later on, he worked with Rajah Toder Māl to organize the revenue system.[42]

But the most important service of Mīr Fath Allāh Shīrāzī was his educational reform. When Akbar put him in charge of education, he reformed the curriculum on new lines. He not only introduced the works of later Persian scholars such as 'Alīamah Sa'd al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī, Mīr Sayyid al-Sharīf al-Jurjanl, 'Alīamah Jalāl al-Dīn Dawānī, Mīr Sadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī and Mīr Ghiyath al-Dīn Mansur Shīrāzī, but made them a necessary part of the curriculum. He also continued teaching in his free time, and numerous students graduated in philosophy under his supervision. He also wrote some valuable commentaries and glossaries on some of the most difficult philosophical and theological works, such as Sharh al-mawāqif of Alīamah Sayyid al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī, Sharh Mulld Jalāl of 'Alīamah Dawānī and others.[43]

Mīr Fath Allāh Shīrāzī died in KashMīr, during a tour with Akbar, on Jamādī al-Thānī 997/22 January 1589. He was buried in Takht-i Sulayman, a place famous for its beauty.[44]

Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī

Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindī is considered one of the most influential and prominent scholars in the intellectual history of Muslim India. On the basis of his services to the cause of religion, he was given the title of Mujaddid Alf-i Thānī ("reformer of the second millennium"). He was born in 971/ 1564 at Sirhind in a scholarly family. His father, Shaykh Abd al-Ahad, was a theologian and metaphysician, who had studied the intellectual sciences at J unpur.

At an early age, Shaykh Ahmad first memorized the Qur'ān and then studied the primary books of the religious and intellectual sciences with his father. He was then sent to Siyalkot, a famous seat for learning, to complete his formal study. In Siyalkot, he studied with Shaykh Kamal al-Dīn, an eminent muhaddith (expert in the traditions). He mastered all the current branches of learning at the age of seventeen.[45]

In 1008/1599, after the death of his father, Shaykh Ahmad came into contact with Khwajāh Muḥammad Bāqi bi'Llāh (970/1563–1012/ 1603), a celebrated mystic and founder of the Naqshbandi order in India.[46] At the latter's invitation, Shaykh Ahmad spent a few days in his khānqah (Sufi centre). During his stay, he was deeply influenced by the Khwajāh's conduct and spiritual life and was initiated into the order, thus becoming his formal disciple. He stayed with his spiritual master for a few months in order to fulfil the necessary requirements of the order. finally, he was granted the khirqah (Sufi robe) and was permitted to initiate others into the silsilah (order).[47]

After the death of the Khwajāh, Shaykh Ahmad made Sirhind his permanent abode and started his mission there. His main concern was to remove all kinds of innovations from the religious life of the Indian Muslims, mostly resulting from Akbar's liberal policy regarding religion. He was anxious to see once again the glory of Muslim orthodoxy in India. To attain his goal, he adopted two means: first, oral instruction and guidance, and, second, writing books and epistles to nobles on various religious topics. The latter approach was more effective and resulted in good relations with some important personalities who later became defenders and champions of orthodoxy within and outside the imperial court.

In 1029/1619, Shaykh Ahmad was summoned to the court of Jahāngīr (1013/1605–1037/1627) to face charges of innovation and heterodoxy levelled against him. Although he cleared himself from a
theological point of view, he was sent to jail for not prostrating before the emperor. During his imprisonment, his piety, constancy, spirituality and influential personality sustained him, and the official circles, including the emperor, were greatly impressed by him. He was released after spending two years in the fort of Gawalior as a prisoner, and was sent back to Sirhind with great respect and valuable gifts.[48]

He spent the last years of his life in seclusion at Sirhind. He died in 1034/1624 and was buried in his native city.

Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindī's greatest contribution in the field of Islamic thought is his exposition of the concept of ivahdat al-shuhud (unity in consciousness). He severely attacked the

well-known metaphysical concept of ivahdat al-wujud (unity of being) of Ibn 'Arab!. For him, the doctrine of wahdat al-wujud was a subjective experience wherein the mystic and the object of love become identical and where the mystic realizes one overwhelming reality. This state of identity is not a permanent one; it is transient and temporal. The higher state accordingly is that of servitude ('abdiyyat) wherein neither the transcendental nature and infinity of God is degraded nor the contingent and accidental position of man and other creatures is elevated to the realm of transcendence or infinity.[49]

Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindī also criticized the doctrine of ivahdat al- wujud from the ethical point of view. The "pantheistic" union of God and humanity, for him, negates the idea of human individuality as well as the position as a responsible being before God. It also makes it difficult to evaluate the morals of individuals and thus negates the whole idea of reward and punishment in the hereafter. Furthermore, this conception denies human freedom.[50]

Most of his philosophical, metaphysical and theological thoughts are expounded in his Maktubat ("Epistles") which have been published in four volumes. Along with this work, he wrote many treatises on various subjects. The following are of great significance: Risdlah tahltliyyah, Risdlah ft ithbat al-nubuwwah, Risdlah mabda' wa'l-ma'ad, Risdlah rubaiyydt, Taliqdt-i 'awdrif, Irshdd al-muridin and Mukdshifdt-i 'Ayniyyah mujad- didiyyah.[51] Almost all of these works deal with metaphysics and Islamic philosophy and theology.

Mullā Abd al-Ḥ;akīm Siyālkōtī

Mullā Abd al Hakim Siyalkoti was another notable philosopher, theologian, logician and metaphysician of the Moghul period. He was born at Siyalkot in a well-known family of intellectual repute. He was a later contemporary of Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindī. By that time Siyalkot was famous for intellectual and transmitted sciences. Mullā Abd al-Hakim studied all the branches of philosophy under Shaykh Kamal al-Dīn, an eminent scholar of his time. He also studied theology under the Shaykh and soon became known as a philosopher.[52]

During the reign of Shah Jahān (ruled 1037/1627–1069/1658), Mullā Abd al-Hakim became the most influential scholar in the imperial court. He was granted special awards and prizes for his teaching and religious services in the imperial madrasah at the capital. Towards the end of his life, he left the court and returned to his native city, Siyalkot, and devoted his time to teaching and writing. Numerous students studied philosophy and other sciences under him, and later continued the intellectual tradition in India.[53]

Besides being a distinguished teacher, Mullā Abd al-Haklm was also a prolific writer. He wrote many valuable glossaries and commentaries on some of the difficult philosophical and theological works. all of his writings were well received by the Muslim scholars within and outside India. His most important works are: Hdshiya-yi sharh hikmat al-'ayn, Hdshiya-yi sharh al-'aqa'id of Alīamah al-Taftāzānī, Hdshiya-yi sharh al- mawdqif of Alīamah al-Jurjanl,

Hdshiya-yi sharifiyyah, Hdshiya-yi sharh-i shamsiyyah and Durrat al-thammah?[54]

Mullā Abd al-Hakim died in 1067/1656 at Siyalkot and was buried there. His mausoleum still exists on Shaban Road in Siyalkot.

Mullā Maḥmūd Junpūrī Fārūqī

Mullā Maḥmūd Junpuri ibn Shaykh Muḥammad Junpuri was another prominent philosopher and metaphysician of Shah Jahān's period. He was born at Junpur in Ramadan 1015/ 1603. His father died before he was twelve. His maternal grandfather Shaykh Shah Muḥammad, a renowned scholar, took him into his care. His early education was completed under the same Shaykh.[55]

For higher study of the intellectual sciences, Mullā Maḥmūd Junpuri joined the intellectual circle of Ustad al-Mulk Shaykh Muḥammad Afdal, the well-known rational philosopher of his time. He studied almost all the intellectual sciences under him. For the study of transmitted sciences, he remained a student of Mullā Shams Nur BronvT of Junpur. He started teaching while he was under twenty, [56] and soon became a recognized scholar of the intellectual and transmitted sciences.

One thing which distinguishes Mullā Maḥmūd Junpuri from his Indian contemporary scholars was his attending the circle of Mīr Damad, one of the eminent philosophers of Safavid Persia and the foremost teacher of Mullā Ṣadrā. Mullā Maḥmūd Junpuri attended Mīr Damad's lectures on

metaphysics and philosophy when the former made a temporary stop at Iṣfahān while he was on his way to Mecca. The young scholar disagreed
with Mīr Damad's doctrine of huduth-i dahri (eternal creation). Yet both scholars were deeply impressed by each other.[57]

Mullā Maḥmūd Junpurl was not a mere speculative thinker; he also had a strong mystical background. There had been a mystical tradition among his paternal and maternal ancestors. He himself was greatly influenced by Miyan Mīr Lahorl, the famous leader of the Qadiriyyah Order in India at that time.[58] He visited him for the first time in the company of Shah Jahān, then the emperor, and Mullā 'Abd al-Hakim. Miyan Mīr Lahorl reproached both scholars for their worldly inclinations, particularly the courtly life. He also came in contact with Shaykh Ni'mat Allāh Fayrūzpuri, a notable Sufi of the Qadiriyyah Order in Bengal. Mullā Junpurl visited Bengal at Shah Jahān's request for the instruction of Prince Muḥammad Shuja'. Mullā Junpurl was initiated in the order and was granted ijdzah (permission to initiate others in the order). It was a turning point in his life. After that he was completely devoted to teaching, writing and spiritual training.[59]

Mullā Maḥmūd Junpurl achieved a high social status even during his lifetime. He was considered one of the prominent philosophers and thinkers by his contemporaries. His foremost teacher, Shaykh Muḥammad Afdal, used to say about him and Mullā Abd al-Rashid Junpurl (Mullā Maḥmūd's fellow student): "Since the time of Alīamah al-Taftāzānī and Mīr Sayyid al-Sharif al-Jurjanl, no two great

scholars of such a high level have come together in one city as Mullā Maḥmūd and Shaykh Abd al- Rashid."

Mullā Maḥmūd Junpurl died at the age of forty-seven. Despite this short life, he trained numerous students in the field of philosophy and metaphysics. He also composed some original works on logic, theology, metaphysics and speculative philosophy. His Shams al-bazighah is considered one of the most basic works in traditional Islamic philosophy in the subcontinent and the neighbouring countries. It was and continued to be studied along with the Sharh-i hiddyat al-hikmat of Sadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī, known as Mullā Ṣadrā, in the traditional madrasahs in the eastern Muslim world. The following works of Mullā Maḥmūd Junpurl are noteworthy: al-Hikmat al-bdlighah, Shams al-bdzighah, al-Fara'id fi sharh al-fawa'id, Risdlat al-dawhat al-miyadah fi haqiqat al-surah wal-maddah, Risdlah fi'l- kulli wai-juz'i, Risdlah irtifd' al-naqidayn, Risdlah ft tahqiq-i qadd' wa qadar and Risdlah taqsim-i nisurah.[60]

He died in 1062/1652 while his teacher, Shaykh Muḥammad Afdal was still alive. The Shaykh was so shocked by the early death of his brilliant student that for forty days nobody saw him smiling. After forty days the master also departed from the temporal world.[61]

Mīrzā Muḥammad Zāhid Harawī

Mīrza Muḥammad Zahid Harawi, son of Qadi Muḥammad Aslam, was another distinguished philosopher of the age of Shah Jahān and Awrangzeb (ruled 1069/1658–1119/1707). Moreover, he was the foremost teacher of Shah Abd

al-Rahlm, father of Shah Walīullah. Muḥammad Zahid's father was qadi al-quddt (chief justice) during the rule of Jahāngīr and Shah Jahān.[62]

During his early years, Mīrza Muḥammad Zahid studied under his father Qadi Muḥammad Aslam and Mullā Muḥammad Fadil Badakhshani. Then he became a disciple of Mullā Sadiq Halwa'i of Kabul, a notable thinker of his day. For the higher study of the intellectual sciences, he went to Turan (Transoxiana) and joined the circle of Mīrza Jan Shīrāzī, a well-known philosopher in Central Asia, and studied philosophy and other related sciences under him. Later, he studied exegesis of the Qur'an (tafsir) under the supervision of Mullā Yusuf Lahorl, a student of Mīrza Jan Shīrāzī. For the study of fiqh and usul al-fiqh, he remained a student of Mullā Jalāl Lahorl.[63] On the completion of his formal study, Mīrza Muḥammad Zahid Harawi started teaching at Lahore and soon became renowned as a philosopher and a theologian.

Since his father had been a chief qadi, Mīrza Zahid Harawi also accepted some responsibility at the imperial court. The Emperor Awrangzeb first appointed him as a royal muhtasib (account-general) and then governor of Kabul.

Mīrza Muḥammad Zahid was a notable scholar of Peripatetic philosophy, ishrdqi hikmah, Ash'arite and Maturidite theology, and logic. He taught these disciplines privately in his free time. Numerous students mastered the intellectual sciences under his supervision and, in turn, handed over the intellectual tradition successfully to the coming generation. Along with some original works in the field of the intellectual sciences, he also wrote glossaries on Alīamah Jalāl al-Dīn

Dawānī's commentary on Haydkil al-nur of Suhrawadī Maqtul, on the Tajrid of Nasir al-Dīn al-TusI, on the Shark al-mawdqif of Alīamah Mīr Sayyid al-Sharif al-Jurjānī, on Alīamah Dawānī's commentary on al-Tahdhib, and on Tasawwur wa'l-tasdiq of Qutb al-Dīn al-RazI.[64]

Shah Walīullāh

Qutb al-Dīn Ahmad ibn Shah Abd al-Rahlm, known as Shah Walīullah, is considered the greatest scholar of twelfth/ eighteenth-century India. His intellectual contribution is undoubtedly greater than that of any other scholar in the history of Muslim India. It is greater and more important in the sense that it came at the time when the Muslim empire was losing
ground, while the Muslims were divided into many factions for numerous reasons. Shah Walīullah set out to reformulate the religio-intellectual legacy of Islam in order to reorganize the Muslims on the basis of their religion. He gave a new rational interpretation to theological and metaphysical issues which, being in full accordance with the revelation, was more appealing to the contemporary mind. His reconciliatory efforts resolved many controversies among the various factions which had emerged among the Muslims in India.

Shah Walīullah was born on Wednesday 4 Shawwal 1114/21 February 1703, at Phult, Delhi. Being a member of a distinguished religious and intellectual family, he was exposed to a highly structured education and spiritual training. Most of his education was undertaken under his father Shah 'Abd a!-Rahim''[65] at Madrasa-yi Rahimiyyah (established by the latter), Delhi. He completed his formal

study while he was fifteen years old. Afterwards his father initiated him into the famous Naqshbandi order.

After completing his formal education, Shah Walīullah started teaching at Madrasa-yi Rahimiyyah and, after the death of his father in 1131/1719, Shah Walīullah became the sole leader of the madrasah. He taught all the transmitted and rational sciences for about twelve years.

In 1143/1731, Shah Walīullah left for the hajj (pilgrimage) to Mecca. He stayed at Mecca and Medina for about fourteen months. This stay at the haramayn (the sancturies of Mecca and Medina) provided him with a first-hand knowledge of the various intellectual and juridical schools in Islam and thus universalized his vision. At the end of 1144/1732, he performed hajj for the second time and then returned home on 14 Rajab 1145/9 July 1726. He spent the rest of his life at Madrasa-yi Rahimiyyah in teaching and writing. On 29 Muharram 1176/20 August 1762, this prominent scholar of Muslim India died in Delhi and was buried there.[66]

Shah Walīullah wrote on almost all those subjects which he taught for years. He wrote both in Arabic and Persian. The years of his life between 1145/1732 and 1176/1762 were the most productive in terms of his writings. The exact number of his works is a controversial issue for his biographers. G. N. JalbanI asserts that more than fifty of his works have been published, while Mazhar Baqa has given a list of seventy works, including five collections of his letters and epistles. This is a list of those works of Shah Walīullah which are fully or partiAlīy related to philosophy and metaphysics: Altdf al-quds\ Artfds al-'arifin\ al-Budur al-bdzighalr, Path al-ivadud fi ma'rifat al-junud; Fuytld al-haramayn; Hama at,

Haivdmi' Sharh hizb al-bahr, Hujjat Allāh al-bdlighalr, Husn al-'aqtdafr, al-Intibdh fi saldsil al-awliyd' Allāh wa asanid wdrith rasul Allāh; Kashf al-ghaym 'an sharh rubaiyatayn-, al-Klmyr al-kathir, l.ewia'dn Lamahdt, al-Qawl al-jamik, Salaat: Shifa al-qulub-, al-Sirr al-maktum fi asbdb tadivin al-'ulum-, Surur al-makbzun\ al-Tafhlmat al-ildhiyyah.

Shah Walīullah's contribution to Islamic philosophy and metaphysics is unique in the sense that he tried to reformulate and reshape these disciplines to be in greater conformity with the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah. His rational approach to the controversial issues of metaphysics to a large extent changed the approach of future Muslim metaphysicians and created conformity and harmony among them. His balanced criticism of his predecessors did not cause further controversies. Rather, it was always considered as a sincere attempt of reconciliation. His attempt to reconcile the two apparently contradictory doctrines of ivahdat al-wujiid of Ibn 'Arabl and ivahdat al-shuhud of Shaykh Imam Sirhindī is the first effort in the area. Before Imam Sirhindī, the doctrine of ivahdat al-wujud of Ibn 'Arab! was in no way acceptable to the mutakAlīirnun (Muslim theologians). Shaykh Sirhindī, introducing the concept of ivahdat al-shuhud, opened a new factor of controversy even among the Muslin metaphysicians. The exponent of each of these doctrines was aggressively critical of the others. It was Shah Walīullah whose rational explanation of both the doctrines and their reconciliation resolved the controversy. The positive effect of his reconciliatry efforts was twofold. On the one hand, it brought about harmony between the opposing groups of the metaphysicians; on the other hand it legitimized the doctrine of ivahdat al-wujud among the mutakAlīirnun.

Shah Walīullah also tried to bring the four schools of law closer to each other. His commentaries on Muwatta' of Imam Malik called al- Musawwd (Arabic) and al-Musajfd (Persian) were written with the same view to finding common orthodox ground for the reconciliation of different schools of law. He also tried to provide common ground and a strong basis for possible harmony and mutual co-operation between the Sunni and Shi'ah. In the same way, Shah Waliullah's contribution in the field of politics is not surpassed by any other Muslim thinker in the history of Muslim India.

Shah Walīullah died in 1176/1762. He left behind him a rich intellectual legacy in the form of literary works, of well-trained disciples including his four sons (Shah 'Abd al-'Azīz, Shah 'Abd al-Qadir, Shah Rafi' al-Dīn and Shah Abd al-Ghanl) and one of the greatest educational institutions of the time. His reforming mission on political, intellectual and spiritual topics was carried on by his four sons and disciples. They shared the intellectual legacy of their spiritual master with thousands of their students and spiritual disciples who came to them from distant places. They wrote new works on various subjects and added to the legacy of their master. The Madrasa-yi Rahlmiyyah was the only centre where the affairs of the Indian Muslims were resolved. The students continued the mission even after the centre was destroyed by the British army in 1857.[67]

Ten years after the destruction of the Madrasa-yi Rahlmiyyah, some of the graduates and spiritual disciples of the family, such as Mawlana Muḥammad Qāsim Nanotwl, Mawlana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi, Mawlana Muḥammad Ya'qub and Hajjl Abid Husayn founded a dar al-'ulum (theological and philosophical seminary) at Deoband. The intellectual tradition

of Shah Walīullah once again made a new start at Deoband under the leadership of his spiritual successors. The Dar al-TJlum of Deoband followed strictly the Madrasa-yi Rahlmiyyah and conformed fully to the method and curriculum prescribed by Shah Walīullah. It is through the Dar al-'Ulum of Deoband that the influence of Shah Walīullah spread throughout the subcontinent as well as into the neighbouring countries.

Today almost all the religious groups in the subcontinent derive their intellectual inspiration and sanad (authority) from Shah Walīullah. But in most cases only particular aspects of his teachings are emphasized. It is the school of Deoband which has taken up the tradition in full with its universal and balanced nature. His writings are studied not only in the religious madrasahs but also in the institutions of modern education.

Conclusion

From this account of the transmission of Islamic philosophy into the Indian world we can conclude with four main points.

Firstly, Islamic philosophy developed in India gradually. It was introduced in India, first, by the Isma'ill dais (propagandists) during the fourth/tenth century and then it flourished in the country through the centuries under the patronage of orthodox as well as liberal Muslim rulers of India.

Secondly, the intellectual sciences were transmitted into India from Persia, especially the province of Khurasan, Central Asia and Iraq. The most important role in the early transmission of philosophical and metaphysical thought was played by the Sufis. The Persian administrators and secretaries who came to India with the Ghaznavids and Gūrids for governmental affairs in the early centuries and, later, the scholars who fled from their homes in Central Asia, Persia and Iraq in the thirteenth century because of the Mongol invasion in their homeland also shared in the transmission of Islamic learning into the Indian world. These Sufis, administrators and scholars brought with them the works and thoughts of the early philosophers, theologians, Sufis and gnostics into India. Madrasahs and institutes were established throughout the country for the teaching of intellectual and religious sciences.

Thirdly, the contribution of these scholars, Sufis and rulers towards the transmission and development of Islamic philosophy and metaphysics
in India is colossal in the sense that, if they had not been instrumental in this process, it would have not seen the light of day in that land. They not only introduced the Islamic intellectual sciences in India but also paved the way for its consolidation there. They handed it over successfully to the coming generations who further elaborated it in their writings.

Fourthly, it was, then, during the Mughul period that a systematic philosophical school emerged which was indigenous in the sense that most of its exponents were Indian by birth. In this regard, the efforts and contribution of the later Indian philosophers, such as Mīr Fath Allāh Shīāzī, Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindī, Mullā Abd al-Hakim Siyalkot!,

Mīrza Muḥammad Zahid HarawT and Shah Walīullah, have been dealt with in greater detail. The discussion has concluded with a brief account of the process of development and transmission of Islamic philosophy and metaphysics in the Indian world from the time of Shah Walīullah up to the present.

NOTES

1 W. Madelung, "Isma'lliyyah", Encyclopaedia of Islam, new ed. (Leiden), 4: 198–99. See also Shaykh Muḥammad Ikram (1986): 30, 338.

2 F. R., "Islam", Funk and VegnAlīs New Encyclopedia, ed. Roberts Philips, 14: 290.

3 "Towards the end of his reign, Maḥmūd tried to establish a more permanent form of control over the Punjab, with a division of responsibility there. The military command remained in the hands of Turkish ghuldm generals, based in Lahore, center ol the Muslim ghdzis in India; but at their side was set up a civil administration under a Persian official, the Qadī Bu'l-Hasan Shīāzī, of whom the Sultan thought so highly that he had considered him for the Vizierate." For more details see C. E. Bosworth (1973): 76–77.

4 C. E. Bosworth says: "Undoubtedly the courts of Maḥmūd and Mas'ud at Ghaznah became brilliant cultural centers. According to Daulatshah, there were four hundred poets, in regular attendance on Maḥmūd, presided over by the laureate, Amīr ash-Shu'ara', 'UnSurī who was himself continuously

busy commemorating in verses his master's exploits and campaigns. The polymath of his age, BirunI, finished his days at Ghaznah, and dedicated his great astronomical treatise, the Qanun al-mas'udi, to Mas'ud, and his book on mineralogy, the Kitdb al-jamdhir fl ma'rifat al-jawdhir, to his son Mawdud. In as much as it was Maḥmūd of Ghaznah who brought BirunI to Ghaznah, the gateway to India, it was he who made possible the Tahqiq md lil-HindFor further details see Bosworth (1973): 131.

5 Shabir Ahmad (1967): 23.

6 Shaykh Muḥammad Ikram (1955): 93.

7 "A large number of seekers after knowledge from all parts of India, the territories of Kashghar, Transoxiana, Iraq, Bukhara, Samarqand, Khurasan, Ghaznah, Herat, etc., benefited by the same. Consequently a new settlement grew up in
the neighborhood of Lahore." See M. A. GhanI, Pre-MughuI Persian in Hindustan (Allāhabad, 1941): 194, quoted in Ikram (1964): 34.

8 Ahmad (1967): 26.

9 Ikram (1964): 35–6.

10 Shaykh Abu'l-Hasan Alī HujwayrI of Ghaznah known as Data Ganj Bakhsh (d. 465/1072 C.E.) came to India in 429/ 1037 with Mas'ud, son of Sultan Maḥmūd of Ghaznah. He is considered as the founder of tasawumf in India as well as the most influential saint of his time. He was a renowned scholar of religious sciences, particularly of theology and mysticism.

Lie wrote many valuable works on these subjects. He thought of tasawivuf (Sufism) as a means of inner purification. He died in 465/1072 at Lahore and was buried there. Sultan Ibrāhīm (ruled 450/1057–495/1099), the successor of Mas'ud, built a mausoleum which still exists. (See M. L. Baghl (1965): 227.)

11 Ikram (1964): 36.

12 Ibid.: 36.

13 Qadī Abd al-Rahman Adud al-Dīn ibn Ahmad al-Ijl was one of the most celebrated scholars and metaphysicians of the Ghūrīd period (583/1186– 603/1206). Maw/Ujif is one of his important works on theology which he dedicated to Sultan Ghiyath al-Dīn, the founder of the Ghūrīd dynasty. Many commentaries have been written on this work, among which those by Sayyed al-Sharif al-Jurjanl and Alīamah Jalāl al-Dīn Dawānī are worthy to be mentioned. For more details see Mīr Ghulam Alī Azad Bilgrami (1971): 193 n. 4.

14 Imam Fakhr al-Dīn RazI (543/1148–606/1210), also known as Ibn al-Khatlb, is considered one of the greatest intellectual figures in the history of Islamic thought. He wrote about 119 works, mostly on theology, philosophy, natural sciences and logic. His al-Mabdhith at-mashriqiyyah is one of his valuable works, comprising discussions about almost all the intellectual sciences. His commentary on al-Ishdrat ival-tanbihdt of Ibn Sīnā displays his philosophical understanding. In addition to that, his commentary on the Qur'an, Mafdtih al- ghayb, known as al-Tafsir al-kabir, philosophical in nature, is considered one of the most valuable commentaries on the Qur'an. politically, he was

attached to the court of Sultan Ghiyāth al-Dīn Ghūrī. After his death, he became one of the favourites of Sultan Shihab al-Dīn Muḥammad Ghūrī, who had great respect for the Imam. He died at Herat in 607/1210 and was buried there. See FathAlīa Khulaif (1966): 16.

15 Ikram (1964): 42.

16 Ikram (1986): 119.

17 A. L. Srivastave (1964): 100.

18 A. Rashid (1969): 155.

19 Srivastava (1964): 101.

20 Ibid.

21 Yusuf Husayn (1962): 34–7.

22 Ibid., pp. 46–9.

23 Ikram (1964): 112–14.

24 Srivastava (1964): 101.

25 Ikram (1964): 115–17.

26 Ikram (1986): 408.

27
Ibid.: 424.

28 Ibid.

29 One of Muḥammad Tughluq's names was Jawna (Yavana "foreigner") Shah. In the ninth/fifteenth century Junpur became the centre of the powerful Muslim state. The sultans of Junpur played a significant role in the development of the Islamic culture of the area. For further details about Junpur see Bosworth (1980): 201–2.

30 Rashid (1969): 157.

31 Qàdl Athàr Mubàrakpürî (1979): 62–5.

32 Husayn (1962): 76.

33 Ikrām (1968): 455.

34 Husayn (1962): 76–7.

35 Ikrām (1964): 154.

36 Encyclopaedia of Islam, new edition, 2: 602.

37 He was a good example of the crucial significance of Persian culture for Islamic life in India.

38 Husayn (1962): 77.

39 Ikrām (n.d.): 162.

40 Husayn (1962): 54.

41 Bilgrāmī (1971): 226.

42 A. Abbās Rizvl (1980): 63.

43 Bilgrāmī (1971): 229.

44 Ibid.: 228.

45 Ikrām (1964): 167.

46 The Naqshbandi Order was founded by Khwājah Bahā' al-Dîn Plr Muḥammad Naqshband (718/1317–799/1398) at Bukhara. Khwājah Muḥammad Bāql bi'Llāh (970/1563–1012/1603), seventh in the line from the founder, introduced the order to India. The Naqshbandïs, from the very beginning, stressed the observance of the Shariah. Shaykh Ahmad Sirhindi, a disciple of Khwājah Bāql bi'Llāh, gave new momentum to the order by attacking all kinds of innovations. See Husayn (1962): 57.

47 On that occasion, Khwājah Muḥammad Bāql bi'Llāh said: "Shaykh Ahmad is … rich in knowledge and rigorous in action. I associated with him for a few days, and noticed truly marvellous things in his spiritual life. He will turn into a light which will illumine the world" (for more details see Ikrām (1964): 167).

48 Ibid.'. 168–9.

49 Husayn (1962): 58.

50 Ibid.

51 See Ikrām (n.d.): 243–7.

52 Bilgrāmī (1971): 193.

53 Ibid.

54 Ibid.: 193 A.

55 Mubàrakpürî (1979): 306–7.

56 Bilgrāmī (1971): 199.

57 Muḥammad Bāqir Dāmàd, better known as Mīr Dàmād, was one of the greatest philosophers and metaphysicians of the Safavid period. His contribution towards the establishment of the theosophical school at Iṣfahān is greater than any other Persian scholar's. He was the foremost teacher of Mullà Sadrā, Sayyid Ahmad 'Alawi, Mullā Khalil Qazwlni and Qutb al-Dīn Ashldwari. Mīr Damad composed many valuable works in the field of philosophy and metaphysics, such as Sharh-inajdt, al-Ufuq al-mubin, al-Sirdt al-miistaqim, Qabasat, Taqdisat, Jadhawat and Sidrat al-muntaha. Mīr Damad died in Iraq in 1041/1663. For more details see Sayyed Hossein Nasr, "The School of Iṣfahān", inl History of Muslim philosophy, ed. M. M. Sharif (Wiesbaden, 1963), 2: 914–15.

58 The Qadiriyyah Order was founded by Shaykh 'Abd al-Qadir JllanI (d. 562/1166). Shaykh Ni'rnai Allāh and Makhdum JllanI introduced the order into India in the middle of the ninth/fifteenth century. Miyan Mīr Lahorl (957/ 1550–1044/1635) was a distinguished leader of this order of his time. Dara Shikoh, a son of Emperor Shah Jahān, was a devoted disciple of Miyan Mīr Lahorl. (For more details see M. L. Baghl (1965): 233.

59 Ibid.: 321–2.

60 For more details about his writings and their contents see Mubarākpurl (1979): 339–59.

61 BilgramI (1981): 91.

62 Ibid.: 195–7.

63 Shah Walīullah (1974), Urdu trans.: 90.

64 BilgramI (1981): 198.

65 Shah 'Abd al Rahim was born in 1056/1646. At an early age he studied under his elder brother 'Abd al-Rida Muḥammad the books of Arabic and Persian grammar and literature, jurisprudence, and the works of Scholastic theology and philosophy up to the level of Sharh al-'iiqa'id of 'Alīamah al-Taftazanl, Sharh al-Mawaqif of 'Alīamah al-Sayyid al-Sharīf al-Jurjanl and Hdshiya-yi khiydlt of 'Alīamah Abd al-Haklm Siyalkotl. For more advanced study of the Islamic intellectual sciences, he joined the circle of Mīrza Muḥammad Zahid Harawi, a well-known theologian, philosopher and metaphysician of the time. After completing his formal study, Shah Abd al-Rahlm turned towards spiritual training. In this regard, he visited various saints and renowned scholars, and finally became a spiritual disciple of Hafiz Sayyid Abd Allāh Akbarabadl, a distinguished khalifah of Sayyid Adam Benawri. He fulfilled the requirements of the Naqshbandi order very soon and was granted the khirqah (Sufi robe) and ijdzah (permission to initiate others into the order). The greatest achievement of Shah Abd al-Rahlm was the establishment and management of the Madrasa- yi

Rahlmiyyah situated in Kotlah Fayroz Shah, in the vicinity of Delhi. In that institution not only Shah Walīullah was taught and trained but hundreds of students, from far and near studied and quenched their thirst for scientific and spiritual knowledge. This madrasah later became a great centre for Shah Walīullah's intellectual, social and political activities. From this centre, knowledge spread throughout India and even reached neighbouring countries such as Afghanistan, Malaysia and Burma. Shah Abd al-Rahlm died on Wednesday 12 Safar 1131/1718 at the age of seventy-seven, in Delhi, and was buried there. For more details on the subject see Shah Walīullah (1974): 331.

66 For the biography of Shah Walīullah see his autobiography, called al-Juz' al- latjfft tarjumat "abd al-da'if, in (1974). Also see Mazhar Baqa (1973): 55, 59.

67 Barbara Daly Metcalf (1982): 76–9.

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CHAPTER 63

Pakistan

M. Suheyl Umar

❧

Pakistan came into existence in 1947.[1] As an heir to the Indo-Muslim civilization that had flourished in the subcontinent since the thirteenth century it inherited, along with other things, the intellectual tradition which manifested itself in the establishment of religious and educational institutions and in the form of various movements, political, cultural, reformist and philosopho-theological. After the introduction of the modern system of education in the Indian subcontinent by the British, the intellectual activity of the Muslims was split into two distinct fields. It perpetuated itself, on the one hand, in the transmission and practice of intellectual sciences taught in the traditional madrasah and other centres of esoteric and exoteric learning and, on the other hand, in the newly introduced disciplines of philosophy in the colleges and universities, which included a study of Islamic philosophy in their curriculum, though often in a fragmentary and superficial manner.[2]

The influence of this philosophic activity on the Islamic society at large has, however, always been limited since philosophy, in its modern Western meaning never developed

in the Muslim world and whatever influence it exerted always left the heart of the tradition intact.

Taking the word philosophy in its widest and traditional sense one can distinguish its four main branches that exerted their influence on the intellectual and cultural activity of the Pakistani society. These branches are: theoretical philosophy (falsafah nazari), practical philosophy (falsafah 'amalt), theological thought (kaldm) and gnosis ('irfdn).

By the turn of the century, interest in the study of intellectual science, even in the traditional madrasahs, was on the wane. Moreover theoretical philosophy and Peripatetic thought had rarely found favourable ground in the Sunni world. This lack of interest in theoretical philosophy coupled with a tendency towards gnostic philosophy resulted in a gradual gravitation of almost all higher intellectual activity towards gnosis, which flourished within the bosom of Sufism or tasawwuf. Sufism worked as a centre which attracted and influenced all the strata of Pakistani society through its appeal to different intellectual levels.

Nevertheless, this should not be taken to mean that other branches of Islamic philosophy did not have their influence on Pakistani society. In fact, intellectual activity in Pakistan is more prone to philosophic methodology than could be discerned from its surface. The creation of Pakistan was, in ultimate analysis, based on a concept. National identity also drew its intellectual nourishment from a conceptual basis. Thus Pakistani thinkers more often use the methodology usuAlīy associated with philosophy.

Theoretical philosophy (nazarl) has been cultivated, though in a diminished form, both in the traditional madrasahs and the departments of philosophy in various colleges and universities, where the subject of Islamic philosophy was introduced soon after the creation of Pakistan. The curricula of the traditional madrasahs have included the intellectual sciences especially logic, theology and a philosophy which was a blend of Peripatetic thought, gnosis and theosophy. The scholars trained in these traditional schools of learning have been absorbed in the society every year. Through their influence in society, maintained either from the pulpit or through their circles of teaching, Islamic philosophy has had an indirect influence even on the masses.

No less influential was this branch of Islamic philosophy in the emergence of thinkers and movements which drew their intellectual nourishment from it. Abu'l-A'lá' Mawdūdí was the foremost example of this influence. A translator of Mullā Sádra's Asfar[3] in his early days and a student of one of the leading masters of intellectual sciences, [4] Mawdūdí undoubtedly brought his training in Islamic philosophy to bear upon the social, political and theological issues which he discussed in his earlier writings. Even in his later days when his movement had become politicized, his thought continued to exercise a powerful influence on the intellectual activity of the country.

Khalilah Abd al-Haklm[5] was a meeting point of the philosophy taught in the modern universities and the influence of the Islamic intellectual sciences. The impact of practical philosophy could also be discerned in the later movements of reform. Asrár Ahmad's Tanzim-i islami[6] and Tahir al-Qadiri's Minhdj al-qur'dn[7] are the foremost

examples of this latter-day influence of Islamic philosophy. Whereas the former has laid more emphasis on religious, social and political issues, the latter has incorporated elements of a more philosophic nature among its issues and the resulting literature.

Study of theoretical philosophy (falsafah nazarl) in the traditional schools of learning of Pakistan was constantly on the wane and a general lack of interest in that part of the curriculum was commonplace among
the students of intellectual sciences. The study of logic was the only part which survived and even that in a simplified form. Furthermore, in the centres of modern education, theoretical philosophy was mostly confined to an indirect study of the early thinkers and compilation of history. Mention should especially be made of M. M. Sharif's A History of Muslim Philosophy[8] and a few other minor works that appeared in the early years of Pakistan's existence. Sharifs work, though slightly outdated now, is still the most comprehensive work in this field. Zafar al-Hasan undertook a critique of philosophy[9] from the Islamic point of view. His pupil Burhan Ahmad FaruqT not only elucidated his ideas but also wrote extensively on the theoretical and practical aspects of Islamic philosophy.[10] M. M. Ahmad was primarily influential as a teacher. He was connected to the gnostic orders himself and combined in his personality the elements of theoretical philosophy and gnosis.

C. A. Qadir was another important figure in the field of theoretical philosophy who not only expounded this branch of philosophy through his works[11] but was instrumental also in establishing and carrying forward the activities of the Pakistan Philosophical Congress.[12] This congress constantly

included Islamic philosophy in its agenda and during its yearly gatherings a special session was always held on Islamic philosophy. Proceedings of the Congress manifest the major activity in this field over the last four decades.

Mention should also be made of the establishment of the Iqbal Academy of Pakistan[13] devoted to the study and dissemination of thoughts and ideas of Muḥammad Iqbal. It was not simply due to the immense contribution of Iqbal's ideas in the Pakistan movement that so much attention was focused on his thinking presented in his prose writings and his exquisite Urdu and Persian poetry.[14] Apart from being a political thinker and leader, Iqbal was perhaps the most outstanding figure of his times, showing the influence of kaldm, gnosis and Muslim intellectual sciences as well as of the study of Western philosophy in his personality. He was, in a sense, the epitome of the cumulative influence of the Islamic intellectual heritage on a contemporary mind. This explains the large number of studies, in the form of books and journals, intellectual currents, institutions, thinkers and ideological fermentation that followed in the wake of the creation of Pakistan as well as in the later years and which were undoubtedly steeped in the influence of Iqbal's ideas. We can describe this phenomenon as an indirect influence of Islamic philosophy.

Iqbal was foremost among the champions of a new theology ('ilm al-kaldm). But kaldm philosophy was also an essential part of the curriculum of the traditional madrasahs of Pakistan. Though also a victim of the detrimental influences of a general lack of interest in the intellectual sciences, kaldm, however, was not eclipsed to the extent that philosophy, as falsafah, for example, was. It not only continued to

exercise its influence through the traditional 'ultima who imbibed its spirit during their years of formal studies, but its influence overflowed, in a sense, in the intellectual activities of the reformers and religious thinkers in varying degrees. A large part of Mawdudl's writings, works of the Farahl school of thought and, to a certain extent, that of Tahir al-Qadiri, could be described as an attempt to present the Islamic theological science ('ilm al-kaldm) in a contemporary idiom. Even among thinkers like Ghulam Ahmed Parwaiz, who were under the complete sway of Western rationalism, the influence of kaldm could be discerned to a considerable extent. Special mention should be made of Alīamah Ayyub Dihlawl regarding the influence and impact of kaldm. His extensive lectures, sermons and writings[15] brought about a flowering of intellectual activity in contemporary society. Thoroughly grounded in all the transmitted (naqli) and intellectual ('aqli) sciences, he was mostly known for his mastery and command over theological reasoning (kaldm) and his consummate skill at presenting these issues in a lucid and brilliant manner. Some of his expositions could be ranked among the most original contributions to the philosophy of kaldm in recent times.

Gnosis or gnostic philosophy, as mentioned earlier, flourished in Sufi circles. It also underwent a decline in the sense that it tended more towards moral philosophy or even towards sentimentalism. Nevertheless, the influence of purely gnostic ideas, though in a diminished degree, was ever present in society. It did not often manifest itself in the form of published works, though this aspect was not totAlīy absent from it. One can cite, for example, the publication of the translations of the treatises of Abd al-Karim al-jlli, Ibn Arabl, [16] etc. as well as the commentaries on Fusils al-hikam etc. by

Dhahln Shah Tajl. It was augmented by the introduction and publication of the works of the traditionalist authors.[17] The process started with the writings of M. Hasan Askari, [18] carried on by his disciple Saleem Ahmed and others in Urdu and English journals and reprints of the works of these authors. Islamic gnostic teachings have had a considerable influence on the highly educated intellectual elite of the society who not only have rediscovered their tradition through these works but also have come face to face with the rich heritage of the sapiential doctrines contained in the intellectual and gnostic aspect of their tradition.

This renewed interest in the more profound and sapiential aspects of the tradition is not altogether unconnected with the influence of gnostic philosophy on literature and art in Pakistan. Here again one finds the perennial wisdom contained in the gnostic philosophy attracting the best minds towards its fold.

The process of Islamization has been also instrumental in highlighting the intellectual aspects of the tradition. We cannot enter into a discussion of its impact here but it can be added that, on its own level,
it has been also conducive to revitalizing certain elements of Islamic philosophy.

Almost all the Islamic countries are facing the threat of the modern and postmodern Western civilization. Pakistan is no exception. However, if a genuine revival of the Islamic philosophic or intellectual tradition could materialize, the encounter with the West could be made on a safer and more profound basis.

NOTES

1 For details see 'Ayesha Jalāl, The Sole Spokesman – Jinnah, the Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan (London, 1985); Ch. M. Ali The Emergence of Pakistan (Lahore, 1988); M. M. Munawwar, Dimensions of Pakistan Movement, (Lahore, 1991); S. M. Ikram, Modern Muslim India and Birth of Pakistan (Lahore, 1977); Stanley Wolpcrt, Jinnah of Pakistan (Oxford, 1984).

2 It may be noted that even until recent times the study of Islamic philosophy has been almost exclusively made through Western sources or the works based on these sources written by Muslim scholars.

3 See Asfi'tr i arbaah, Urdu trans. (Hyderabad, 1943).

4 During his formative years and the most intensive period of his studies, Mawdudi was a student of Abd al-Salam NiazT of Delhi, who was renowned for his mastery of the intellectual sciences.

5 See his Islamic Ideology! (Lahore, 1988) and The Prophet and his Message (Lahore, 1980). He also wrote extensively in Urdu and was the editor of the monthly journal al-Ma'arif devoted to religious and philosophical issues.

6 A Lahore-based religious reform movement, influenced by Mawdudi and adopting more or less the same methodology. However, ir limits itself to religious and social issues. Publications, journals, seminars and study circles are its most prominent activities.

7 Another Lahore-based organization. While the Tanztrn-i islami appears to be more or less a continuation of Mawdudl's thought, Minhdj al-qur'dn is more akin to sentimentalist religiosity. The activities are similar, with the difference that the latter is also more participative in politics.

8 See M. M. Sharif, A History of Muslim Philosophy (Wiesbaden, 1963), reprinted Karachi, 1983.

9 See Zafar al-Hasan, Philosophy: a Critique (Lahore, 1988).

10 See B. A. Faruql, Mujaddid's Concept of Tawhid (Lahore, 1989); Minhdj al- quran (Urdu) (Lahore, 1988); Islam aur musalmdnu kay zindd masd'il (Lahore, 1989).

11 See C. A. Qadir, Logical Positivism (Lahore, 1965); Philosophy and Science in the Islamic World (London, 1988).

12 See C. A. Qadir, Quest for Truth (Lahore, 1985).

13 Established in 1951 through on Act of the Parliament, the Iqbal Academy of Pakistan has published over two hundred books apart from bringing out its quarterly journal in five languages, holding seminars and preparing audio cassettes.

14
See Kulliyāt-i Iqbāl (Urdu/Persian) (Lahore, 1990). Also see Annemarie Schimmel, Gabriel's Wing (Lahore, 1989); Hafiz Malik, Iqbal: Poet Philosopher of Pakistan (New York, 1971).

15 See M. Ayyüb Dihlawl, Maqālāt-i Ayyübi, 3 vols (Karachi, n.d.); Mas'alā-i-jabr- o-qadr (Karachi, n.d.); Tafslr-i Ayyübi (Karachi, 1960).

16 For example, Barkatullāh Farangï MahAlīl (trans.), Fusüs al-Hikam (Urdu) (Karachi, n.d.); Dhahïn Shah TajI (trans.), Fusüs al-Hikam, Tarjumah, Tanbîhāt wa Tashrïhāt (Urdu) (Karachi, 1976); A. Q. Siddiqui (trans.), Fusüs al-Hikam (Urdu) (Lahore, n.d.); Fadl-i-Mīrān (trans.), Insān-i kāmil (Karachi, 1962); M. Taqï Hayder (trans.), Al-Kahf wa'l Raqirn (Lahore, 1977).

17 René Guénon, Frithjof Schuon, Titus Burckhardt, Martin Lings, S. H. Nasr, A. K. Coommaraswamy, etc.

18 especially his posthumously published works, i.e. Jadidiyyiil (Rawalpindi, 1979); Waqt kî Ràgnï (Lahore 1979); Answer to Modernism (Karachi, 1976). Also see Riwàyat, (Lahore, 1983) and Studies in Tradition (Karachi, 1992).

CHAPTER 64

The Arab world

Ibrāhīm M. Abu-Rabi

❧

It is philosophy that makes man understandable to man, explains human nobility and shows man the proper road. The first defect appearing in any nation that is headed toward decline is in the philosophic spirit. After that deficiencies spread into the other sciences, arts, and associations.

(Jamal al-Dīn al-Afghanl)[1]

Introduction

This chapter explores Islamic "philosophical activity" in the Arab world since the late nineteenth century. A convenient overview of the field is provided by Jamil Saliba's classic article on philosophical production in the modern Arab world.[2] However, any cursory reading of this article and other studies in the field confronts us with a major problem. The problem is a dearth of committed and articulate interpretations of Islamic philosophical thinking in the modern Arab world. Most existing studies are primarily confined to describing tendencies that have had a living

presence in the Arab world without shedding enough light on how to treat the philosophical questions at hand theoreticAlīy and conceptuAlīy. In view of the above, a series of questions may arise. Firstly, how do we define Muslim philosophical thinking in the Arab world over the past century? Secondly, is there a need for a reassessment of the relationship between philosophy and religion in Arab society? And, thirdly, what is the relevance of the Muslim religious and philosophical heritage to modern Arab intellectual history?[3]

Philosophy is by definition a mental human product, and in our case it is part and parcel of modern Arab intellectual history. As such, philosophy is the product of intellectuals who belong to different and

often competing intellectual, religious and political camps. In recent years, there has been a significant shift in Western studies of the Muslim world from a course of study emphasizing the role of the elites and the benefits of modernization to a "scholarly concern with the Islamic roots of culture and politics".[4] A parAlīel shift from liberal, nationalist and secularist philosophies to the Islamic roots of modern Arab philosophy is highly needed. This is an attempt by no means to advocate a reductionist approach in the study of the intellectual history of the modern Arab world but rather to stress the significant role "the Islamic attitude" still plays in shaping Arab philosophy. It is true that the historians of ideas of the modern Arab world have used a variety of methods in studying the complex structure and the salient features of Arab thought, culture and philosophy. But the majority who write on philosophy in the Arab world have followed a dismissive attitude vis-à-vis the Islamic roots of philosophical activity.

Most specificAlīy, the renaissance/decline, decadence/ renewal and stagnation/revival dichotomies have been used in order to discuss movement and growth in Arab intellectual history.[5] In delineating the main issues and themes of modern and contemporary Arab/Islamic thought, a serious scholar, besides taking note of the diverse data in the field, must consider the question of method or of "correct" interpretation. But the task of the methodological explication of the main themes of Islamic philosophy in the modern Arab world becomes quite difficult in view of the fact that methodological studies of modern Arab/Islamic though t are rare, and, in many instances, are only partiAlīy adequate.[6] Hamilton Gibb's observation of 1947 remains, more or less, true in the 1990s: "One looks in vain for any systematic analysis of new currents of thought in the Muslim world."[7] Therefore, one must learn to ask smaller as well as larger questions in order to provide an accurate interpretation of intellectual activity and its reflection of the needs, aspirations and goals of present Arab society. One of these questions is the historicity of this thought. Thought, including the most speculative, abstract and metaphysical, never arises in a vacuum but is organicAlīy connected to a set of conceptual, social and historical precedents.

Therefore, it is possible to consider philosophical thinking in the modern Arab world as a reflection of the maturity of thought, consciousness, logic and wisdom that the Arabs have achieved over the centuries. It is true that one has to grapple with the history of philosophy in order to grasp the philosophical issues and problems of the past; but there is no return to the past. It is historicAlīy unfeasible to go back to the days of al-Kindi or al-Fari hi or Ibn Sīnā in philosophy. The modern Arab probably need not be an al-Kindl or an

al-Fàràbl. Their issues belong to a historical and social formation that is different in nature and complexity from that of the present. Yet our learning from this past philosophy is essential, since philosophy, besides being particular and social, can also be universal and abstract.

Our postulate that philosophy is historical leads us to question the state of philosophy in the Arab world on the eve of the Western intervention. Scholars have agreed that both philosophical and theological thinking, far from thriving before the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, was in a state of stagnation and decline. Therefore, the first tentative conclusion we may draw is that the reclaiming and revival, if not the genesis, of critical and rational philosophy in the modern Arab world have been mainly due to the military and political catastrophe resulting from the violent encounter between the Arab world and Western colonialism.

Undoubtedly, the traditionalist Arab intelligentsia at the time were alerted to the enormous gaps existing between their Arabo-Islamic culture and the Western one. The answer given by some was not to seek refuge in the past achievements of the ancestors, but to study the Islamic heritage with a critical eye. The Lebanese philosopher Nassif NAṣṣār argues to that effect and contends that

In effect the renaissance of the Arab world has never been the resurrection of the medieval Arab world, just as it is not a simple consequence of contact with modern Western civilization. The renaissance of the Arab world signals the entry of the Arab world, after a long period of stagnation, into a new historical period … This historical phase is distinguished by a confrontation between two civilizations:

the Arabo-Islamic civilization of the Middle Ages and the modern Western one. The historian–sociologist should investigate this confrontation at all levels of the social system, economic, political and cultural.[8]

Therefore, philosophical renaissance is still a historical necessity today simply because "the renaissance of philosophy in modern Arab culture is a central problem that indicates the degree of conscience and independence attained by [that] culture".[9] It is true that most philosophical production in the Arab world is that of the history of philosophy and not philosophical thinking itself. But since

Philosophy has become a central cultural factor; it is necessary that philosophy should liberate itself from the control of the history of philosophy, and that it should ponder living historical issues in a philosophical spirit. In that sense, it seems to us that the basis of spiritual and philosophical renewal in Arab culture should not be the theory of knowledge so much as the theory of the historical being. This theory necessarily implies a theory of knowledge, but above all it implies a theory of socio-historical existence, as well as moral and political action.[10]

Any actual renaissance of philosophy in the modern Arab world, therefore, can succeed only if it is accompanied by a critical perspective. Though critical and philosophical thinking is much more developed in the West than in the contemporary Arab world, "The rights and the tasks of critical thinking for these two types of societies are nevertheless the same."[11] As we shAlī see later, critical thinking has marked the best-developed Islamic forms of philosophical reflection in the modern Arab world.

Beginnings

The gestation of modern Muslim philosophical activity must be understood against the backdrop of the Arab Nahdah (rebirth, renaissance)[12] of the nineteenth century. Nahdah is

a vast political and cultural movement that dominate [d] the period of 1850 to 1914. Originating in Syria and flowering in Egypt, the Nahda sought through translation and vulgarization to assimilate the great achievements of modern European civilization, while reviving the classical Arab culture that antedates the centuries of decadence and foreign domination.[13]

generally speaking, the Nahdah movement stood against the degeneration of Islam, which, according to Gibb, "stayed put – that is it remained fixed in the molds created for it by the scholars, jurists, doctors, and mystics of the formative centuries, and, if anything, decayed rather than progressed".[14]

The modern period of Islamic history, says Smith, "begins with decadence within, intrusion and menace from without; and the worldly glory that reputedly went with obedience to God's law [was] only a distant memory of a happier past".[15] At about this time "Western civilization was launching forth on the greatest upsurge of expansive energy and power vastly accumulated. With them the West was presently reshaping its own life and soon the life of all the world."[16] The Nahdah intelligentsia, therefore, reacted to Islamic decline and theorized on the options for renaissance, while not neglecting Western possibilities for such a renaissance.

One can easily argue that the Nahdah phenomenon is based on a complex epistemological structure, which has both Islamic and Western components. As such, Nahdah was translated by the Arab intellectual pioneers of the nineteenth century into a powerful historical and social movement, and has, consequently, revived a significant number of issues and debates revolving around the Islamic heritage and the challgences of the present; Islam and the question of Arab cultural identity; Islam and the West; the question of women; and the issue of freedom

of expression. According to Arkoun, the encounter between the Arab world and the West created new conditions to which Arab and Muslim thought responded by creating new expressions.[17] These expressions represented the new philosophical, socio-cultural, psychological and linguistic orientations of the modern Arab world. In order to understand the background of these new expressions, one must take into account the rise of Western modernity – its nature and contents – and the impact it had on modern Arab/Islamic thought.[18] "The historian of thought, " in Arkoun's words, "is bound to go deeper and analyze the relations between material and intellectual modernity."'[19]

Arkoun sets forth to explore the impact of modernity on Arab thought and philosophy. He maintains that the Arab world accepted Western modernity and its educational and cultural underpinnings only "slowly and reluctantly". One of the main consequences of the interaction between Arab and Western thought is a new philosophical thinking characterized by criticism, innovation and a futuristic orientation. Arkoun does not reflect much on the present conditions of Muslim philosophical thinking in the Arab world. He none the less

calls for a critique of Islamic reasoning as a means of reviving contemporary Arab thought.[20]

The Nahdah thinkers, most notably Tahtawl, [21] Afghani[22] and 'Abduh, [23] were confronted with the problem of how to interpret the vast Islamic tradition of Qur'an, Hadīth and philosophy in a socio-political and scientific environment dominated by the West. It is to a degree true that these thinkers "lived and acted in an Islamic community that was intellectuAlīy still relatively coherent and united", [24] but it is equAlīy true that the premodern notions of Islamic philosophy and religion were inadequate to meet the challgence perpetuated by an aggressive Western world view. The essential question posed by these thinkers was how Muslims can be authentic and modern at the same time. They saw the need for a total revitalization of Islam in the face of encroaching Western culture, since "the attack of the West on the Arab world, aside from its political effects, was also a direct attack against Islam as a religion".[25]

The Nahdah intellectuals attempted to salvage "Islamic Reason" from many centuries of slumber and decadence. They argued for the viability of Islamic reasoning in the modern age, since they believed that Islam was inherently rational. Arming themselves with what they considered to be authentic Islamic criteria for thinking and discourse, they sought to fight both internal Muslim decadence and external Western cultural and political encroachment.[26] Thus, historical continuity with the Islamic tradition was hailed as an answer to historical, cultural and religious rigidity and stagnation.

But, as a matter of fact, two different options presented themselves to and were pursued by the Nahdah thinkers: firstly, the Islamic model, which took its historical shape in the experience of the Prophet and his
companions, and whose theoretical foundations are derived from both the Qur'an and the Sunnah, [27] and, secondly, the "Western model", [28] which stressed the ideas of liberalism, rationalism and secularism.[29] Many influential Nahdah thinkers considered the latter model as the cultural expression of Westernization in Muslim lands.[30]

It should be noted, however, that both decadence and colonization brought about a conflict-rid den and often explosive sit uat ion in the second phase of the Nahdah which began in the early twentieth century. TheoreticAlīy speaking, the problem of the Nahdah can be viewed in terms of three major interrelated components of discourse: doctrinal discourse; philosophical discourse and historical/political discourse.

To begin with, doctrinal discourse concerns the purification of the fundamentals of religion. As Laoust aptly puts it: "No doctrinal reform is possible without return to an original source."[31] Reform or isldh is the return to the just form of religion, and the affirmation of transcendent truth in a modern setting. This reformist programme has dominated Arab intellectual activity up to the present time. It revolves around the affirmation of "a traditionalist method and language" in a modern setting. Therefore, contemporary Muslim philosophers and intellectuals find themselves face to face with a set of social and historical questions that await a theological answer. It is clear that many Muslim intellectuals remain faithful to their visions of past Muslim history – a

vision based on the significant role revelation plays in the process of history. But as a result of the rise of political secularization in the Arab world in the wake of Western colonization, "the reign of the faqihs [jurists and theologians] was substituted, for better or worse, by that of the (technical) experts and the leaders of the masses. This new situation necessitated a new mental attitude and new criteria."[32]

The objective of philosophical discourse, as it appears in the early writings of the noted Egyptian philosopher, Shaykh Mustafa Abd al- Raziq, [33] is to show the authenticity of traditional Islamic philosophical discourse, and its relevance to the modern needs of Muslim societies.

The historical/political discourse of the Nahdah describes the religion- state relationship. This relationship has undergone many transformations since the nineteenth century. In the first phase of the Nahdah Islam assumed a nationalistic meaning, the purpose of which was to build a strong state able to compete with the West. In the second phase, Islam was expressed by Afghani, Abduh and Rida in pan-Islamic terms. The goal was to reinstitute the Muslim ummah (community of believers) in the image of the Ottoman Empire. Furthermore, "Islamic fundamentalism"[34] rose in the form of the Muslim Brotherhood movement. Hasan al-Banna, the founder, opted to create an Islamic state. His programme attempted to assert the sacred law in all walks of life. Politics, as a result, dominated philosophy and theology. A rupture between the 'ulama
(Muslim scholars and theologians), as the custodians and defenders of the Classical Sunni tradition, and the Ikhwan, as a mass-based movement, was inevitable. The Ikhwan looked on the 'ulama' with great suspicion. In the Ikhwan's view, the

'ulama were upholders of the same status quo that the Ikhwan were attempting to abolish. It is not clear, however, whether the Ikhwan's thought should be considered philosophicAlīy.

To conclude, any intellectual reflection on the state of the Nahdah in modern Arab/Islamic thought must take into account the present meaning of tradition, the problematic of the state–religion relationship, and the current situation of Islamic culture. By the same token, any economic, political and social analysis of the current state of affairs will be methodologicAlīy deficient if a proper treatment of Islam and Islamic culture is lacking.

MuṢṬafĀ Abd AL-RĀziq and his School

In the above discussion of the philosophical dimension of Nahdah it was suggested that Mustafa Abd al-Raziq (d. 1947) played a major role in focusing the attention of Arab thinkers on the importance of philosophy as a medium of intellectual discourse. Although he is considered a reviver of traditional Islamic philosophy, the rediscovery of philosophy in the Arab world in general, and in Egypt in particular, has been only superficiAlīy discussed by scholars. There remains little or no analysis of the role Islamic philosophy plays in modern Arab intellectual life, and of the Azhar's (to which Abd al-Raziq belonged) contributions to it.

In his major work, Tamhid li-tarikh al-falsafat al-isldmiyyah ("Prolegomena to the History of Islamic Philosophy"), Abd

al-Raziq proposes the following: firstly, the Qur'an, as the sacred book for Muslims, encourages free rational speculation (nazar 'aqli hurt)', secondly, a litera- list interpretation of the Qur'an is inadequate to portray its rationalistic depth and attitude; thirdly, Islamic rationalism, which is intrinsic to the Islamic revelation, should not be confused with the Greek logic and philosophy that Muslim thinkers adopted and modified, and, fourthly, the Arab race is as capable of philosophy and comprehensive thought as any other people.[35] In this, Abd al-Raziq goes against the grain of nineteenth-century Orientalist thought, one of whose best representatives, Ernst Renan, argued that

We can not demand philosophical insights from the Semitic race. It is only by a strange coincidence of fate that this race instilled a fine character of power in its religious creations, [for] it never produced any philosophical treatise of its own. Semitic philosophy is a cheap borrowing and imitation of Greek philosophy. This should be, in fact, said about Medieval philosophy in general.[36]

Having this thesis in mind, 'Abd al-Raziq attempts to prove the originality and authenticity of Islamic philosophy by elaborating on the inner theoretical dynamics of Islamic culture and by stressing the strong bond between philosophy on the one hand, and Sufism, kaldm, jurisprudence and the Shari'ah on the other.[37] His final aim, however, is to prove the compatibility of traditional Islamic philosophy with the rationalism of modern thought.

Abd al-Raziq defines philosophy both as the love of wisdom and as a rational method of discourse with which one can

comprehend the world and deduce laws by which to govern human society. Furthermore, he postulates that the genesis of Islamic philosophy is to be found in the Qur'an since it encourages rational research (bahth nazart). Fie also contends that the Qur'an consists of doctrine and SharVah. He defines Shari'ah as a set of rules inspired by doctrine and designed to meet the changing demands of life. In this sense, philosophy is the rational free discussion of the principles of jurisprudence that have a practical aim – to define human behaviour vis-à-vis the socio-economic, political and cultural milieu. 'Abd al-Ràziq maintains that after the death of the Prophet, Muslims developed a philosophical system with a double aim in mind: to reflect philosophicAlīy on the emerging questions and problems in the nascent Islamic empire, and to defend the doctrines of Islam, especially the doctrine of tawhid (the oneness of God), against competing non- Islamic philosophies and theologies.[38] This formAlīy established the science of kaldm in the formative phase of Islam.

'Abd al-Ràziq supports the idea that early Islamic civilization was distinguished by a legal and cultural uniqueness, which mainly stemmed from the historical specificity of Islam then. And, therefore, philosophy took on a legal function and permeated "the science of the principles of jurisprudence" [film usui al-fiqh). Thus reasoning about legislation was the cornerstone of all Islamic philosophical and rational investigation: "Any scholar of the history of Islamic philosophy must first investigate ijlihtid [exercise of reason] from its naive inception as an individual opinion until it became a scientific method of research possessing unique principles and foundations."[39] The different schools offiqh arising during the formative phase of Islam were dependent

on Him usili al-fiqh, and, consequently, a large body of rationalist and legalist literature began to appear in Islam.

The formal wedding in early Islam between philosophy and "the science of the principles of jurisprudence" led to the creation of a novel method of analysis, unknown to the Arabs of the Jdhiliyyah (the pre-Islamic period). Ray (individual opinion), qiyds (analogy) and ijtihad
(exercise of reason) were the blueprint of this method. A student of Abd al-Raziq, the Egyptian philosopher El-Ehwany maintains that Abd al- Raziq's method stresses the difference between Islamic jurisprudence, as developed by Shafi'i, and Aristotelian logic, adopted by the Muslim philosophers of the formative phase, "The principles of certainty lie in the sayings of God as stated in the Qur'an. Truth is the conformity of action to these statements, or the statements of the Prophet in his Tradition, or the accord of the community at some time."[40]

Abd al-Raziq argues that the Prophet used ray to create laws that were not found in the Qur'an. Highlighting the role of reasoning in the Prophet's time, Abd al-Raziq goes against the contention of Joseph Schacht that the Prophet had no reason to alter the customary laws prevailing in Arabia. Though prophetic legislation was brought to an end by the death of the Prophet, Abd al-Raziq argues that Muslims had to devise new rules – mainly through consensus – that reflected the early Islamic rational activity.

It should be pointed out that Abd al-Raziq was very loyal to the religious tradition of al-Shafi'T, as he was to the Islamic rationalism of Muḥammad Abduh. One wonders why Abd al-Raziq focused on al- Shafi'l's legal philosophy, and not on

that of Ibn Malik, Abu Hanlfah or Ibn Hanbal, the three other founders of jurisprudence. One possible answer would be that Abd al-Raziq intended to revive the legal tradition of al-Shafi'l, who grew up in Egypt, as a means of dealing with the contemporary problems of Egypt. Taha Husayn corroborates this view by saying that Abd al-Raziq fell under the. influence of al-Shafi'1, firstly because "he belonged to the same legal school as did al-Shafi'i and considered loyalty to him a debt ", [41] and, secondly al-Shafi'T's Risalah "opened up new scientific horizons that had been closed down to many a Muslim scholar".[42] Also, in the eyes of Abd al-Raziq, al-Shafi'T, in addition to discussing the principles of jurisprudence philosophicAlīy, devoted a great deal of time to analysing the dogmas of early Islam.

Shafi'1 divides the Islamic religious sciences into "the science of the Qur'an" ('ilm al-kitdb), and "the science of the Sunnah" ('ilm al-sunnah). These two gave birth to what Abd al-Raziq calls the science of the "fundamental principles of religion and law" ('ilm al-usul i.e., usul al-Dīn, and usul al-fiqh), and the derivative science of the fundamental principles ('ilm al-furu).[43]

To Abd al-Raziq, the Qur'an is not solely a book of ethics and morals. It is the basis of all legal, theological and philosophical activity. Primacy goes to faith and reason combined. The Qur'an is a baydn (perspicuous declaration) to the people that prescribes "the rules of metaphysics, nature, humanity, ethics and pragmatism".[44] To Abd al-Raziq, the Qur'anic theory of humanity suggests that people are responsible for their actions because they have minds of their own.

Some Muslim theologians, such as Ibn Taymiyyah, discouraged kaldm for its supposedly heretical nature. 'Abd al-Raziq, on the other hand, following in the footsteps of al-Ghazzali and Ibn Khaldun, maintains that kaldm provides a rational defence of the main tenets of Islam. Although the Prophet of Islam discouraged arguments that dealt with metaphysics (fearing unnecessary theological arguments and divisions), Abd al-Raziq maintains that the Qur'an encourages Muslims to comprehend the principles of their religion rationAlīy.

Criticism has been levelled against 'Abd al-Raziq's "philosophical project" by a number of contemporary Arab thinkers. The Lebanese historian of philosophy Majid FakhrT thinks that Abd al-Raziq was wrong in the choice of his title (Prolegomena to the History of Islamic Philosophy) since his discussion does not centre on the type of philosophy traditionally understood. FakhrT argues that, far from being a theoretical introduction or an endeavour to revive philosophy, this is an exclusively historical account of the development of fiqh and Islamic kaldm)[45] On the other hand, the Moroccan philosopher Jabiri claims that Abd al-Raziq fails to show the originality of the Greek-oriented Islamic philosophy since he limits himself to kaldm and fiqh.[46] For his part, the Lebanese Marxist philosopher Husayn Muruwwah argues that Abd al-Raziq's equation of philosophy and religion is a compromising attitude which reflects "the ideological bourgeois attitude, which dominates the activities of other [bourgeois Arab writers'] mental attitudes towards various problems of the modern age".[47]

As mentioned above, Abd al-Raziq's fundamental contribution to modern Arab and Islamic thought is his

emphasis upon rationalism, and the inseparable link he posits between rationalism and revelation in Islam. However, one could question whether Abd al-Raziq has contributed in any serious way to the resurgence of Arab/Islamic thought and philosophy. We can perhaps answer this question by comparing Abd al-Raziq with his teacher, Muḥammad 'Abduh. The latter tried to liberate Muslim thought and practices from the shackles of blind imitation by giving reason the upper hand over revelation in solving controversial issues. Abd al-Raziq, on the other hand, attempted to strike a balance between reason and revelation. To him, pure Islamic thought is to be found only in the Qur'an. Although, generally speaking, both Abduh and Abd al-Raziq share the same mission – to recreate the early context of thought in a modern setting – their audience is not the same. 'Abduh's philosophical and educational mission was more intricate and dangerous than that of 'Abd al-Raziq. Abduh did not write for the theologians and the intellectual elite alone; he aimed at correcting those popular beliefs he considered un-Islamic. Another major difference between Abd al-Raziq and Abduh lies in their respective attitudes towards Sufism. Abduh's negative appraisal of Sufism and its association with Islam's political and cultural decline
were not accepted by 'Abd al-Raziq, who perceived that Sufism had led Muslims to the highest ethical achievements.

Regardless of these differences, both Abduh and Abd al-Raziq were in agreement on a number of points. Amin, for instance, maintains that

Shaikh' Mustafa Abdel-Razek, who was the closest disciple of Muḥammad Abduh, thought of putting into practice the principles of his master, who wanted to reconcile Islam with

Western civilization. Also Shaikh Abdel-Razek strove resolutely to rejuvenate the old Islamic university which contained more than thirty thousand students coming from all the corners of the earth.[48]

Amin stresses that ethics was promoted at the expense of rationalism in Abd al-Raziq's philosophy. He contends that

The message of Mustafa Abdel-Razek is therefore a message of moral reform: it cultivates the supreme art, that which forms the soul. Shaikh Abdel-Razek summarizes his philosophy in the words of his master Muḥammad Abduh: love in the human world resembles universal attraction in the universe; it maintains society and preserves it from ruin.[49]

In conclusion, it is worth mentioning that no one has done more than Abd al-Raziq to recapture the legal philosophy of al-Shafi'l and reinterpret it in a modern setting. Abd al-Raziq's preoccupation with "Islamic rationalism" reflected his concern about the low regard the process of rationalism is accorded in modern Muslim societies.

The Philosophical Legacy of MustafĀ Abd Al-RĀziq

The growth and spread of Abd al-Raziq's Islamic-oriented philosophy must be understood in the context of other trends of philosophical thinking which have been current, especially in Egypt, since the early 1930s. Because of space limitations,

I will confine myself to a brief description of the following schools of philosophy.

Ibrāhīm Madkur's Greek-oriented philosophy.[50] In his early philosophical work, Madkur discusses the impact Greek philosophy and especially Aristotelian logic had on Muslim philosophers and jurists.

'Uthman Amin's "internalist"(juwaniyyah)philosophy.[51] Amin believes that Islamic spirituality can gain a strong presence in the modern Arab world as a theoretical system as well as a way of life. He agrees with Mustafa Abd al-Raziq that Islamic mysticism is an integral part of Islamic philosophy, and that it is the only power capable of transforming the modern Arab individual.

'Ah Sami al-Nashshdr's Ash'arite philosophy. Al-Nashshar follows in the footsteps of 'Abd al-Raziq, and argues that kaldm in general, and Ash'arite (Sunni conservative) kaldm in particular, developed a unique brand of Islamic philosophical thinking.[52]

'Abd al-Rahmdn Baddwi's existential philosophy, [53] In al-Zamdn al- tvujudi (Cairo, 1957), Badawl attempts to apply modern European existential philosophy to Arab society. Badawl does not believe that Arabs and Muslims possess a genuine philosophical spirit. He contends that "philosophy is the negation of the primal nature of the Muslim soul".[54]

Zaki Najib Maḥmūd's positivist and empirical philosophy. Maḥmūd's early philosophical works[55] reflected his concern with a positivist and pragmatic philosophy in the mode of William James. His book The Myth of Metaphysics calls

attention to what Maḥmūd perceived as the needs of Third World societies, especially industrialization and modernization in the image of industrial Western societies. Maḥmūd's approach was not without its detractors. A number of influential Arab–Muslim philosophers criticized positivism vehemently, and argued that its main purpose is to destroy Islamic metaphysics. The Iraqi philosopher 'Alīamah Muḥammad Baqir al-Sadr, for instance, contends that positivist materialism launched a bitter attack against philosophy and its metaphysical subjects. Ele also argues that "positivism has borrowed a metaphysical notion to complete the doctrinal structure it had established for the purpose of destroying [MJetaphysics".[56]

Aware of its philosophical limitations and non-viability in the modern Arab world, Maḥmūd modified his positivistic philosophical focus by criticAlīy examining the Arabo-Islamic heritage as a means of understanding today's malaise. One can notice a clear transition in Maḥmūd's thought in the early 1970s to what might be termed "philosophical liberalism". This is evident from Tajdid al-fikr al-'arabi ("Renewal of Arab Thought"), where Maḥmūd turns to the Arabo-Islamic heritage in order to understand the reasons behind the present backwardness of the Arab world. He argues, firstly, that there is a perceived lack of individual and social freedom in the Arab World, and, secondly, that modern Arab thought is still dominated by the epistemological and intellectual frameworks of the past. The challgence facing the modern Arab world is, therefore, to go beyond an anachronistic type of knowledge that is based on "speech and rhetoric to a new type based on machine and science".[57]

Epistemology and Philosophy

In an illuminating piece on the difference between theology and philosophy, Paul Tillich argues that

epistemology, the "knowledge" of knowing, is a part of ontology, the knowledge of being, for knowing is an event within the totality of events. Every epistemological assertion is implicitly ontological. Therefore, it is more adequate to begin an analysis of existence with the question of being rather than with the problem of knowledge.[58]

Muḥammad Abid a I-Jab in does not take Tillich's advice, and prefers, instead, to interpret the present problems of Arab and Muslim existence by analysing the cognitive components that have gone into making "the Muslim mind" since the inception of Islam.[59]

What are the benefits of an epistemological critique of the Arab mind – both classical and modern?

Jabiri argues that a thorough deconstruction and critique of "the structure of the Arab mind" is a necessary step towards building a viable Arab future. In al-Khitab al-'arabi al-mudsir ("Contemporary Arab Discourse"), he maintains that the Arab Nahdah of the nineteenth century did not result in a major epistemological and philosophical breakthrough because of the failure of its representatives to critique the Arab mind itself. Jabiri upholds the Orientalist position that there was a

deep decline in the Arab world on the eve of the European intervention.[60]

Jabiri considers the question of decline (inlpitdt) to be one of the main problematics of modern Arab thought and philosophy. He declares that no intellectual trend has been immune from discussing the reasons and nature of this situation. He argues that Muslim thinkers, especially "revivalist" Muslim thinkers, have failed to present a viable alternative to the problem of decline.[61] He further argues that both "the Islamic tendency" and "the liberal Westernized tendency" have not succeeded in diagnosing the intellectual malaise of the Arab world: the former tendency locates the solution in the Islamic past, in the Golden Age, whereas the latter locates it in the European Renaissance, which was the antecedent of European colonialism. In other words, the liberal tendency, according to Jabiri, cannot seek Western philosophical answers to questions and issues arising in the context of the modern Arab world. finally, Jabiri concludes that the Nahdah discourse in modern Arab thought – be it Islamic, liberal, nationalist or Marxist – is a compromising and selfcontradictory one, mainly because it offers ready-made solutions and theses.

Jabiri, like any modern Arab philosopher, is preoccupied with the correct method of investigating and interpreting the intellectual achievements of the Arab world in the last century or so. He contends that the various components that make up the Nahdah discourse, especially the political, Arab nationalist, liberal and Islamic philosophical ones, have paid lip service to the real and fundamental issues and questions facing

the Arab world. As a result, "The Arab mind' has failed to build up a coherent discourse, which could deal with any of the numerous issues and questions debated in the past one hundred years."[62] Jābirï reaches the grim conclusion that the conceptualizations of the Nahdah discourse were based on prefabricated models that do not necessarily reflect the current social and cultural conditions.

Jābirï inquires, along Foucauldian lines, [63] about the possible relationship between knowledge and power in modern Arab societies. Knowledge is cognition and power is ideology. To understand the deep and complex relationship between cognition and ideology in the modern Arab world, Jabirl begins by analysing the constitutive epistemological principles of what he calls the "Arab mind".[64]

What is the relationship between the cognitive and the ideological? In Takwïn al-'aql al-'arabi ("Formation of the Arab Mind"), Jābirï attempts to show that the structure of the Arab mind is different, for instance, from that of the French or Chinese mind. Following in the footsteps of the French epistemologist Lalande, Jabirl draws a distinction between "la raison constituante" and "la raison constituée".[65] The former is a mental activity that differentiates between principles and consequences, and the latter is defined as the epistemological principles of mind that resist any major change.

Jabirl claims that the Arab mind is "une raison constituée'. That is to say, it "is a constituted reason: it is the summation of all those principles and rules offered by Arab culture to its adherents as a means of gaining knowledge. In other words, a culture imposes these rules and principles as an epistemological system."[66] Elaborating on the preceding

thesis, Jabirl argues that "the Arab mind", which has been formed since the Jdhiliyyah, has taken its epistemological shape and depth in the formative phase of Islam, and has thus resisted any later historical and political transformations, especially in the modern period. Jabirl goes on to add that the history of Arab thought is based on three broad epistemological structures: Jdhiliyyah epistemology; Islamic epistemology; and Nahdah epistemology. In this classification, Jabirl goes against the grain of many a Muslim thinker who holds firmly to the idea that the Islamic system of knowledge abolished the Jdhilt one[67] and that both Islam and Jdhiliyyah are mutuAlīy exclusive. Jabirl is closer to the ideas of Goldziher and Izutsu, who maintain that Islam, far from abolishing Jdhiliyyah thinking, modified its epistemology and directed its world view in an Islamic way. It is interesting to note that, in his analysis of the history of Arab thought, Jābirï subscribes to the notions that explain the evolution of Arab thought linearly and monolithicAlīy. And, in that sense, he views the Nahdah problematic as an historical event that can only be understood against the backdrop of pre-Islamic, Islamic and Western epistemologies and world views.

Though there have been some "epistemic ruptures" in the long history of Arab thought, this thought has to be understood as an archeology of knowledge rather than an epistemic mutation. Therefore, there has always been, Jabiri concludes, a strong connection between episte- mology and ideology, or tradition and ideology. The Islamic heritage serves several social and political purposes in the modern Arab world. Its utility has been the main source of its strength and longevity.[68]

Jabiri's analysis neglects to mention or give value to the non-literate Arab mind, to folk culture and practices in the Arab world. Whereas the literate Arab mind was formed in the era of tadivin (recording), the same does not apply to folk culture, which is a dominant fact in the Arab world today. Therefore, when we document the Nahdah epoch, we should not neglect the conditions of folk cultures and their eminent contributions to revival.

Jabiri explains that one of the most important steps taken by the literate Arab mind was to build foundations for the Arabic language. Consequently, "After mummification, the Arabic language was frozen … But social life can neither be mummified nor frozen."[69] This is the main crisis facing the Arab intelligentsia today since they can write a language that contains elaborate mechanics and linguistic distinctions, thus forcing them to use concepts and terminologies created by their forefathers. Today's Arabic is not equipped with proper linguistic tools to reflect on the colossal historical changes affecting the modern Arab world. Here Jabiri reiterates AbdAllāh Laroui's thesis on the "anachronism" of the Arabic language: "The salafi [traditionalist] imagines that his thoughts are free. He is mistaken: in reality, he is not using language to think within the framework of tradition; rather, it is tradition that lives again through language and is 'reflected' in him."[70] Arabic, as a medium of communication, is ahistorical and unimaginative. Therefore, the first step towards true emancipation comes in the form of freeing the Arabic language from the "epistemological constraints and shackles" of the Grand Ancestors. In turn, this would liberate the Arab intelligentsia from the burden of double thinking. The dichotomy currently present between the traditional and

the modern would disappear by the time a new episte- mology is created.

Jabiri, following in the footsteps of Schachr [71] and Makdisi, [72] maintains that Islamic civilization is that of fiqh (jurisprudence). Fiqh was established during the tadwln movement and doubly supported by the 'ulama and the state. The state and its supporters prevented the recording of what they perceived as intransigent material, and therefore, according to Jabiri, the thinkable and unthinkable had to coexist in the Muslim world.[73] Jabiri argues that liberating modern Arab thought from both the language and fiqh of the past would restore intellectual rigour and freedom.[74]

Towards an Islamic Personalism?

Muḥammad Azīz Lahbabi's [al -Hababl] philosophy can be summed up as a series of epistemological transitions from personalism to realism and to futurism.[75] Lahbabi's thought is a catalyst of two historical moments, phases, exigencies and conditions. On the one hand, he responds to the challgences of Westernization by accepting a major component of its philosophical expression – personalism.[76] On the other, he is overwhelmed by the concerns of the Muslim world as part of the Third World, and takes an aggressive stand against the West.[77]

Lahbabi's ontology, especially in his early philosophical work, is defined as a web of interaction between man, self

and world. Man's awareness of this interaction is what gives him a sense of freedom and destiny. In his view as well as in the view of others who have written on the subject, "a person … is a complex unity of consciousness, which identifies itself with its past self in memory, determines itself by its freedom, is purposive and value-seeking, private yet communicating, and potentiAlīy rational".[78] To Lahbabi, freedom presupposes responsibility, and responsibility presupposes destiny.[79] Freedom is the freedom of the function or will of man. And here he agrees with Hegel's understanding of the history of the world as "the progress of the consciousness of freedom".[80] Lahbabi's Hegelianism, which is similar to that of the early Marx, stresses the idea that living human beings make their history, and that individuals per se are free to function because they possess a complete rational self. Freedom is experienced as deliberation, decision and responsibility. These three elements of freedom constitute man's destiny. The freedom/destiny polarity in Lahbabi's thought is corroborated by the individualization and participation polarity. Lahbabi argues that "the healthy personality is the one which is totAlīy integrated in social life".[81] Fie further maintains that individuals are distinguished by telos, the inner aim, which is the basis of his process of actualization. Participation is essential for the individual, and not accidental. This participation guarantees the relational aspect of human life: humans are related to God and to other beings.

Lahbabi's arguments centre on propositions and concepts that make up "the mental space" of the Western world. He seems here to be more concerned with the crisis of orientation and spiritual malaise in Western societies than he is with the problems of colonization and decolonization. Therefore, in

his discussion of being[82] [être), Lahbabi is concerned with Western ontology, and its constituent elements.

The term "being" means the whole of human reality: the structure, the meaning and the aim of existence. Lahbabi says that Hegel was the first Western philosopher to give that term "being" a whole philosophical meaning: "finally, with Hegel, the concept of being is understood for
the first time as a dynamic and logical movement of concepts. The human being is thought, and thought cannot be reduced to 'I think.' It [thought] is (to be found) in the we (think)."[83] Lahbabi is, therefore, immersed in the Hegelian principle of dialectics and vitality. This vitality reflects the inseparable relationship between being and thought, and being and existential freedom. Therefore, one's dynamic interaction with reality is a complex process that leads to continuous self-growth and self-conscious- ness. One is distinguished from animals by consciousness. In addition to dynamics and form, one is distinguished by vitality and intentionality. Intentionality presupposes an inner aim (telos), and telos is the source of social dynamics and growth. Intentionality is defined as a human capacity to relate to meaningful structures, to live in universals, to grasp and shape reality. In other words, humans are distinguished by their ability to create technical as well as conceptual tools that relate them to reality in its inclusive sense.

Lahbabi took major strides to apply his personalistic ideas to cultures and civilizations in general. In 1961, he wrote a book on how a national culture, especially the national culture of North Africa, can attain universal principles of action, humanism and dynamism.[84] He contends that a national culture is defined as "a totality of spiritual, intellectual, and

material values and forms that are conceived by a nation in the process of its evolution".[85] A national culture can achieve total integration with the world civilization only if its creative energies are translated experien- tiAlīy and existentiAlīy. In sum, political independence should lead to the solidification of the national culture, and the vitality of national culture is sought in its contributions to world civilization.

Lahbabi argues throughout his various philosophical works for the revival of the critical spirit in modern Arab and Islamic thought. From this angle, he criticizes the apparent lack of critical philosophical expressions in modern Islamic culture,

It is unfortunate for the Islamic culture that ijtihād has never been respected especially by the fuqaha, who have instAlīed themselves as the protectors of tashri' [legislation], and struggled in favour of taqlld [blind obedience to the text]. In other words, they have refused any effort toward personal interpretation or any adaptation of the text to reality. Taqlïd is the triumph of the sheep-like spirit. The formalistic and literal spirit has triumphed by neutralizing any spirit of initiative or criticism.[86]

Lahbabi maintains that Sufism has modified the authentic spirit of Islam and has invaded its entire structure. He notes that with Sufism Muslims began to succumb to the various aspects of fatalism (tawakkul), dependence, the belief in the precariousness of time, the non-reality of the world and, consequently, the renunciation of this world.[87] Lahbabi considers that the Sufi's retreat from the world has gone in an opposite direction to all cultural and social progress, as well as to the directions of the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Sufism,

according to him, occupies only a marginal position in respect to the official religious sciences in Islam: "Because the origin of mysticism is not Islamic, almost all the practices of the Sufis are not Islamic. That is why in the 8th century [AH], the great Muslim thinker Ibn Taymiyyah defined the mysticism of Sufism as an ensemble of wasawis [hallucinations]."[88] Lahbabi's critique of Sufism as an irrational and, implicitly, an irrelevant religious movement appears very clearly in his early writings as a young man enchanted with the scientific and rational contributions of Western civilization. Therefore, in his analysis of Sufism, he argues that it has not been able to produce an adequate and precise language of discourse because its fountainhead is the irrational and unknown.

In addition to the above postulates, Lahbabi proposes that even the modern salafiyyah of the Arab world of Jamal al-Dīn al-Afghani and Muḥammad Abduh has failed to meet the demands of the modern age:

The Salafiyyah can be viewed from two different perspectives: In the first place, it is a movement of purification, of the return to the origins as a means of rejecting all the superstition and myths that have accumulated over the centuries in Islam. In the second place, it is a struggle for the opening of the door of ijtihad.

Considering this situation – opening the door of ijtihad – the Salafiyyah has started to put new interpretations in order to actualize Islam and create an atmosphere of adaptation in the wake of the encounter with the West.[89]

Nevertheless, he goes on to argue that

we should not blind ourselves to the difficulties and inadequacies facing the Salafiyyah. Its promoters, it seems, of the late nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, did not possess, as was necessary, any consciousness of the dynamism of industrial societies, nor did they understand the leading role played by bankers, and technicians in contemporary society.[90]

The modern Salafiyyah has thought of religious problems independently ol the new context of industrialization – a context of development that created new psychological and social problems, especially amongst the working classes.

In conclusion, Lahbabi applies what he has learned from the philosophies of personalism and existentialism to the modern Muslim world. A transition is made in his thought from speculative thinking to experiential reality. The connection between thought and being has to be translated as dynamism, vitality, responsibility and destiny. Lahbabi is concerned in the current stage of his life with the destiny of Arabs and Muslims. His appraisal of contemporary Muslim culture is based on premisses of rationalization, industrialization, and the creation of a new and efficient intelligentsia. Modern Muslims, in order to survive, have to reappropriate modern culture and its achievements.

Islamic Hegelianism?

In his two perceptive studies, La Personnalité et le devenir arabo-islamique and Europe and Islam: Cultures and Modernity, the Tūnīsian philosopher Hichem Djait probes

into the concerns of what he calls the Arabo-Islamic peronality – its present, its future and its relationship with the West. Djait represents a new brand of Francophone authors and philosophers who are totAlīy immersed in the issues and questions that underlie the Muslim world, and he brings a novel brand of European philosophical insights, especially Hegelian and Existentialist, into his analysis.[91]

As a serious student of cultures, Djait delves into the Islamic heritage as a means of finding answers to his present concerns. He nevertheless turns Islamic religious belief and the inherited Arabo-Islamic culture "into a subject of critical assessment".[92] He argues that Islam, in its Classical age and vigour, was characterized by a high sense of religious and cultural homogeneity and historical consciousness. This was obvious in the writings of the 'ulama and thinkers who ventured to discover the realm of the unknown in the human and social sciences. The elite culture of Islam, Djait tells us, "pursued all the forms of learning, with fierce vigour: history, geography, law, scholastic theology, philosophy, medicine, mathematics. But in the meantime, it was seized and shaken by an underlying force: a fascination with God."[93] However, the obsession with the Divine did not limit itself to the realm of history or that of the secular, in general. It took on a strong scriptural fascination as well.

The Sacred Text (i.e., the Qur'an) created a long interpretative tradition, which forms the second major tradition in Islam today after the Qur an itself.[94] Furthermore, the Sacred Text became the embodiment of the Islamic search for the ideal. Thus a total picture of the majesty that was Islam emerges before our eyes: we are talking about an undeniably theological unity that elevated human culture to

the level of the sacred. But the historical continuity of this culture was broken, well before the Western intrusion into Muslim lands.

Therefore, Djait enquires about the theological and cultural homogeneity of the modern Muslim world, and reaches the conclusion that a new terminology, in the form of dialectical epistemology, must be used in order to shed light on the modern situation. Djait sees a historical break-up in modern Islam, and argues for the use of the bipolar concept of historical continuity and discontinui ty as a yardstick against which the nature and achievement of the Arab Nahdah are judged. This is a better measure than "the rather hollow dyads of apogee/decline, decadence/ renaissance, Arab/ non-Arab, orthodoxy/heterodoxy, not to mention the recent dialectic between tradition and modernity".[95] The multipolar cultural character of modern Islam emerging in the wake of its political and historical break-up destroyed its "living network of human and cultural exchanges, [thus] condemning each region to a solitary existence or to an exclusive dialogue with the past". '[96]

To Djait's mind, Islam started to decline when its cultural and political homogeneity was broken down, and that is when Muslims were awakened to a violent encounter with Europe.[97] In a sense, decline means the break-up of the homogeneity that Classical Islam attained. It further means the accentuation of tension between the specific or particular and the universal, between the real and the ideal in Islam. Also, decline means the inability of the 'ulama, as the leading intellectual class in Islamic societies, to produce relevant theological knowledge that could be used to offset the rising tide of secular knowledge. Thus we are talking about a

fundamental inner mutation in the modern setting of Islam – its cultural and social milieu. This mutation is further accentuated by the political disintegration of modern Islam and by industrial and military weakness. Thus the question arises, can any Islamic movement of thought in the Arab world today salvage the Classical homogeneity of Islam after its historical break-up?

Djait Alīudes to the lack of philosophical knowledge in modern Islamic resurgence as a popular religious movement, and says that the Islamic movements of today are in an undeniably pitiful and unenviable position. On the one hand, the Islamic resurgence benefited greatly at the mass level from the failure of liberalism, Arab nationalism, Arab socialism and state capitalism; on the other, it has not been able to forge a coherent Alīiance between knowledge and action, philosophy and movement. On the contrary, Islamic resurgence has had to face an unholy Alīiance between secular knowledge and power.

The colonial shock has produced in modern Arab society a dialectical situation. The contradiction between the colonizer and the colonized, "produced the bourgeoisie, the petty bourgeoisie and an oppositional intelligentsia".[98] In other words, this encounter has produced a new constellation of power relations that did not exist in the precolonial epoch. One of these changes is that

the power holder (politician) and the intellectual have become unified in their thinking, especially in the priority they accord praxis over theory, and in the distance they have instituted between reality and truth, or between the true and what is said.

But, because of his function, the politician, nevertheless, stays as the man of reality, and the intellectual, because of his vocation, stays as the man of truth." [99]

He goes on to argue that

The major drama of the Arab intellectual rests not only in his witnessing the devaluation that is behind his reason for existence and pride – knowledge and culture – but in being prevented from accomplishing his civilized mission, which is criticism and free speculative thinking. It is even strange to note that the active segment of the Arab intelligentsia has invested its debating power in the notion of social justice, thus neglecting a concept similar in beauty and truth, which is liberty. [100]

From his side, the Egyptian philosopher Flasan Flanafl, by using some Hegelian and early Marxist categories of analysis, completes Djait's analysis of "theological and cultural homogeneity" by attacking the theologians of Islam. He contends that the traditional function of the 'ulama should be to produce theological works that explain the exigencies and complexities of the modern world. In other words, theology, as is clear in the Qur'an, has never stood aloof from the social and other problems facing the Muslim individual. It is religious simplification of the complexity of the mundane. But what we see instead is that the theologian "separates his theology from contemporary life, and being the functionary of the state, the theologian or scholar of theology is not a free and engaged thinker". [101] Flanafl suggests that a transition is needed from theology to anthroplogy – anthropology being in a general sense the science of humans and their social conditions. Flanafl defines theology as "a pure cultural

formation, in a certain epoch, produced as the result of the encounter between the revealed text and a new vocabulary presented by other cultures".[102] He prefers anthropology, in a general human sense, to theology for the following reasons: theology is not a science, and as such it lacks a method. Further, it was construed in the form of a defence – of defending Islam rationAlīy against other philosophies and theologies. The premises and results of theology do not satisfy the rational mind, and they revolve around essence, characteristics, etc. that do not convey a sense of urgency in our contemporary intellectual and cultural life. Lastly, the vocabulary of theology is restrictive and not shared by the entire religious world. Here he refers to the difference between monotheism and other religions, such as Hinduism and Buddhism, that possess a different terminology. For all these reasons, Hanafi recommends that theology should be transformed into anthropology since the latter is a human science – the main axis is humanity. He defines this science as "an engaged science, leadership-oriented and militant, in other words, an

ideology"[103]. The transition from theology to anthropology to ideology is necessary in Hanafi's eyes in order to transform human actions. And this is the weakness of the reform movements in Islam since they did not assume this role. To a large extent, "they remained theocentric". He goes on to argue that

The transformation of theology into anthropology should be integrated into a larger enterprise: the reconstruction of traditional Islamic sciences, their science, culture, and jurisprudence into revolutionary and contemporary actions; the subject matter of ancient philosophy (the existence of God, the creation of the world and the immortality of the

soul) to that of human existence of citizens and people; the transformation of the ancient subject matter that concerns the divine essence, to that which concerns man in this world, from the subject matter of ancient mysticism that is concerned about the elevation of the self to that of God to the modern mysticism of romanticism and revolution.[104]

Hanafl seems to be frustrated by the lack of creative theological activity amongst the modern ulamd' of the Arab world. He makes a distinction between theology and the sacred. Theology is a human activity. The 'ulamd ' lack a creative interpretation of human existence because of their inability to produce novel formulations of the theological doctrines. They further accept the Classical theological activity as a priori and indisputable. In other words, the 'ulamd' have failed to interpret theology as ontology. "The regimes under whose protection we have lived since World War II, and which are determined to preserve their existence, are mostly dictatorships with complex components…. These systems have shown their resistance against downfAlī. Though coercive, they have been based explicitly on values."[105]

Traditionalism or Historicism or Marxism?[106]

Abdallāh Laroui's brand of philosophy cannot be properly termed Islamic, since he maintains that

philosophy is born, develops, and lives again in polemic. It is not by re-examining old problems with the old terminology that it can save itself from ever-threatening anachronism; it renews itself only by occupying itself with the questions that are the stuff of everyday social practice, and these first appear in the form of critical polemic.[107]

However, its relevance to our present endeavour is derived from Laroui's scathing critique of what he terms "Islamic traditionalism", and its pervasive presence in contemporary Islamic societies. Laroui struggles specificАlīy with the notion of the Islamic tradition per se. Though he ends up dismissing the entire theological and philosophical heritage of Islam as obsolete, he maintains that traditional categories of thought still dominate the mental product of a large number of the Arab intelligentsia: "Arab intellectuals think according to two rationales: Most of them profess the traditionalist rationale [salafi\; the rest profess an eclecticism. Together, these tendencies succeed in abolishing the historical dimension."[108]

According to Laroui, the real crisis of the traditionalist Arab intelligentsia is to be sought in the "foundations" that give birth to their thought. This mental dependency on and refuge in the past makes the chances of historical consciousness and progress quite remote. What is, therefore, the alternative? Laroui argues that the only means to do away with the traditionalist mode of thinking "consists in strict submission to the discipline of historical thought and acceptance of all its assumptions".[109] Laroui is not quite clear about the real nature of this historical school. Yet his challgence to the functioning categories of the modern Arab mind still awaits an answer. In the words of Hourani, Laroui calls for the

adoption of historicism: "that is to say, a willingness to transcend the past, to take what was needed from it by a 'radical criticism of culture, language and tradition', and use it to create a new future".[110] It is true that Laroui brings out a number of important terms that summarize his position on a number of crucial issues. Such terms as hegemony, tradition, historicism and revolution cannot be valued in a historical sense unless they are understood in the context of power dynamics in modern Arab society, and the way this society produces knowledge and culture. One could argue, therefore, on the basis of Laroui's thinking that the real problem facing the modern Arab world is not Westernization, cultural alienation or historical alienation but the preservation of rigid and traditional categories of thought which do not show inner readiness to combat and solve current problems.[111]

Though Laroui's basic aim is "to overcome cultural and intellectual backwardness", [112] his alternative is simplistic at best. He proposes to overcome the past by suggesting its total abolition from the existing memory of Arab society. In other words, far from cAlīing for a critical and engaged reappraisal and reappropriation of the Islamic tradition, in all of its complexity and categories, Laroui calls for the total adoption of Westernization, which should become, in his view, the intellectual problem of the modern Arab people. Therefore, he gives preference to Western political organization, and its technical and scientific activity, and takes them as a measure of progress.[113]

Concluding Remarks

In spite of his "double criticism" approach, the Moroccan philosopher Abdelkebir Khatlbl states that "Contemporary Arab knowledge [including philosophy] cannot, without experiencing a radical rupture, escape its own theological and theocratic foundations which characterize the ideology of Islam and of all monotheism."[114] That the treatment of Islam and the Islamic tradition in modern Arab philosophy is inescapable is clear in liberal, Marxist, nationalist and religious works. The preceding notion is in agreement with the thesis that modern and contemporary Arab philosophy "has not yet been able to establish an independent personality of its own outside the periphery of religion".[115] Therefore, this philosophy, in spite of modern encounters with the West as the "other", has preserved a fundamental historical connection to the medieval Islamic heritage of thought. Consequently, a scholar is compelled to deal with "philosophical production in the modern Arab world" in the context of its historical and cultural specificity. Modern European thought, which broke away from medieval Christian thought, cannot act as the criteria against which one must measure the philosophical contributions of modern Arab society.

Putting the question of continuity aside, this chapter revolves around the richness of contemporary Arab intellectual history. Arab thinkers have been alerted to the need to produce ideas and philosophies that have bearing on present intellectual, social and cultural issues.[116] Since no intelligentsia of any society can be monolithic and dull in terms of its theoretical

reflections and ideas, it is taken for granted that the concerns of the Arab intelligentsia are diverse. It could be said that the intellectual life of the twentieth century is more rich and profuse than that of the previous century. This is due to several causes. Firstly, with the end of colonialism and the rise of the independent nation state, new issues came to the fore. Life became more complex and a noticeable shift of emphasis is seen from struggles against colonialism to building the national culture. Secondly, post-colonial Muslim societies have struggled with issues of identity, especially religious identity, and the task of defining the relationship between the nation state and religion, i.e. Islam, became more urgent. Thirdly, the end of official colonialism did not mean the end of Western cultural and scientific influence on the Muslim world. In certain ways, the Western influence upon some Muslim countries increased by leaps and bounds. Today, instead of direct Western military, economic and political hegemony, Muslim societies have to face such issues as Western modernization, modernism, modernity and Westernization. A reconfiguration of these diverse issues and a better definition of the place of religion are two chAlīenging tasks.

The colonial and post-colonial moments in the Muslim world have led to a noticeable erosion in the religious and social position of the 'ulama', as the traditional intelligentsia class in the world of Islam. The function of the traditional 'dlirn is to preserve and transmit religious knowledge.[117] A new type of Muslim intellectual is being born – one who is critical of the ulama', and who nevertheless shares more or less the same world view of Islam.

It could be said that the history of modern philosophy in the Arab world is, to a great extent, that "of a certain clash of human temperaments", [118] but it is also the product of historical moments, cultural contradictions and cross-philosophical fertilizations. Modern Arab philosophers are committed and alienated at once. They are committed to the mission of philosophy, which is to give direction and concreteness to thought. However, they are in doubt regarding the method or methods through which to achieve such a mission. We have seen that the ultimate methodological concern of many a philosopher – Abd al- Ràziq, al-Nashshar, etc. – is the revival of the fiqh methodology and world view. Others have sought methodological directives from Western schools and philosophies. Meanwhile, both groups have called for revival, emancipation, critique, rationalism, equilibrium and philosophical destiny.

One could reasonably argue that philosophy does not permeate Arab society thoroughly and that its presence is "partial and marginal in comparison to that in Western culture or to that in the medieval Arab world".[119] ' But if we consider philosophy as the reflection of the independence and maturity reached by a culture, the Arab world has come a long way. It is true that the Arab philosopher may have to lead a double and eclectic life reflecting, on the one hand, on his medieval Islamic heritage, and, on the other, attempting to assimilate the Western tradition of philosophy and thought. This process, however, is inevitable, and is not without its difficulties, hazards and deep commitments.

NOTES

1 Jamàl al-Dīn al-Afghànl, "Lecture on Teaching and Learning", in Nikki R. Keddie, An Islamic Response to Imperialism: Political and Religious Writings of Sayyid Jamal ad-Din al-Afghàni (Berkeley 1983): 105.

2 J. SAlība, "al-Intaj al-falsafl: al-falsafah 'umuman wa falsafat al-'ulùm", in Khalil al-Georr et al., al-Fikr al-falsafi fi ma'at 'dm (Beirut, 1962): 393 446. Since then, several short studies have appeared: G. Atiyeh, "Another Aspect of Philosophy: Modern Arab Philosophy", in Therese-Anne Druart (ed.) Arabic Philosophy and the West: Continuity and Interaction (Washington DC, 1988); S. Binsà'id, "al-Tayaràt al-falsafiyah fi'l fikr al-'arabl al-mu'asir ", in Ibrāhīm Badràn et al. (eds), al-Falsafah JiÌ-watan al-'arabi al-mu'àsir (Beirut, 1985); J. Charnay, "Courants reformateurs de la pensée musulmane contemporain", in
j. Berque and J. Charnay (eds), Normes et valeurs dans l'Islam contemporain (Paris, 1966); J. Charnay, "L'Intellectuel arabe entre le pouvoir et la culture", Diogenes, 83 (July–September 1973); A. Chejne, "Intellectual Revival in the Arab World: an Introduction", Islamic Studies, 2(4) (1963), 413–37; L. Gardet, "Philosophie arabo-musulmane et philosophie européenne d'aujourd'hui ", in I. Madkour (éd.), Dirāsāt falsafiyyah muhdàt ilā rüh 'Uthmān Amïn (Cairo, 1978): 129–41; A. Subhî "Ittijāhāt al-falsajat al-islāmiyyah fi'l watan al-'arabï, 1960–1980", in Ibrāhīm Badrān et al (eds), al-Falsafah fi'l-watan al-'arabï al- mu'àsir (Beirut, 1985): 101–22. A good bibliography on modem Arab thought is to be found in P. Khoury, Tradition et modernité:

Matériaux pour servir à l'étude de la pensée arabe actuelle (Münster, 1981).

3 In the course of his comments on what he calls "the problem of Islamic philosophy" facing him as a graduate student at the University of Chicago in the late 1940s, Muhsin Mahdi says: "There was also a more general problem that had to be faced: whether the study of Islamic philosophy or of the philosophic sciences that flourished in Islamic civilization is a legitimate subject for Islamic studies at Alī…. Therefore, the problem of Islamic philosophy became crucial for me: what it is, its relation to the Islamic revelation, its role in Islamic society" (M. Mahdi, "Orientalism and the Study of Islamic Philosophy ", Journal of Islamic Studies, 1 (1990): 87).

4 E. Burke, III, "Islam and Social Movements: Methodological Reflections ", in E. Burke, III and I. Lapidus (eds) Islam, Politics, and Social Movements. (Berkeley, 1988): 17.

5 A good example of this method is illustrated in G. Shukrl, al-Nahdah wa'l suqüt fi'l-fikr al-misri al-hadïth (Beirut, 1976).

6 It was hoped that Issa Boulata's latest work would fill this lacuna. See I. Boullata, Trends and Issues in Modern Arab Thought (Syracuse, 1990). See the following critical review of the book: Ibrāhīm M. Abu-Rabi', "Trends and Issues in Contemporary Arab Thought", American Journal of the Islamic Social Sciences, 8(1) (March 1991): 151–66.

7 H. A. R. Gibb, Modern Trends in Islam (Chicago, 1947): ix. Gibb claims that the main reason for the decline of Islam and

Muslims is the aversion to rationalism in the Muslim world: "The student of Arabic civilization is constantly brought up against the striking contrast between the imaginative power displayed, for example, in certain branches ot Arabic literature and the literalism, the pedantry, displayed in reasoning and exposition, even when it is devoted to these same productions. It is true that there have been great philosophers among the Muslim peoples and that some of them were Arabs, but they were rare exceptions. The Arab mind, whether in relation to the outer world or in relation to the processes of thought, cannot throw off its intense feeling for the separateness and individuality of the concrete events. This is, I believe, one of the main factors lying behind that 'lack of a sense of law' which Professor Macdonald regarded as the characteristic difference in the oriental" (ibid.'. 7). Also, "The rejection of rationalistic modes of thought and of the utilitarian cthic which is inseparable from them has its roots, therefore, not in the so-called 'obscurantism' of the Muslim theologians but in the atomism and discreteness of the Arab imagination" (ibid.: 7).

8 N. NAṣṣār, "Remarques sur la renaissance de la philosophie dans la culture
arabe moderne", in N. NAṣṣār, A. Abdel-Malek and H. Hanafl (eds), Renaissance ehi monde arabe (Paris, 1972): 331.

9 Ibid-. 332.

10 Ibid.: 340–1.

11 M. Arkoun, La Pensée arabe (Paris, 1985): 98.

12 See the following on the meanings ol Nahdah, deacadence and stagnation: S. H. Nasr, "Decadence, Deviation and Renaissance in the Context of Contemporary Islam", in Khurshid Ahmad and Zafar Ishaq Ansari (eds), Islamic Perspectives: Studies in Honor oj Sayyid Abul Atta Mawdttdi (Leicester, 1980): 35–42. Nasr argues that "The modernists never tire of speaking of nearly every form of activity in the Islamic world as a renaissance, whose Arabic translation, al-nahdah, has become such a prevalent word in contemporary Arabic literature. There is something insidious about the carefree usage of the word renaissance, for it recalls the Renaissance in the West when the re-birth of spirituAlīy deadly elements of Graeco-Roman paganism … dealt a staggering blow to Christian civilization and prevented it from reaching its natural period of flowering as a Christian civilization" (ibid.-. 37). The modernist attitudes that Nasr criticizes are represented by the following: F. Rahman, Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition (Chicago, 1982); M. Siddiqi, Modern Reformist Thought in the Muslim World (Islamabad, 1982); O. Turan, "The Need of Islamic Renaissance", in M. A. Khān (ed.) Proceedings of the International Conference (Islamabad, 1970): 24–31.

13 A. Laroui, The Crisis of the Arab Intelligetitsia: Traditionalism or Historicism?(Berkeley, 1976): vii. From his side the Tūnīsian philosopher H. Djait comments on the phenomenon of Nahdah by saying that "It must be acknowledged that the cultural phenomenon of the Nahdah (renaissance) paved the way for both these forms of development by reconstructing the Arab heritage, by restoring the connection to the splendors of an age now given classic status, in a word, by spreading an atmosphere and ideology of renascence. The immediate consequence of this movement,

whose vital center lay in Egypt and Syria, was the emergence of a modern Arabic language and literature, hence a re-Arabization by the core of the Middle East" (H. Djait, Europe and Islam: Cultures and Modernity (Berkeley, 1986): 137–8.

14 Gibb, op. cit.\ 1.

15 W. C. Smith, Islam in Modern History (New York, 1956): 16.

16 Ibid.: 45–6.

17 Arkoun, op. cit.\ 90.

18 Much has been written about modernity. The following is a select bibliography on the meaning and history of modernism in both the West and Islam.

Modernity and Western thought: P. Ackroyd, Notes for a New Culture: an Essay on Modernism (New York, 1976); C. Baudouin, The Myth of Modernity (London, 1950); D. Bell, The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism (New York, 1976); P. Berger, Facing up to Modernity (New York, 1977); M. Berman, Alī That Is Solid Melts Into Air: the Experience of Modernity (New York, 1982); R. Bernstein, Habermas on Modernity (Cambridge, Mass., 1985); J. Collins, Uncommon Cultures: Popular Culture and Post-modernism (New York, 1989); FI. Foster (ed.), The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture (Port Townsend 1983); D. Frisby, Fragments of Modernity: Theories of Modernity in the Works of Simrnel, Kracauer, and Benjamin (Cambridge, 1985); S. Gablik, Has Modernism Failed? (New York, 1984); C. Grana,

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23 On M. Abduh, see E. Kedourie, Afghani and Abduh: an Essay on Religious Unbelief and Political Activism in Modern Islam (New York, 1962); C. Adams, Islam and Modernism in Egypt (New York, 1933); 'U. Amïn, Mohammad Abduh: essai sur ses idées philosophiques et religieuses (Cairo, 1944); R. Caspar, "Un aspect de la pensée musulmane moderne: le renouveau du Mo'tazilisme", Mélanges, 4 (1957); M. Kerr, Islamic Reform: the Political and Legal Theories of Muḥammad Abduh and Rashid Rida (Berkeley, 1976); D. Khalid, "Ahmad Amin and the Legacy of Muḥammad Abduh", Islamic Studies, 9(1) (March 1970); R. Ridà, Tārikh al-ustādh al-imām al-shaykh Muḥammad Abduh (Cairo, 1933).

24 M. Mahdi, "Islamic Philosophy in Contemporary Islamic Thought", in C. Malik (ed.), God and Man in Contemporaiy Islamic Thought (Beirut, 1972): 105.

25 S. H. Nasr, Islam and the Plight of Modern Man (London, 1975): 90.

26 Concerning this issue see L. Gardet, "De quelle manière s'est ankylosé la pensée religieuse de l'islam", in G. E. V. Grunebaum and R. Brunschwig (eds), Classicisme et déclin culturel dans l'histoire de l'Islam (Paris, 1957).

27 According to Laroui, the Arab intellectuals of the nineteenth century posed the question: what is the West? The opposing other – the West – according to Laroui developed two forms of hegemony. In the first instance, the West began to impose its arms, gods, and laws and cultures on the oriental. The indigenous cry against "the imported ideologies of the West" was a last attempt to assert tradition in the face of the invader. Tradition became part of the ideological conflict between East and West. The second form of hegemony, according to Laroui, began with the development of the Industrial Revolution, and attained its apogee in the mid nineteenth century. The world was rounded into final shape, divided among the principal European powers; Asia was said to be sleeping, the East was decadent, and Turkey a sick man.

28 S. Müsà, al-Nahdat al-'umbiyyah (Cairo, 1934).

29 S. Musa, Hurriyyat al-'aql fi Misr (Cairo, 1947).

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H. Laoust, "Le Réformisme orthodoxe des 'Salafiyya, ' et les caractères généraux de son organisation actuelle", Revue des Etudes Islamiques (1932) 6: 175–224 (p. 185).

32 M. A. Lahbabi, Le Personnalisme musulman (Paris, 1964): 100–1.

33 See our discussion of M. Abd al-Rāziq below.

34 On the explication of the term fundamentalism, see D. Eickelman, "Changing Interpretations of Islamic Movements", in W. R. Roff (ed.) Islam and the Political Economy of Meaning: Comparative Studies of the Muslim Discourse (Berkeley, 1970); M. Marty and R. S. Appleby (eds) Fundamentalisms Observed (Chicago, 1991); Y. Haddad, "Muslim Revivalist Thought in the Arab World: an Overview", The Muslim World, (3–4) (July–October 1986); F. Rahman, "Roots of Islamic Neo-Fundamentalism", in P. Stoddard (ed.) Change and the Muslim World (Syracuse 1981); W. R. Roff, "Islamic Movements: One or Many?" in W. R. Roff (ed.) Islam and the Political Economy of Meaning: Comparative Studies of the Muslim Discourse

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35 M. Abd al-Rāziq, Tamhïd li- tiirïkh al-falsafat al-islāmiyyah 3rd ed. (Cairo, 1966): 5.

36 E. Renan, Averroes et l'Avérroïsme: Essai historique (Paris 1882): vii–viii.

37 Muslim thinkers of the Classical age attempted this synthesis as well. See L. Gauthier, Introductio7i à l'étude de la philosophie musulmane (Paris, 1923).

38 Abd al-Rāziq, op. citr. 144.

39 Ibid.: 123.

40 A. F. El-Ehwany, Islamic Philosophy (Cairo, 1957): 140.

41 T. Husayn, "Le Cheikh Mostafa Abd el-Razeq tel que je l'ai connu", Mélanges, 4(1957): 250.

42 Ibid.: 250. Taha Husayn says (ibid.: 251) that early Islamic philosophy was as simple as Islam itself because it reflected the liberal spirit of the new religion.

43 For an elaboration on this division, see G. Makdisi, "The juridical Theory of Shāfi'1 – Origins and Significance of Usül al-Fiqh", Studia Islamica, 59 (1984): 39.

44 Abd al-Rāziq, op. cit.: 273.

45 M. Fakhrl, "al-Diràsāt al-falsafiyyat al-'arabiyyah", in al-Fikr al-fabafi, ed. F. Sarrüf (Beirut, 1962): 256.

46 M. A. Jābirî, al-Khitāb al-'arabï al-tnu'āsir (Beirut, 1982): 236.

47 H. Muruwwah, al-Naza'àt al-mādiyyah fl-falsafat al-'arabiyyah al-islāmiyyah (Beirut, 1988): 83.

48 'U. Amin, Lights on Contemporary Moslem Philosophy (Cairo, 1959): 115.

49 Ibid.: 120.

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51 U. Amin, al-Juwāniyyah: usül 'aqtdah wa falsafat thawrah (Beirut, 1960). See also G. Anawati, "En memoriam: Osman Amine", Mélanges, 14 (1980).

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58 R Tillich, Systematic Theology: Volume One (Chicago, 1953): 108.

59 M. A. jābirï, Taktuîn al-aql al-ʾarabr, (Beirut, 1988).

60 Jābirï, al-Kbihib: 20.

61 In this regard, Jābirï quotes the best representative of modern Islamic revivalism in the Arab world, Sayyid Qutb who maintains that today's Muslims "are also surrounded by Jāhiliyyah, which is of the same nature as confronted during the first period of Islam, perhaps a little deeper. It also appears that our entire environment is seized in the clutches of fāhiliyyah. The spirit of Jāhiliyyah has permeated our beliefs and ideas, our habits and manners, our culture and its sources, literature and art, and current rules and laws, to the extent that what we consider Islamic culture, Islamic sources,

Islamic philosphy and Islamic thought are all the products of Jahiliyyah" (S. Qutb, Milestones (Karachi, 1981): 61).

62 Jābirï, op. cit.: 181.

63 See M. Foucault, Les Mots et les choses (Paris, 1966) and L'Archéologie du savoir (Paris, 1972).

64 J. Charnay, "L'Intellectuel arabe entre le pouvoir et la culture", Diogenes, 83 (J uly-September 1973).

65 J. Lalande, La Raison et les normes, (Paris 1963).

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73 Jābirï draws on Arkoun, who is quoted above.

74 Jābirï's method of deconstruction permeates his total output. See our discussion below.

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76 M. A. Lahbabi, De l'être à la personne: Essai de personnalisme réaliste (Paris,
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77 M. A. Lahbabi, Le Monde de demain: Le Tiers-monde accuse (Casablanca, 1980).

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80 G. Hegel, Lectures on the Philosophy of World History, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge, 1975): 54.

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82 For a full elaboration of the term "being" in Western philosophical writings, see P. Tillich, Systematic Theology, Volume One (Chicago, 1953): 163–210.

83 Lahbabi, De l'être: 12.

84 M. A. Lahbabi, Du Clos à l'ouvert: Vingt propos stir les cultures nationales et la civilization humaine (Casablanca, 1961).

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87 Lahbabi's views on Sufism do not stem, in my view, from a real understanding of tasawwuf as an authentic religious science in Islam. The real doctrines of Sufism were developed, to a large extent, against the backdrop of the science of theology (Him al-taivhid) and the tumultuous events of the formative phase of Islam. For a better appreciation of Sufism as an Islamic science, consult the following: Abu Nasr al Sarrāj, Kitiib al-luma' fil-tasawwuf ed. Reynold A. Nicholson, Gibb Memorial Series, 22 (Leiden and London, 1914); A. B. al- Kalābàdhl, al-Ta'rruf li-madhab ahl al-tasawwufi ed. A. J. Arberry (Cairo, 1934), trans. A. J. Arberry, The Doctrines of the Sufis (Cambridge, 1935); A.T. al-Makkl, Qüt al-qulüb ft muāmalat al-mahbûb, 2 vols (Cairo, 1892–3); A. M. Schimmel, "The Origin and Early Development of Sufism', Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society (1958); A. M. Schimmel, Mystical Dimensions of Islam (Chapel Hill, 1975); and W. M. Watt, The Faith and. Practice of al- Ghazali (Chicago, 1982). Al-Ghazzālî (d. 505/

1111) attests to the genuine character of Sufism by saying that "Among the things that necessarily became clear to me from my practice of the mystic 'way' was the true nature and special characteristics of prophetic revelation. The basis of that must undoubtedly be indicated in view of the urgent need for it" (ibid.-. 63).

88 Lahbabi, op. cip. 95.

89 Ibid.: 99.

90 Ibid.: 100.

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92 A. Hourani, A History of the Arab People (Cambridge, Mass., 1991): 444.

93 FI. Djait, Europe and Islam: Cultures and Modernity (Berkeley, 1985): 119.

94 On the metamorphosis of religious tradition and the transmission of religious knowledge from one generation to another, consult E. Shils, Tradition (Chicago, 1981).

95 Djait, op. cit.: 124.

96 Ibid.: 125.

97 See M. Munlr, al-Fikr al- arabi fi'l- a~r al-I;adith (Beirut, 1973).

98 H. Djait, Le Personnalite et Ie devenir arabo-islamique (Paris, 1974): 163.

99 Ibid.: 271.

100 Ibid.: 272.

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H. Hanafi, "Théologie ou anthropologie", in A. Abdel-Malek, A. Belal and H. Hanafl (eds), Renaissance du monde arabe (Paris, 1972): 233.

102 Ibid. 235.

103 Ibid.: 247.

104 Ibid.: 257.

105 Ibid.: 273.

106 The term "historicity" or "historicism" is used in two ways. First, it is used by Hegel, Marx and Popper in order to deduce historical patterns or laws on the basis of which future historical events can be predicted. In that task, the conflation of both history and metaphysics is involved. Second, the term is used by Marxists to express how the material foundations of a society can determine the historical stage and evolution of that society. See K. Popper, The Poverty of Historicism (New York, 1957). In this work, the term is employed in the first sense. There are certain distinct patterns of the Nahdah according to which we can predict the rise of several theoretical issues in the future Arab world.

107 Laroui, The Crisis: 83.

108 Ibid.: 153–4.

109 Laroui, The Crisis: 154.

110 A. Hourani, A History: 445.

111 This is discussed in Sharabi, Arab Intellectuals (see n. 18).

112 See Adonis [Ali Ahmad Sa'ld|, "Reflections on the Manifestations of Intellectual Backwardness in Arab Society", in Cemam Reports (Beirut, 1974): especially 25–34.

113 A. Laroui, L'Idéologie arabe contemporaine, essai critique (Paris 1977): 19. In addition to Laroui, other Third World Middle East thinkers have pondered the question of tradition and modernity: M. Bennabi, Islam in History and Society, trans. A. Rashid (Islamabad, 1988); D. Shayegan, Qu'est-ce qu'une révolution religieuse? (Paris, 1991); D. Shayegan, Le Regard mutilé: Schizophrenic culturelle: pays traditionnels face à la modernité (Paris, 1989).

114 A. K. Khatibi, "Double Criticism: the Decolonization of Arab Sociology", in H. Barakat (ed.), Contemporary North Africa: Issues of Development and Integration (Washington DC, 1985): 14.

115 Atiya, in Druart, Arabic Philosophy and the West (see n. 2): 154.

116 See A. El-Kenz, Algerian Reflectio?is on Arab Crises, trans. R. W. Stooky (Austin, 1991).

117 See M. Gilsenan, Recognizing Islam: Religion and Society in the Modern Arab World. See also D. F. Eickelman, Knowledge and Power in Morocco: the Education of a Ttventieth-Cetitury Notable (Princeton, 1985) and D. F. Eickelman, "Traditional Islamic Learning and Ideas of the Person in the Twentieth Century", in M. Kramer (ed.) Middle Eastern Lives: the Practice of Biography and Self-Narrative (Syracuse, 1991): 35–60.

118 W. James, Pragmatism: a New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking (London, 1913): 6.

119 NAṣṣār, Remarques (see n. 8): 340.

CHAPTER 65

Egypt

Massimo Campanini

❧

Philosophical issues are usually neglected when the issues of the Islamic reception and confrontation with the Western world are faced. Most attention is paid to sociology or history or to cultural subjects. But epistemological qualms troubled Muslim thinkers from the very beginning of the reforming path. Egypt can be chosen as a privileged observatory for this kind of question, considering the role it played in the contemporary history of the Arab world.

Liberal and nationalistic thinkers, living in the first decades of the twentieth century when Egypt was more or less openly a British protectorate, showed sometimes a very poor awareness of the potentiAlīy destructive contradiction which arises from the mixing of too many different cultures. To be sure, their openmindedness marked a radical transformation and a real change in Egyptian culture and politics, and there is no need to pursue this topic here. It would be enough to remember the names of all Abd al-Rāziq, Ahmad al-Sanhürï, and Taha Husayn. Unfortunately, acting as sincere interpreters of a new and changing world, they became the occasionAlīy unconscious upholders of foreign control and

intellectual subordination of Egypt. No doubt, colonisation implies a substrate ready to receive the new form, as Malek Bennabi sharply argued; but excitement for outside spiritual – and material – achievements can make intellectuals capable of forgetting their own origin. Tïhā Husayn's view, for instance, of Egypt as a sort of failed European country is deeply misguided. Thus, we can understand the warning of the radical Islamist Sayyid Qutb:

We should not go to French legislation to derive our laws, or to communist ideals to derive our social order, without first examining what can be supplied from our Islamic legislation which was the foundation of our first form of society…. Our summons is to return to our own stored-up resources, to become familiar with their ideas, and to proclaim their value and permanent worth, before we have recourse to an untimely servility which will deprive us of the historical background of our life, and through which our individuality will be lost to the point that we will become mere hangers-on to the progress of mankind.[1]

However, we will not speak here only of politics, but firstly of episte- mology, even though a judgment about some political issues is obviously implicit.

It is not fortuitous, in my opinion, that Islamic reformism and modernism set up a constructive confrontation with modernity on the basis of a reappraisal of Ibn Sïnà or Ibn Rushd's classic rationalism and especially Mu'tazilite rationalism, which was clearly indebted to its Greek heritage. This is particularly true in Egypt. A long tradition of studies and researches aiming to demonstrate "the revolution of intellect in Arabic philosophy" and its Greek roots enriched

Egyptian historiography, from Ibrāhīm Madkür and 'Abd al-Rah man BadawT to 'Arif al-'Iraqi.[2]

Muḥammad Abduh's Risālat al-tawhïd is a philosophical meditation on anthropology and theology. Abduh argued about God's existence and essence in quite Ibn Sīnān (but also Ghazzàliān) terms, as the following short passage proves:

De même que le contingent a besoin d'une cause pour être appelé à l'existence, il en a besoin d'une pour continuer à exister; car nous avons démontré que le contingent n'est pas prédisposé par lui-même à exister et qu'il n'entre dans l'existence qu'à la suite d'une cause efficiente extérieure à lui. … Il est évident que l'ensemble des contingences est également contingent, et tout contingent a besoin d'une cause qui lui donne l'existence, donc f ensemble des contingences a besoin d'un créateur…. Ainsi il est prouvé que les contingences qui existent ont une cause efficiente dont l'existence est necéssaire…. L'existence de l'être nécessaire est la source de l'existence de tout contingent….

Toute perfection de l'existence, qui peut être conçue comme attribut de l'être nécessaire, doit lui être attribué.[3]

Robert Caspar had pointed out Muḥammad 'Abduh's Mu'tazilite outlook many years ago, in particular regarding human freedom of act and will.[4] The novelty of Muḥammad 'Abduh's position did not enable him, however, to join Ahmad 'Urābï's revolutionary movement in 1882 aiming to overturn the status quo. In this case, a modernistic approach and enlightened attitude did not convince a very independent thinker to choose an uncompromising political position.

Ahmad Amin (d. 1954) was actively engaged in Egyptian culture and politics: he was a university professor, Director of the Cultural Centre of the Egyptian Ministry of Education (1945) and later of the Cultural Section of the Arab League (1947). In his major work, Duha al-isldm ("The Morning of Islam"), first published in 1933, he complained about the early disappearance of Mu'tazilism as an irretrievable misfortune for Islam, underlining that

the Mu'tazilites gave free rein to intellect [aqlj in its investigations of all [scientific] problems without setting any bounds. They regarded intellect as the way to truth [al-haqq\ in its investigation of heaven and earth, God and man, great and little. There is no field which the intellect cannot attain, [because] the intellect was created to know and have knowledge of everything – even what lies behind nature and matter.[5]

Amin's goal was the revival of Muslim cultural heritage, making of it a way for the intellectual and moral recovery of all Arab and Islamic people. Although he was a somewhat openminded person, he was not fully free from a traditional outlook. Amin praised the Mu'tazilites for their rationalism and demonstrative skill, but he preferred them to philosophers in the strict sense merely because they are men of faith, while the philosophers are inclined to view religion as not always consistent with rational and theoretical presuppositions.

But besides these "old" modernists, substantiAlīy the same positive evaluation of Mu'tazilisrn arises as a common feature also in Fu'ad Zakariyyah, Zaki Najib Maḥmūd or Hasan I Ianafi's reflections, even though Western scholarship does not

wholly agree about the supposed strict rationalism of the Mu'tazilites.[6]

The influence of Mu'tazilisrn poses a crucial question: which kind of "rationalism" developed in the Islamic philosophical world? Which kind of "rationalism" should be cultivated in the contemporary Islamic philosophical world? Does there exist a unique kind of "Islamic" rationalism? Does it arise in contemporary times? Does a reconstruction of Islamic thought suitable for modernity mean or – perhaps better – does it require a reconstruction of its religious dimension? The debate has been particularly alive in Egypt, even though a great deal of comment arose also in other parts (Persia and India) of the Islamic world. It goes without saying that this confrontation with modernity affected Arabic minds as well as other Muslims, and imposed on Arab thinkers the duty of answering the Western challgence and discovering – if possible

an even more Arab, more Islamic way of thinking. This led Arab philosophers to a troublesome relationship with their own heritage which they are mostly inclined to consider not appropriate for contemporary issues. It means, moreover, that political claims cannot be
obliterated in a larger methodological and philosophical reform grounded on Islamic revivalism, mainly because the reconstruction of politics in theory and of political systems in practice must reckon with the Islamic ideological framework.

It is true that, looking briefly at the eastern Muslim world, an Indian philosopher and poet like Sir Muḥammad Iqbāl (1873–1938) lived his relations with Europe and European (Western) culture more quietly. Neither his mystical nor his

theoretical attitudes were completely upset by European (Western) thought. Indeed, he was persuaded that the core of European technical advancement is basicAlīy Islamic.[7] Alessandro Bausani stressed more than once that Iqbāl was not an enemy of Europe, albeit he expressed some surprise at the contradiction existing between the Westernizing culture of Iqbāl and his condemnation of democracy. "The shayātīn (devils) of democracy, " Iqbāl writes, "are nowadays the kings of politics: vile earth does not need me any more."[8] This kind of contradiction is unavoidable for an Islamic culture confronting outward categories. Democracy is a revolutionary ideal; it was born from the French Revolution. But Islam did not experience such a revolution.

Perhaps Iqbal's distinction between a materialistic Europe and a spiritual Orient can be judged hasty or naive, or at least philosophicAlīy out of date. But it is quite characteristic that Iqbāl was convinced of a convergence of Bergson s doctrine de la durée with the Islamic doctrine of time. Accordingly, Nietzsche would have been ready to accept the mysteiy of Divine Law moving away from a misunderstood conception of morals learned in corrupted Europe, and he became angry mainly because Europe failed to provide him with suitable moral answers. These – perhaps too open – attempts at "Islamicizing" European (Western) thought can surely be considered from the viewpoint of reformistic modernism, but do they reveal any desire for imitation or flattering of European superiority? In his famous lectures about the reconstruction of religious thought in Islam, Iqbāl was able to stress that

there is no basic incompatibility between religion and science. Although philosophy can certainly examine the principles of

religion, it cannot treat religion as something inferior to it. Religion presents a view of the whole person, while philosophy and science deal just with aspects of the whole.[9]

The superiority of religion over philosophy – and obviously over science – underlines the independence of religion of all external influences. But does this conclusion solve the dramatic contrast between tradition and modernity? Many Arab authors, however, did not recognize this superiority and so damned themselves to bow to the idols of science and progress. Arab–Muslim philosophers often did not succeed in reorientating Islam away from foreign and imported patterns.

If it is not trivial to repeat that a major problem in contemporary Islamic thought is the reconciliation of the urgent necessity ol exploiting European progressive ideas in epistemology and scientific research with faithfulness to a past heritage, it is equAlīy worth underlining that this problem was particularly worrying in the Arab world and, obviously, in Egypt, where several thinkers nourished a kind of intellectual submission. This is the case ol men like Ahmad Lutfi al-Sayyid (d. 1963), whose sincere liberalism, inspired by Western philosophical and sociological traditions going back to John Stuart Mill and other similar thinkers, seems to deny an autonomous weight to Islamic heritage. P. Vatikiotis suggests, in quite triumphalist terms, that

He cannot be credited with any originality of thought; yet he was original in the way he tried to transmit European ideas, and in the manner in which he ventured to use these ideas as the basis for the construction of principles to guide the formation of a modern nation in Egypt. Ahmad Lutfi did not provide Egyptians with a metaphysics or an integrated

intellectual system. Rather he laid down for them the basic rules for the reasoned criticism of society. Above Alī, he tried to impress upon his compatriots that a society without a system of values and a set of principles to guide it towards certain goals would remain hopelessly backward. And these could be acquired by modern European education.[10]

If this is true, then we can draw a few negative conclusions as well: firstly, that Islam is lacking in values and principles; secondly, that the repudiation of all the Islamic past and tradition is unavoidable; thirdly, that European education and culture are assumed as meta-historical and not subjected to any sort of criticism. Obviously, Vatikiotis' own view suggests a rather deformed image of Lutfi al-Sayyid's work. Yet Lutfi al-Sayyid stands very far from a real Islamic renaissance, if we take European ideas of freedom, nationality and individualism as the only effective path to modernity. It is ironic that the same author, Vatikiotis, charges Islamic modernism and political thought with inconsistency just because it refused to accept Greek rationalism![11]

Indeed, the solutions Egyptian Muslim thinkers put forward are not always satisfying, even when we take a more favourable attitude than Vatikiotis. We can pick out here at least a couple of contrasting trends. On the one hand, some scholars tried to overcome difficulties by discovering a kind of abstract liaison between Islamic and Western (especially Classical) thought. 'Abd al-HAlīm Maḥmūd, former Shaykh of Al-Azhar, divided the true value of falsafah into theoretical (about God) and ethical investigations. But these values already belong to mature Islamic thought, which he calls more properly hikmah. Falsafah

is introductory to hikmah regarding both intellect ('aql) and practice (irtiyitd).[12] It is more or less the same with Iqbal, but we need to be careful not to forget the historical dimension. For instance, in the following passage where Aristotle, al-Kindi and Kant are, so to say, sanctified by the Holy Qur'ān:

There is no doubt that rational people would agree with Aristotle that "Every order bespeaks the intelligence behind it." Similarly, al-Kindï, the first Muslim philosopher, considered that the evidence of craftmanship in a door, couch or chair, with its design and perfected order, does not reveal its maker any less than the universe reveals its omnipotent Creator … Al-Kindï adds that the external manifestations and phenomena that register upon the senses give the clearest indication of the design of the First Planner…. The above manner of demonstration is the method which Kant, the greatest philosopher of Germany, declared to be the clearest and strongest proof of the existence of God. It is the way that has been followed by many thinkers from East and West. all these proofs of the existence of God may be summed up in the following verses in the chapter of the Qur'an called "The Great News":

"Did We not spread the earth as a bed, and raise the mountains as pillars? And did We not create you in pairs and appoint your sleep for a rest, and appoint night as a mantle and the day for your livelihood? And did We not build above you seven mighty heavens …?" (78:6)[13] ''

On the other hand, there is secularism, a more or less strong rejection of original Islamic presuppositions. Unfortunately, the secularism of such a famous person as Fu'ad Zakariyyā'[14]

seems to betray the real meaning of Islam: it is absurd to reject the radical tendencies in Islam merely by opposing democracy and political freedom to its inner conservatism. Does there reAlīy exist a universal pattern of Westernization? Fu'ād Zakariyyā' argues that the Arab world and its thought decayed for two main reasons: blind deference to tradition (tumth and taqltd) and an inability to historicize the past. He writes:

Nous autres musulmans avons grand besoin de quelqu'un qui nous dise, comme les philosophes de la Renaissance: "Si vous avez devant vous la nature et les problèmes des hommes, pourquoi faut-il que toujours vous reveniez aux textes des ancêtres? Pourquoi faites-vous de la pensée héritée une autorité indiscutable? Pourquoi ne pas affronter les situations nouvelles avec votre raison?

Selon moi, cette incapacité du monde arabe à historiciser sa relation au passé constitue la cause première de son sous-développement intellectuel.[15]

Probably, Fu'ād Zakariyyà' is too optimistic regarding the Western attitude to realize rationalism in every field of common life:

Certes, en Occident aussi, la production scientifique avait pour destinataire initial une petite élite; mais une fois reconnue par celle-ci, elle s'est diffusée peu à peu au sein de couches de plus en plus larges et, sous une forme plus ou moins élaborée, a fini par faire partie du sens commun. Rien de tel dans la turāth arabo- musulman: aucun de ses produits n'a accédé à ce statut de culture de masse qui fait que l'on dit par exemple du Français qu'il est cartésien.[16]

If Fu'ād Zakariyyà' is right, all the Western world would be perfect, without racism or dogmatic troubles, in a natural state of paradise, with science solving every problem and granting everyone a happy and affluent life. But hypostatization and mythologization of an assumed absolute truth

either secularism or scientific rationalism – become themselves a kind of taqltd.

Zakl Najlb is more concerned with salvation – or at least a reconsideration – of his Islamic background. He is a "logical positivist", so that it is only natural that he stresses the importance of logic. He claims that Arab Classical thinkers turned their attention to Aristotle's rational solutions immediately after him;[17] meanwhile, he argues, quoting Descartes and Francis Bacon, that Western rationalism was able to develop to a great extent scientific and technological progress[18] – a thing Islam cannot do. Islam remained backward with respect to this astonishing scientific advance for several reasons. First of Alī, the Islamic world witnessed too many oppressive and autocratic political regimes, where freedom of expression and ideas were forbidden. As an example, the author tells the story of Ibn Flanbal and the mihnah under al-Ma'mün's caliphate.[19] Moreover, too often the (dead) past ruled over the (living) present ("Sultan al-mādï 'alā'al-hādir huwa bi-mathàbat al-saytarah yafriduhà al-mawtï 'ald'al-ahiyā'"). Francis Bacon and his doctrine of idola theatri (aivhām al-masrati) are used[20] to prove that belief (al-wahm) distracted the Muslim from true thought.

After a rather tough condemnation of dead heritage, Zakl Najlb asks a twofold question: how can we connect Arab with

Western thought? How can we relate ancient Arab thought to the contemporary?

The most original section of Zakl Najlb's work is when he points out the dynamism of reason and philosophy: this dynamism means, from an epistemological point of view, the passage from the known to the unknown, the passage from the past to the present in a comprehensive
refoundation of sciences. Zaki Najib writes: "As to the definition of intellect I wish to note …, it is a movement by which I am carried from witness to witnessed, from proof to proven, from premise to consequence …, The most important word in this definition is 'movement' harakahn."[21]

Philosophy is the disclosure of secrets, receptiveness of novelty ("al-falsafah hiya ikhrdj al-asās al-kàminah fï afkdrind"), [22] so that the greatest goal of intellectual effort must be its encounter with modern science: this is, of course, the goal of Arab intellectual ambitions which started from the very beginning of the last century ("nasha'at land siradt fikriyyah jadïdah … wa ahammu tilka al-siradt al-fikriyyah … hiya tariqat al-liqa Alīatï nawd'im fihd bayna 'ulum hadïthah)" [23] Obviously, the Arabs' task could be made easier through the renaissance of intellect (al-'aqt) which moulded the best Classical Muslim culture. Indeed, Muslim thought can go beyond Western achievements; as M. Chartier put it: "la connaissance sensible, cheminant à pas de raison, qui a pour mission de scruter et d'organiser le monde des phénomènes, et une connaissance extra-sensible, qui a un rôle de témoin de ces idéaux sans lequels l'homme perdrait de vue le but ultime de sa vie".[24]

This last conclusion does not prevent secularists from pointing out that the innovation of Zaki Najlb's views consists in their distance from tradition. Celebrating the thinker after his death (Zaki Najib died in September 1993), Nasr Hāmid Abü Zayd wrote that he was aware of the "living and energetic knowledge of the West against the frozen and stagnant knowledge of turdth". In Zaki Najlb's opinion, turdth would not be able to solve even one problem Çal-turath Idyahullu mushkilah wahidah min mushkildtinā") concerning freedom (hurriyyah) and successful entrance in the epoch of science and industry (dukhülJï 'asr nl-'ihn wa I- sinaah).[25]

Mohammed Arkoun is perhaps more refined than Zaki Najib in writing that Islamic thought leaves a large area of shadow in its impensée. This "impensée dans la pensée islamique [est] sur tous les mouvements de pensée qui ont accompagné, en Occident, la naissance et l'irrésistible croissance de la civilisation industrielle". Arkoun argues that "on ne peut entretenir un lien vivant avec la turdth si l'on n'assume totalement la modernité; inversement, on ne peut contribuer de façon originale à travailler la modernité, si l'on continue à confondre turdth historique et turdth mythologique ".[26] This is not the place to discuss Arkoun's thesis thoroughly; while I admit I do not fully agree with him, I suggest that the main fault of thinkers like Fu ad Zakariyyā' and Zaki Najib is just the confusion between historical and mythological turāth. I know I am going far beyond Arkoun's intentions in pointing to a historical turdth which is both rich and constructive: the world of Islam was erected on its basis. Mythological turdth, on the contrary, consist of apparently
anachronistic rules and impositions many philosophers regarded as oppressive and restricting the free development of Islamic thought. But it is just a mythology, like other

mythologies: science, technology and uninterrupted progress (the so-called "magnifiche sorti e progressive", in the words of a sceptical Italian poet, Giacomo Leopardi). In any case, I think that the crisis of contemporary Islamic thought cannot be reduced to a mere crisis of Islamic philosophy, because we must ackowledge that its problem is essentiAlīy political and its solution essentiAlīy revolutionary, assuming revolution is a radical change of the present situation. We would have to consider in a different light Nasser's political experience, in admitting that the 1967 disaster signified the closure of a whole historical epoch, but also that Nasser's defeat and the failed improvement of social and economic situation in the Arab countries created more scope for an Islamic radical challgence.

Another major negative feature of both Fu'äd Zakariyyä"s and Zakl Najlb's thought lies perhaps in their inadequate awareness of the criticism advanced against the new positivism and scientific objectivity by epistemological anarchism (Feyerabend) and the so-called "weak thought", which means the denial of a strong, metaphysical dominion of being and absolute reason.[27] Feyerabend, on the other hand, argues that unanimity of opinions is appropriate for mythological thought where tyranny and oppression are destroying free scientific research: a real objectivity in knowledge needs a multiplicity of opinions and truths; no one can claim to master any truth, because humanism involves a variety of contending views.[28] In the same new logical positivism (we can think of Wittgenstein), we often discover a very questionable rationalism underlying either the inability of answering philosophical and scientific questions (we must be silent when we cannot speak about something)[29] or the

contradictory multiplicity and irreducibility of psychological and linguistic world pictures.[30]

Fu'ād Zakariyyā' and Zakl Najib were so concerned with establishing a convergence between Arab thought's values and Western ones, coupled with an enthusiastic evaluation of the latter, that they let pass unobserved the most striking difficulties the same Western philosophical tradition found in itself. After Nietzsche no one can accept philosophical statements being sure of asserting, beyond any doubt, epistemological truth and morality.

In Hasan Hanafl Islamic rationalism finds a phenomenological and anthropological solution which is perhaps the only reAlīy "open" version, being "aimed at". We have a sound reference in Husserl's Krisis des europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendentale Phänomenologie and in his theory of phenomenological telos. The Italian editor of this important work, Enzo Paci, wrote that "if we admit that truth is reality, [oppressive] apparatuses will win power. If we let unreal truth become
in ourselves the life of truth, victory will be of all the men in the world."[31] It means that phenomenological truth alone is our way of improving the social situation and erasing injustice.

Hanafi's phenomenological teleology is built on two main aspects: firstly, a new concept of tawhïd intended as the anthropological realization of social justice: God is a principle of equality to whom men are moving in their historical praxis ("Allāh hnwa al-mubda' al-wdhid al-shāmil Alīadhï yatasdwd amdmihi jaml' al-'ibdd fa'1-shahādah laysat qawlan bal 'amalan iva mudradah wa thawrah")[32]; unicity (tawhïd)

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means the process of unification just as liberty is liberation[33]; and, secondly, the concept of intersubjectivity as pluralization of cultural subjects[34]: against colonialism, exploitation and the double opposition of Orientalism and Westernization, "life in horizontal" means that all the makers of culture and science must claim their right to be acknowledged as active subjects of history. This is why Hanafl wrote that

L'Islam est la religion révolutionnaire par excellence. Le tawhïd est un processus d'unification dans le futur du fait accompli dans le passé. Il veut dire la liberté de conscience, le rejet de la peur, la fin de l'hypocrisie et du dédoublement. "Dieu est grand" signifie la destruction du despotisme. Tous les êtres humains sont égaux et toutes les nations sont égales devant le même principe … La vocation de l'homme est de transformer la parole de Dieu, la révélation, comme structure idéale du monde.[35]

Hanafl argues that the ancients (al-qudamā') were wrong in seeking to obtain a scientific knowledge of God's Essence, because God is the Absolute (mutlaq) and sciences are accustomed to transform the absolute into the relative ("al-'ilm mawduuhu wa minhajuhu wa ghdyatuhu tahwïl li'l-mutlaq ild nisbf").[36] Even though we wish to insist on the relativity of science, this statement does not imply a defeat of reason. Indeed, it is strictly Islamic, because it places God's reality beyond any theoretical grasp. This statement clearly leads to an active transformation of pure philosophy into ethical and anthropological engagement ('amal). The same God is praxis: "Allāh laysa tasawwuran bal fi'l laysa nazaran – Logos bal 'amal – praxis –".[37]

What is Hanafi's philosophical attitude to Westernization? An intriguing historical issue arises here, or rather the issue of historiography and Orientalism. In general, he sharply criticizes historical method when applied to philosophy, on the ground that this method tends to throw doubt on speculation (nazar). Hanafi's criticism hits in particular Western Orientalism. Orientalists are not able to give up their "national" (qawmï) concept of science, which is obviously "European". Orientalism, for instance, by applying a surreptitious historical method (minhaj ta'rïkhï) distorts the thought of men like Suhrawadī, willing to concentrate on his Greek or Indian or anyway external inspirations and so ignoring his Islamic and orthodox background.[38]

In his last important work, Muqaddimah ft 'ihn al-istighrdb ("Introduction to the Science of Westernization"), Hanafl tries to pave the way for a factual transfer from the illusory knowledge of an alien world (the East) by the "Orientalists" – officiating priests of a transcendental "Orientalism" – to an analogous, equAlïy illusory, knowledge of the West as another alien reality, analysable by "Westernization".[39] Indeed, the main philosophical and ideological problem to overcome is the surreptitious opposition between the ego (and) and the aliud (dkhir), a distinction meaningful only from the point of view of a triumphant and victorious culture over the others (the culture of imperialist Western countries over Africa and Asia for instance), while a real phenomenological perspective implies an intersubjectivity leading to a true transcendence of exploitation and racism.[40]

Secondly, the history of Western philosophy, which Hanafl draws from Greek antiquity to contemporary times, shows a progressive decadence and atomization of its coherence. The

last stage would be the dissolution of European conscience with the triumph of an irrationalistic mainstream.

In order to demonstrate this assumption, Hanafl argues for a cyclical development of history and historical thought, both in the Western world and in the Oriental (and especially Islamic) world, in successive periods of about seven hundred years. In Islam, the first phase went from Hijrah to Ibn Khaldun, who represented the critical consciousness of Islamic culture at its apogee. After a second phase of decadence corresponding more or less to Ottoman supremacy and failure and subsequent modernization and submission to Westernizing patterns, the fifteenth century of Islam (1400 A.H. corresponds to A.D. 1980) marked the setting forth of a new nahdah. "We are observing, " Hanafl writes, "the end of the second and the beginning of the third stage, the end of colonialism [.isti'mdr] and the beginning of liberation [taharrur]. We are contemporaneous to the movements of liberation and we witnessed Arab revolution, along with Palestinian loss."[41] Of course, temporal boundaries must not be kept too strictly, because history is a changing process; but general patterns are clearly discernible.

Comparatively, Western history, which started six hundred or more years before the Muslim era, is now living at the very beginning of decadence entering its third phase. After attaining the peak of power in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the Western (but we can say perhaps better "Christian") world is running into a descending parabola coinciding with Islamic awakening and rising. The ideological and philosophical crisis of Western outlook and life is proved by the great hold on common and intellectual minds of nihilism (falsafat al-'adam).

The death of God (Idhut mawt al-ildh), the death of spirit (al-mawt fi'l- ruti) in arts and culture "gave expression to a hidden crisis of European consciousness" ("tu'abbir 'an azmati dafinah fi'l-way al-urubi'),[42]Husserl was aware of this emergency and declared it in his Krisis, arguing that the crisis of European sciences is properly the crisis of European humanism ("azmat al-way al-urubi bVl-insdniyyah)."[43]

In these circumstances, what room is there for the Third World in general and the Islamic world in particular? In the Third World, we have recently experienced national independence and the construction of autonomous economic systems, among which Hanafl cites Arabic socialism as a third way between capitalism and Marxist socialism.[44] Indeed, Hanafl applies to the Third World a deeper awareness of history, because China and India, Persia, Mesopotamia and Egypt developed in seven thousand years of uninterrupted tradition and civilization.[45] In the new phase of history now starting, however, those cultures and civilizations, which from the Middle Ages moved from East to West, must come back to the East again: this is the promise of a new world.[46]

This analysis underlines the importance of dialogue in a clear distinction of roles and responsibilities. This dialogue must be aware, anyway, that the Islamic mind is seeking a new resolution and probably, when achieved, the new resolution will bring forth a complete bouleversement of intellectual outlook and political conditions.

NOTES

1 S. Qutb, Social Justice in Islam, trans. J. B. Hardie (New York, 1980): 15–16.

2 I choose, among the many titles I could quote, I. Madkhur, L'"Organon" d'Aristote dans le monde arabe (Paris, 1934), 'Abd al-Rahmàn Badawi, Histoire de la philosophie en Islam (Paris, 1972); Atif al-'lràqï, Thawrah al-'aqlJi'l-falsafat al-'arabiyyah (Cairo, 1984).

3 M. Abduh, Risàlat al-Tawhïd: Exposé de la religion musulmane, trans. B. Michel and M. Abdel Raziq (Paris, 1978): 21–6 passim.

4 R. Caspar, "Le Renouveau du Mo'tazilisme ", Mélanges de l'Institut Dominicain d'Etudes Orientale du Caire, 4 (1957): 141–201.

5 A. Amîn, Duhā al-islàm (preface by Taha Husayn) (Beirut, n.d.), 3: 68.

6 See for example C. Bouamrane: "On ne saurait faire tout uniment des Mu'tazilites les 'rationalistes' de l'Islam…. Leur visée est d'abord apologétique; ils sont par là d'authentiques mutakAlïimün. … La valeur accordée à la raison ne signifie pas qu'ils lui reconnaissent un droit absolu face à la révélation" (C. Bouamrane and Louis Gardet, Panorama de la pensée islamique (Paris, 1984): 42.

7 M. Iqbāl, The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Isla?n (Lahore, 1989).

8 M, Iqbāl, Poema Celeste (Jàvêdnamā), Italian trans. A. Bausani (Bari, 1965): 301; and see p. 87.

9
Iqbal, Reconstruction: 131.

10 P. Vatikiotis, The History of Modern Egypt (London, 1991): 240.

11 P. Vatikiotis, Islam and the State (London and New York, 1987): I quote from the Italian translation, Islam: stati senza nazioni (Milan, 1993): 69.

12 See 'Abd al-Halim Maḥmūd, al-Tafkir al-falsafi fiì-islàm (Cairo, 1984).

13 'Abd al-Halim Mahmiid, The Creed of Islam (London, 1978): 34–5.

14 F. Zakariyyah, Laìcité ou Islamisme (Paris and Cairo, 1989).

15 Ibid.- 38 and 48.

16 Ibid.: 55.

17 Zakl Najlb Mahmiid, Tajdid al-fikr al-'arabi (Beirut and Cairo, 1982): 313; see also p. 317.

18 Ibid.: 23–4.

19 Ibid.: 42ff. More or less the same remark in F. Zakariyyah, Laìcité ou Islamisme: 49.

20 Zakl Najlb Maḥmūd, Tajdid al-fikr al-'arabi: 51.

21 Ibid.: 310.

22 Ibid.: 263.

23 Ibid.-.269.

24 M. Chartier, "La Rencontre Orient–Occident dans la pensée de trois philosophes egyptiens contemporains", Oriente Moderno, 53 (1973): 641.

25 N. H. Abu Zayd in al-Musawwar, 3598 (24 September 1993): 44–6.

26 M. Arkoun, Pour ime critique de la raison islamique (Paris, 1984): 59 and 57.

27 See G. Vattimo and P. A. Rovatti (eds) Il pensiero debole (Milan, 1983): "la razionalità deve, al proprio interno, depotenziarsi, cedere terreno, non aver timore di indietreggiare verso una supposta zona d'ombra, non restare paralizzata dAlīa perdita del riferimento luminoso, unico e stabile, cartesiano. 'Pensiero debole' è Alīora certamente una metafora. … E' un modo di dire provvisorio, forse anche contraddittorio. Ma segna un percorso, indica un senso di percorrenza: è una via che si biforca rispetto Alīa ragione-dominio, comunque ritradotta e camuffata…. Una via che dovrà continuare a biforcarsi" (p. 10).

28 P. K. Feyerabend, "Against Method", paragraph 3, in M. Radner and S. Winokur (eds) Minnesota Studies hi the Philosophy of Science, 4 (Minneapolis, 1970): 17–130.

29 L. Wittgenstein, Tractatus logico-plnlosophicus, 1st ed. (London, 1921), paragraph 7.

30 L. Wittgenstein, Philosophische Untersuclningen (Oxford, 1953).

31 E. Paci, "Prefazione" to E. Husserl, La crisi delle scienze europee e la fenomenologia trascendentale (Milan, 1975): 18.

32 H. Hanafi, al-Yamin wa'l-yasàr fi'l-fikr al-Dīni, fifth volume of al-Dīn waì- thawrah fi Misr (Cairo, 1989): 54.

33 Al-Hurriyyah taharrur in H. Hanafl, Min al-'aqidah ilal-thawrah (Cairo, 1988), 3: 380.

34 See my interview with the author, "Per una nuova lettura dell'IsIàm moderno: intervista ad H. H.", IsIàm: Storia e Civiltà, voi. 39, (2) (1992): 69–79.

35 H. Hanafl, "Des Idéologies modernistes à l'Islam révolutionnaire ", Peuples Mediterranéens, 21 (October–December 1982): 12.

36 Min al-'aqidah ila'l-thawrah, 1: 82.

37 Ibid, -. 88.

38
All these arguments are found in H. Hanafl, Hikmah al-ishrāq wafînümïnülüjiyā, included in Diràsdt islāmiyyah (Beirut, 1982): esp. 226–8. But the author deals with them also in his thesis Les Méthodes d'exégèse: essai sur la science des

fonda- ments de la compréhension Çilm usül al-fùjh) (Cairo, 1965): cxli–cl.

39 H. Hanafl, Muqaddimah fï 'Uni al-istighràb (Cairo, 1991).

40 Ibid.: 695ff.

41 Ibid, -. 698.

42 Ibid.: 715.

43 Ibid.: 718.

44 Ibid.: 735.

45 Ibid.: 737.

46 Ibid.: 768.

CHAPTER 66

Turkey

Mehmet Aydin

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Historical Background

It seems that the traditional Turkish attitude to philosophy in general and to Islamic philosophy in particular never freed itself from the influence of al-GhazzAlī's well-known criticism of the faldsifah. It was at least partly due to this influence that one can see a theologico-philosophical endeavour which one might loosely name as "the tahafut tradition" – a tradition which was largely based on Tahafut al-faldsifah ("The Incoherence of the Philosophers") and which took little notice of the Tahafut al-tahdfut of Ibn Rushd. This does not mean, however, that al-GhazzAlī's criticism of the faldsifah was accepted uncriticAlīy.

In the madrasahs, hikmah in its very broad sense was included within the Ottoman educational system. The great Fatih Sultan Mehmed (ninth/ fifteenth century), whose keen interest in philosophy, religion, art and education in general is well documented in historical studies, ordered Muslihuddin Mustafa Hocazade and Alauddin ʿAlī TusT to re-examine the

main points of the philosophical debate elaborated in al-Ghazzali's Tahafut and bring some clarification concerning the filsafiih din (philosophy–faith) relationship. This historical event proves that the Ottoman intellectuals were still very sensitive towards the theological frontiers of Classical Islamic philosophy.

Both scholars took their duties very seriously and each wrote an independent tahafut. Although the one written by Hocazade was considered somewhat deeper and subtler, both tahdfuts were well received by the Sultan and the madrasah circle.

About a century later Kemal Pasazade, also known as Ibn Kemal (940/1533), wrote a fairly detailed commentary upon the work of Hocazade. This work, which is entitled Hdshiyab 'aid tahafut al-faldsifah, is not a mere commentary; it takes all the main arguments of the three
tahdfuts (al-Ghazzali's, Ibn Rushd's and Hocazade's), explains them very carefully and puts forward criticisms. There is a study of this work by Ahmet Arslan (Professor of Philosophy at IzMīr Ege University). Both this study and the Turkish translation of Kamal Pasazade's Hdshiyah were published by the Turkish Ministry of Culture (Ankara, 1987).

Arslan is an ex-student of Miibahat Kiiyel (Professor of Philosophy at Ankara University), whose pioneering efforts constituted the main source of contemporary interest in the "tahdfiit tradition". She wrote her doctorate studies on Ug Tahafut Bakimindan Felsefe Din Miinasebetleri ("The Relations Between Philosophy and Religion from the Point of View of the three tahafuts") and paved the way for the revitalization of the old Turkish interest in the common

problems of the tahdfuts of al-Ghazzali and Ibn Rushd. This work, published by Ankara University Press in 1956, still stands as a leading contribution to the study of Islamic philosophy.

There is also a work on Hocazade's tahafut entitled Ta'liqat 'ala tahafut al-faldsifah li Hocazade by Muhyiddin Muhammed KarabagI (d. 1535). Another work with similar content is being studied in Ankara University by Ulker Oktem. This work was written by Mestcizade Abdullah Efendi (1148/1735) and is entitled al-Masdlik fi'l-khilafiyyat bayn al-mutakAlīimin wa'l-hukdmd'.

'Alī Tusl's Tahafut, whose full title is Kitab al-zuhr [al-Zdhirah] fi'l- muhdkamah bayn al-Ghazzdli wa'l-hukama', was thoroughly studied and translated into Turkish by Recep Duran, of Ankara University. This work also came out among the publications of the Turkish Ministry of Education in 1980 with the title Tehafutii'l-felasife (Kitabu'z-Zuhr).

There are more books with similar content written by Ottoman theologians in different periods. When these works are edited and studied, the main contribution of the Turkish "tahafut tradition" to the history of Islamic philosophy will be well documented and thus clearly understood.

In spite of this Classical and modern Turkish interest in some major theological and philosophical problems, Islamic philosophy, especially the metaphysical aspect of it, had never become popular in the Ottoman educational system. As has been pointed out above, the GhazzAlīan suspicion of

philosophy has always been kept alive in the intellectual life of the nation.

Fortunately, the situation was quite different with theology (kaldm). Tafsir, Hadīth, fiqh and kaldm were considered the chief disciplines of "Islamic sciences".('Ulum-i Islamiyye) and this kaldm was – perhaps it is needless to point out – the philosophical theology of the post-Ghazzalian period: the theological views of Fakhr-al-Dīn al-RazI, Sayf al-Dīn al-Amldi and others. It was mainly through this theological channel that philosophical ideas managed to survive in the madrasah educational system.

Owing to its direct bearing on theology and jurisprudence, logic had a safe place in that system. A similar position existed for ethics as well. It was studied and taught not as a moral philosophy but as an 'ibn al akhldq whose "IslamicAlīy acceptable form" was given by al-Ghazzali in the relevant section of Ihyd 'uljim al-Dīn. Following the path well trodden by such great Persian moral philosophers as TusI, Dawànī and others, the Ottoman thinker Ktnahzade all Efendi (916/ 1510–980/1572) wrote his Akhlàq-i 'alà'ï, which became a textbook for centuries. The book is interesting and important not because of its contribution to the tradition of tahdhïb al-akhldq but because of its sociological implications for the most brilliant period of the Ottoman history.

While talking of indirect influence, one should not ignore the importance of Ibn Arabl's system upon Turkish intellectuals. In this respect, the place of Sadreddin Konevi is very important.

Turkish Studies in the Area of Manuscripts

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(Adnan Aslan assisted us with this chapter. (O.L. and S.H.N.)

CHAPTER 67

South-east Asia

Zailan Moris

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There are approximately 200 million Muslims in south-east Asia today in the area stretching from southern Thailand, through Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei and Indonesia to the southern Philippines. The Malays constitute the predominant ethnic group of the Muslim population in this part of the world.

The precise date of the introduction of Islam to south-east Asia, or, more specificAlīy, the Malay–Indonesian archipelago, and the place of origin of the Muslims who brought the Islamic religion to this region are not known with certainty, owing to the lack of historical records and data. Consequently, several theses exist on both questions.[1] However, it is evident that by the seventh/thirteenth century there was a definite Muslim presence in north Sumatra[2] and by the eighth/fourteenth century in Trengganu on the north-east coast of Malaysia.[3] In A.D. 1414 the ruler of Malacca embraced Islam and henceforth, until its conquest by the Portuguese in A.D. 1511, Malacca joined Pasai in north Sumatra to become an important centre of Islamic learning and propagation of the Islamic religion throughout the

Malay–Indonesian archipelago. After the fAlī of Malacca, the Muslims moved their centre to Acheh and, like Pasai and Malacca, Acheh very quickly became an important centre of international trade and also of Islam.[4]

The period between the tenth/sixteenth century and the eleventh/seventeenth century witnessed the intense Islamization process of the Malay–Indonesian archipelago, as demonstrated by the tremendous amount of literature produced in the Malay language on a wide range of religious matters covering the fields of Islamic Law (Shari'ah), jurisprudence (fiqh), rational theology ('dm al-kaldm) and Sufism (tasawwuf).[5] The intense Islamization process which took place during these two centuries is directly related to the presence and activities in Acheh of certain religious scholars or 'ulama from Mecca, Yemen and
Gujerat.[6] These scholars not only brought with them important Islamic texts from their homeland but also taught and held discussions on theology, metaphysics and Sufism. Their intellectual activities and discussions made a tremendous impact on the local Muslim population and were instrumental in the production of a vast amount of writings in Malay on matters related to rational theology, metaphysics and tasawwuf. Among the best examples of such writings and the more profound and philosophical in nature are those of the Sufi poet and metaphysician, Hamzah Fansurl (d. c. 1000/ 1600), the Sufi Shaykh, Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatranl (d. 1040/ 1630) the Sufi and 'dlim Nur al-Dīn al-Ranlri (d. 1077/1666) and the Sufi saint (wali) Abd al-Ra'uf al-Singkeli (d. 1104/ 1693).[7]

As a result of the fact that Sufism played a dominant role in the Islamization of the Malay–Indonesian archipelago,

coupled with the natural predisposition of the Malays, who are more aesthetic than philosophical, there did not develop among the Muslims in south-east Asia a distinct tradition of falsafah or hikmah such as that to be found, for example, in Persia and Andalusia.[8] Philosophical reflections on the nature of reality, the nature and destiny of humanity, the origin and structure of the universe and ethics, for example, are to be found mainly in the writings of the Sufis, the seekers after the veritable experience and knowledge (marifah) of God. Metaphysics, cosmology and epistemology can be considered to constitute the doctrinal or theoretical aspect of Sufism and ethics or, more specificAlīy, spiritual ethics and psychology, the practical dimension of tasawwuf. Thus, the following discussion of philosophy in Muslim south-east Asia focuses mainly on the discussions and treatments of subjects of philosophical import and significance, to be found in the writings of the Sufis of the Malay-Indonesian archipelago, especially during the eleventh/seventeenth century in which some of the most outstanding religious writings of this region were produced.

In the eleventh/seventeenth century, there flourished in Acheh a group of Malay Sufis commonly referred to as the Wujudiyyah, who subscribed to Ibn Arabl's doctrine of wahdat al-wujud, or Unity of Being, and Abd al-Karim al-Jlll's doctrine of the Universal Man, or al-insdn al-kdmil[9] The leading figures of the Wujudiyyah and their greatest exponents were Hamzah Fansurl and Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatranl. Opposed to the teachings of the Wujudiyyah were the more orthodox Sufis and ;ulama, of whom the most vocal and influential was Nur al- Dln al-Raniri, who considered the former as heretics (zindiq).'''[10] It is in the mystical writings of Hamzah Fansurl and Shams al-Dīn

al-Sumatrani and the polemics of Nur al-Dīn al-Ranlri against the former that we find some of the most profound expositions and treatments of topics of philosophical import, such as the nature of God – His Essence (al-Dhat), Names and Attributes (al-asma' wa'l-sifdt) and Acts (al-af'at) – and His relation with creation or the Universe, the nature of the world (whether it is eternal or created?), the possibility, extent and limits of human knowledge of God and the "World of the Unseen", the nature of the human soul and issues related to its immortality, salvation and perfection.

In his prose works such as the Shardb al-'dshiqin and Asrdr al- 'arifin, [11] FanSurī, the foremost Malay Sufi poet[12] and the first to produce systematic speculative works in the Malay language, discusses his views on the Attributes of God and their relation to the Divine Essence, the manifestation (tajAlīiyydt) of the Pure Essence of God at the various levels or stages of determination and the relation between God and the created universe. FanSurī's discussion of the indeterminate nature of the Divine Essence which is beyond conception and discourse, the manifestation of the Essence of God in descents (tanazzuldt) involving five stages or levels (martabat) of determinations and the unity of the being of the Universe and the Being of God reveal the unmistakable influence of Ibn Arabl's metaphysical thought.

Another leading exponent of the teachings of the Wujudiyyah was Shams al-Dīn al-Sumatrani. He was both the "Shaykh al-Islam" of Acheh and the spiritual teacher of the sultan of Acheh at the time of Sultan Iskandar Muda (d. A.D. 1636). Al-Sumatrani wrote along the same doctrinal line as FanSurī and was the most important commentator on the latter's works. In the Nur al-daqa'iq, which is the first section of a

part of a metaphysical work by al-Sumatrani which has survived, [13] he expounds the doctrine of the seven grades of Being – extending from the Essence of God which is absolutely undetermined to the World of material bodies ('a lam al-ajsdm) – which had come to characterize and be associated with the Wujudiyyah school; and the esoteric doctrine of the Universal Man. Following 'Abd al-Karlm al-Jili, al-Sumatrani considers the Universal Man as the central and ontologicAlīy comprehensive theo- phany (tajAlīi) or locus (mazhar) of manifestation of the Names and Attributes of Allāh. The doctrine of the Universal Man provides the metaphysical basis for the understanding of the famous Hadīth of Prophet Muḥammad: "He who knows himself knows his Lord."

The most influential and intolerant critic of the Wujudiyyah and of FanSurī's and Sumatrani's teachings in particular, who caused many of the writings of the school to be burnt and some of its members to be persecuted, was the orthodox Sufi and 'dlim, Nur al-Dīn al-Raniri. Al- Ranlri criticized and opposed the teachings of the Wujudiyyah on many grounds. However, the most fundamental issue of disagreement between them was the doctrine of the unity of the Being of God and the Universe which underlies much of the metaphysical outlook of the Wujudiyyah.

In his polemical work, Hujjat al-siddiq It daf' al-zindiq, al-Ranlrl criticizes (although sometimes inaccurately)[14] the teachings of the Wujudiyyah, especially that of FanSurī and al-Sumatrani on the relation
between God and the Universe. In al-Ranlri's understanding, FanSurī's identification of the being of the Universe with the Being of God is tantamount to pantheism, which is contrary

to Islamic teachings. According to al-Ranlrl, a definite distinction should be made between the contingent being of the Universe and the necessary Being of God. Al-Raniri argues that the assertion that the contingent being of the Universe is ultimately reducible to the Being of God logicAlīy implies that the Being of God is totAlīy immanent in the being of the Universe, which consequently entails the negation of God's transcendence and the affirmation of the necessary and eternal nature of the being of the Universe.

Besides his polemical works, al-Raniri also wrote important texts on Sufism, such as the famous Bustan al-salatin, which is a major work consisting of seven books, the first book dealing with the creation of heaven and earth.

In the Malay Islamic world, apart from the speculative writings of the Sufis discussed above, it is also of philosophical significance to mention certain Malay translations, commentaries and adaptations of important Sufi and theological works which enjoyed wide circulation among the Malays and which greatly influenced their religious and philosophical outlook. Noteworthy examples of such works are the Persian text Taj al-saldtin[15] which was translated into Malay in the early eleventh/ seventeenth century and discusses, among other things, the nature of God, humanity and the world and humanity as the central locus of manifestation of God's Names and Attributes; the Malay translation of the Sharh al-'aqa'id al-nasafiyyah, '[16] which is Sa'd al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī's (d. 791/1388) famous commentary on Abu Hafs Najm al-Dīn al-Nasafi's (d. 537/1142) Aqa'id, a comprehensive treatise on the articles of Islamic belief; the Siyar al-salikin ild 'ibadah rabb al-'dbidm[17] by Abd al-Samad Palimbani (d. 1190/1776), which is an abridged translation

and commentary on Abu Hamid al-Ghazzali's magnum opus, the Ihyd 'uliim al-Dīn; the Minhaj al-'dbidin ild jannah rabb al-'dlamin[18] by Da'ud ibn Abd Allāh al-Patani, which is a Malay translation and adaptation of al-GhazzAlī's Ihyd', Kitdb al-asrdr and Kitdb al-qurban ila 'Lldh; the Malay translation and commentary on the esoteric Kitdb al-!Jikam[19] of the Shadhlll shaykh Ibn 'Ata Allāh al-Iskandari; and Kemas Fakr al-Dīn al-Palimbanl's mystical work, al-Mukhtasar, [20] which is an abridged translation and adaptation of WAlī al-Raslan al-Dimishql's treatise on Divine Unity, al-Risdlah fi'l-tawhid.

The twelfth/eighteenth century witnessed the gradual decline of writings on tasawwuf, especially those of a metaphysical nature, and the situation continued throughout the thirteenth/ nineteenth century. In the fourteen th/twentieth century, with the reassertion of Islam in public life in Indonesia and Malaysia, [21] there has been a substantial increase in writings on Islam in general and on Sufism in particular.

Among contemporary Malay intellectuals, the figure who merits mention for his significant contribution and works on matters of philosophical concern and import is Syed Muḥammad Naquib al-Attas. The founder and director of the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, which is based on Islamic principles and concepts of knowledge and education, al-Attas has produced numerous works on Islam and Sufism in the Malay world, such as his major work The Mysticism of Hamzah Fansurl and The Oldest Known Malay Manuscript: a Sixteenth Century Malay Translation of the 'Aqa'id of al-Nasafi.

Like many other Islamic thinkers of the fourteenth/twentieth century, two main concerns can be discerned in al-Attas' works: one, a critique of modernism and secularism and their pervasive and negative influence and effects on Muslim life and institutions and, two, an exposition and re-presentation of the Islamic understanding and treatment of certain fundamental aspects of human life and civilization such as religion, knowledge and education, ethics and morality. In his Islam and Secularism, al-Attas deals with the problem of secularization and its damaging effect on the Islamic world view which is based on the central doctrine of al-tawhid or the Unity of Allāh and the erosion of Islamic values and principles in such important areas as education and ethics. His treatise on Islam: the Concept of Religion and the Foundation of Ethics and Morality discusses the Islamic concept of religion and its implications for the ethical life and the Islamic understanding of such concepts as freedom and responsibility, order and justice at the level of the individual and community, and knowledge and salvation. In recent years, al-Attas has written several works on specific topics in Islamic philosophy such as The Meaning and Experience of Happiness in Islam, The Nature of Man and the Psychology of the Human Soul, On Quiddity and Essence: an Outline of the Basic Structure of Reality in Islamic Metaphysics and Islam and the Philosophy of Science.

In conclusion it can be stated that Islamic philosophical thought in south-east Asia is closely bound up with Sufism (tasawwuf) and theology (kaldm), and its development since the intense Islamicization process of the Malay–Indonesian archipelago in the tenth/sixteenth century indicates and reflects not only the particular situation and resources of the Malays and their understanding and interpretation of the

Islamic religion but also the kinds of contacts and relations they had with Muslims in the other parts of the Islamic world, particularly the Middle East and India, and the types of works which have reached them and made an impact on their intellectual and religious lives.

NOTES

1 For a comprehensive discussion of this subject, see G. W. J. Drewes (1968): 433–59.

2 According to the Achehnese (Malay) chronicles, Islam was introduced into the northern tip of Sumatra around 506/1112 by an Arab missionary by the name of Sheikh AbdAllāh Arif and became established in the area in 601/1204 when Johan Shah became its first sultan. In addition, Marco Polo, who was visiting north Sumatra in A.D. 1292, observed that the inhabitants were Muslims. S. M. N. al-Attas (1969): 11.

3 A stone inscription dated 702/1302 was discovered at Kuala Berang indicating Muslim settlement in the region. See H. S. Paterson (1924): 252–8.

4 In south-east Asia, Islam came through the channel of trade and missionary activities and there existed a close correspondence between economic prosperity and power and religious achievements. See A. H. Johns (1957): 11.

5 Among these writings is a genre referred to as "kitiSh literature". They are systematic scholarly treatises written in Malay on fiqh, kaldm and tasawwuf and which draw heavily from Arabic sources and to a lesser extent Persian. It is

through this genre of literature that Malay, which was previously a language very much lacking in abstract philosophical concepts and technical vocabulary in such fields as jurisprudence and theology, became transformed into a language capable of expressing and transmitting profound and abstract intellectual concepts and ideas to become the cultural and intellectual language of Islam in the region. See R. O. Winstedt (1958): 113–26; also V. I. Braginsky (Leiden, 1973): 29–43.

6 For the names of these iilamct and the texts they brought with them and their intellectual activities and interests, see R. Winstedt (1958): 112–13.

7 Several important studies, mainly in the form of doctoral dissertations submitted to the University of Leiden in the Netherlands, have been done on these figures. See, for example, D. A. Rinkes, Abdoerraoef van Singkel (1909), J. Doorenbos, De Geschriften van Hamzah Pansoeri (1933), C. van Nieuwenhuijze, Shamsu'l- Din van Pasai (1945); also S. al-Attas (1970) (originAlīy a doctoral dissertation submitted to the London School of Oriental and African Studies in 1966).

8 During the pre-Islamic period in which the Malays practised Hinduism and later Budd hism, the more intellectual and philosophical dimensions of these religions were neglected in favour of the mythological aspect. For example, there was a preponderance of Malay translations of the epic, romantic and mythological literature of the Hindu religion such as that of the Mahabharata and Ramayana and hardly of the Upanishads or of important Hindu philosophical tracts. Furthermore, the mythological aspects of Hinduism were translated into the

skilful art form of the wayang or shadow puppet theatre. Similiarly in the case of Buddhism, there did not emerge among the local Malays any Buddhist thinker or philosopher of note or writings on Buddhist philosophy, although in the fourth/tenth and fifth/eleventh centuries Sumatra was an important centre of Buddhism. See al-Attas (1969): 2–10. Also S. T. Alisjahbana (1966a and b).

9 On the Wujudiyyah and their views, see Johns (1957).

10 Al-Raniri wrote two important works Hujjat al-siddiq li daf'al-zindiq and Tibydn fi ma'rifat al-adydn, to refute the teachings of the Wujudiyyah in general and of Hamzah FanSurī in particular. For a comprehensive discussion of Raniri's refutation, see al-Attas (1966).

11
For a romanized Malay version and English translation of these works, see al- Attas (1970): 2.

12 Hamzah FanSurī is well known for his mystical poems (sh'ir) which are of great beauty and power and which struck a new note in Malay poetry. See Winstedt (1958): 155–6; also G. W. J. Drewes and L. F. Brakel (1986).

13 Winstedt (1958): 119.

14 On some of al-Raniri's errors and inaccurate understanding of Fansurl's metaphysical teachings, see al-Attas (1966): chapter 3.

15 Winstedt (1958): 114–16.

16 See al-Attas (1988).

17 P. Voorhoeve (1960): 92.

18 Winstedt (1958): 126.

19 R. L. Archer (1937).

20 A. H. Johns (1980): 173.

21 See J. Esposito (1987): Introduction.

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CHAPTER 68

Orientalism and Islamic Philosophy

Oliver Leaman

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When Edward Said published his critique of Oriental studies (Orientalism, 1978) many of those who wrote on topics connected with the Middle East and its cultures felt that they had to respond to his arguments. He argued that many of the writers on the Middle East had found it difficult to avoid regarding the area and its people as exotic and essentially "other" from the point of view of the West, and that they incorporated colonialist assumptions in their treatment of the cultures of the area. Frequently he points to the negative stereotypes which Western scholars used when describing the people and practices of the region, and he suggests that these have their basis in the very unequal power relations which existed at that time, and indeed continue to exist today, between the West and the Middle East. Then of course one has to take into account the long history of conflict between the European countries and what was regarded as the threatening power of Islam, a conflict which extended over many centuries and which actually resulted in physical conflict on many occasions. Using the tools of the literary

theorist, Said showed how difficult as a result was an objective treatment of the Middle East, and he argued that if an accurate picture is to be constructed it must involve an awareness by the writers themselves of the position from which they are writing. That is, they should acknowledge that they are not approaching the issues with complete scientific detachment but that they themselves are part and parcel of an ideological system which is bound to affect how they set about their work. This does not mean that it would be impossible to write accurately and well on the Middle East, but rather that, if such writing is to be possible, the writers must make the effort to understand how what they say and what they examine are aspects of the culture which they inhabit, a culture
which is strongly characterized by negative attitudes to different customs and practices.

Said's book led to a lively debate in the world of Islamic studies in general, and many of the inhabitants of that world took great exception to his approach. Others were broadly supportive, and they incorporated what they took to be his message in their work. This is particularly true of some subjects, the study of European paintings of Middle Eastern themes, for example. The analysis of these paintings has been fruitfully deepened by an understanding of the sorts of attitudes towards women and the Middle East which were then current in Western society. Without understanding where the artists were coming from, it might be said, it is difficult to know how to interpret their work. They are not just painting pictures which are on topics that occur to them on a particular occasion. Rather, they are part of a cultural movement which sees people from the Middle East in a certain way, and that way enters into the style and content of the works of art. It is

important to grasp the nature of the tradition within which they are working to understand what they are doing.

But it was not only those who wrote on art who took on board many of Said's ideas. Elis criticisms of historians, literary and cultural historians, analysts of religion and social scientists frequently struck home, and many practitioners in these areas came to reappraise the ways in which they went about their work. They sought to understand, and often challenge, the presuppositions which underlay their approach to their work. When one considers the large numbers of books which have emerged in recent years with titles dealing with "the Muslim mind" or "the Arab personality", perhaps not enough writers have considered the theoretical difficulties of their approach to the Islamic world, since many of these works are premissed on the axiom that there is a basic and deep distinction between Western forms of thought and life and those to be found in the Islamic world. The end of the Cold War and the need to find a new enemy has led to the rediscovery of "the threat of Islam" which has lain below the surface for many centuries in Western culture. Those impressed by the work of Edward Said would find the notion of an Eastern/Western, Christian/Muslim, Us/Them and Same/Other dichotomy running through forms of cultural expression highly problematic, and would seek to challenge it as a starting-point in scholarly work, by contrast with the sort of writing which has become so popular recently as a result of the desperate search by the West for a new bogey to fear and to challenge.

Said does not have much to say about philosophy in his seminal work, but it is clear that his arguments are relevant to the study of Islamic philosophy. The latter is often regarded

by the commentators as not being the same as other sorts of philosophy, and so should be studied in diverse

ways. Why? Sometimes it is argued that Islam had an enormous impact upon the structure of Islamic philosophy, and so one should not just study the arguments but also analyse the ways in which religious issues pervade those arguments, albeit surreptitiously and not openly. This seems to be a promising line, given that so many of the philosophers themselves make a sharp distinction between what is esoteric (bātin) and what is exoteric (zāhir), and often take care to express themselves in ways which will obscure their arguments from those for whom they are not intended. This view of the interpretation of Islamic philosophy has been outlined in the works of Leo Strauss, and his followers have utilized it throughout their approach to the area. Strauss considers a whole range of philosophy to contain a hidden message, one dominated by religious considerations, and he argues in many and varied ways that if we look at the texts in the right sort of way this feature becomes apparent. I have criticized this approach in the past, and its supporters and critics have produced fervent arguments to defend their respective views. What it is interesting to examine here are the Orientalist assumptions of the sort of view which Strauss advocates. The assumption is that Islamic philosophy should not be regarded as philosophy primarily, but more as a code which needs to be cracked in order to discover the opinions of the philosophers. It is seen as a form of literature which disguises the real opinions of its writers, and it is the job of the interpreter to find out what these real opinions are, to pierce the layers of concealment and uncover the genuine beliefs of the author.

It is certainly true that when one does philosophy one is often interested in discovering the real views of the particular philosopher with which one is dealing; but philosophy is far more than just the history of philosophy. The main purpose of philosophy is to understand arguments, and to assess those arguments and construct new arguments around them. The approach which Strauss advocates places the entire emphasis upon the historical aspects of Islamic philosophy. It is as though the philosophy itself is not worth considering as philosophy, so it is more appropriate to consider it as interesting and difficult writing which requires unravelling, a fascinating intellectual problem about understanding the author as opposed to understanding the argument. The latter is not worth doing, since the argument is bound not to be very interesting anyway. Since the Straussians think that Islamic philosophy is basically a vain attempt at reconciling religion with Greek philosophy, and then disguising the author's genuine view that the latter is a better guide to the truth than the former, the arguments are not going to be very interesting. They are going to be predictable and unoriginal. If one is looking for an intellectual problem, then, it will not be found with the argument but rather with the way in which the argument is embedded in a complex form of language which disguises it. Yet when one examines Islamic philosophy

one comes across writers who put great effort and care into the logical structure of their argument, and even a cursory glance at those arguments is bound to lead to respect. The philosophers themselves certainly regarded themselves as philosophers, and even those who were hostile to philosophy were concerned to put their objections in language which would fit in with the sort of reasoning which the philosophers used. The notion that one could sweep away all this philosophical output by regarding it as a mysterious form of

literature is Orientalism at its worst. It implies that the philosophers in the Islamic world could not really be thought of as philosophers just like philosophers everywhere else, but should be regarded as capable only of a lesser and inferior activity, using philosophical language to present unoriginal views in convoluted ways.

There are many writers on Islamic philosophy who are not Straussians but who adopt a methodology which also appears to rest on Orientalist assumptions. These writers will be more concerned with the analysis of the language of a text than with the meanings to be found in the text. Actually, given the sorry state of manuscripts in the area of Islamic philosophy, there is a great need for careful and scholarly research to try to establish the precise nature of the text in question. This is especially the case when the work is present in a variety of manuscripts which differ from one another, or is in a language other than that in which it was originally written. In that case the original text needs to be constructed out of the available translations, and this is a difficult and time-consuming process. Since much Islamic philosophy also refers to so much outside of itself, to Greek thought, for instance, and to Islam itself, there is a need for commentators to note carefully the sorts of references which the text is making, since readers might otherwise not follow the sort of argument which is being presented. All this sort of work is vital if progress is to be made in our understanding of Islamic philosophy, but it cannot be the end of studying such philosophy. The end, if there is an end, lies in the analysis of the arguments, not as fossils in a museum of the history of ideas but as part and parcel of the development of philosophy. That development consists in the continual examination and analysis of arguments. It is certainly not necessarily the case

that the arguments of each succeeding generation of thinkers are superior to earlier arguments, but they are all parts of a tradition, and the key to understanding that tradition lies in understanding the arguments. Those scholars who write on Islamic philosophy as though one could do no more but reconstruct and describe the text are like surgeons whose brilliance makes an operation succeed, only to have the patient die.

There is an approach to Islamic philosophy which might be called Orientalism in reverse. This suggests that the subject can really be understood only by Muslims, since only they are capable of appreciating the religious aspects of the area. Non-Muslims may approach Islamic
philosophy to a degree, but they are necessarily limited by their background to a partial view. This might be classified as a type of Orientalism, since it is based upon the presupposition of basic and significant distinctions between Muslims and non-Muslims, between what might be broadly called the "East" and the "West". This is just as problematic as the type of Orientalism which Said identifies. There are clearly differences in looking at a form of cultural expression when one comes from within that culture as compared with being an outsider, but it is not obvious that the former has an advantage over the latter. Insiders may miss just as much, as outsiders, albeit different things. Insiders may not notice aspects of the area which appear problematic or interesting to outsiders. It is worth adding that philosophers have a good deal of experience of examining arguments which have been produced within a cultural environment very different from their own. The sorts of religious beliefs held by Plato and Bishop Berkeley, for instance, are very different from the beliefs of many of their modern interpreters, and yet this does

not seem to be an obstacle to their comprehension. It is important yet again for us to emphasize that in philosophy it is the arguments which are of most interest, and the actual religious beliefs, or lack of them, of the arguers themselves is not a crucial part of the equation. A whole range of interesting biographical questions could be raised about individual philosophers, and similarly useful observations could be made about the period in which they worked, yet if we are primarily concerned with philosophy and not with the histoiy of ideas these issues are of minor significance.

Yet it might be thought that this is rather too quick, since one of the characteristics of Islamic philosophy is precisely that it is Islamic, that is, primarily religious. If a philosophy is religious, then one perhaps requires criteria for its examination which are distinct from those appropriate to a non-religious form of philosophy. We have to be careful about our use of terms here. When a philosophy is called "Islamic" it is not suggested that everything which is produced under this label directly or indirectly imports religious issues. Quite the contrary. We are talking about philosophy appearing or influenced by the forms of thought current at a particular time in the Islamic world, and as the reader will have seen by even a cursory inspection of some of the chapters in these volumes, many of the philosophers are involved in discussions which have nothing at all to do with religion in the narrower sense of the term. As one would expect with a form of philosophical expression which covers such a long period in time and so many diverse thinkers, there is an immense variety of ideas, themes and arguments. It is a gross over-simplification to try to characterize this variety as being especially wedded to a particular religious perspective, although most of it appeared within a certain religious

context. This brings out the radical error in claiming that one needs to share a religious perspective in order to understand what is produced in

relation to that perspective. There is no one way in which to study a philosophical tradition, and the only criteria to be employed are those applicable to all philosophy including Christian and Jewish, the criteria of valid demonstration.

The central flaw of Orientalism is that it intrudes on the pursuit of philosophy by illegitimately insisting on just one approach to the understanding of such philosophy. The chief objection here is not so much in the way in which Orientalists interpret texts, although that is bad enough, but more in the idea that there could be just one way of going about such work. This stereotyping of texts goes hand in hand with the stereotyping of ethnic groups, and is just as objectionable. It is to be regretted, then, that the growing influence of the critique of Orientalism which Said produced has yet to have much impact upon the study of Islamic philosophy, by contrast with its effect upon other disciplines in the area of Islamic studies. It reveals how isolated much study of Islamic philosophy remains from the hermeneutic developments in other forms of enquiry.

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X

Interpretation of Islamic philosophy in tne West

CHAPTER 69

Henry Corbin: His work and influence

Pierre Lory

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The work of Henry Corbin extends over different areas of Islamic thought and includes a considerable informative contribution, with editions of texts and doctrinal translations and commentaries. But its significance goes far beyond what is commonly called "Orientalism". Corbin did not seek to display the teaching of the authors he studied in the display cases of a museum of the philosophy of the past. Rather, his aim was to show how far their themes and their presence in the world could illuminate and stimulate intellectual activity at any time, and especially in our own time so often forgetful of its own beginnings.

Born in 1903, Corbin followed a course of philosophy at the Sorbonne from 1919. There he especially attended the courses of Etienne Gilson on the texts of Ibn Sīnā translated into Latin, which made him aware even at this early stage of the importance of angelology in the noetic of this philosopher, and led him to start learning Arabīc in 1925. His frequenting of the Ecole des Langues Orientales led him to make the

acquaintance of Louis Massignon, an Orientalist with a burning passion for spiritual Islam, and the person who informed him about a text which was to be decisive in his philosophical path, the Hikmat al-ishrāq of Shihāb al-Dīn Yahyā Suhrawardī. It is worth mentioning that Corbin spent much of the 1930s in Germany. There he made the acquaintance of, among others, Rudolf Otto and Martin Heidegger. He was one of the first in France to emphasize the importance of the work of Heidegger and to translate some of it into French. Henry Corbin's interest in German philosophy or in the new Protestant approach of Karl Barth to exegesis took place at the same time as his Islamic investigations, inspired by the same research problems, those of the interpretation of a sacred text and concerning the nature of existence. As part of the mission to the French
Institute in Istanbul in 1940 he was obliged by political and military events to stay there until 1945, finishing off his work there on Suhrawardī. A decisive event for the rest of his life was his trip to Iran in September 1945. The welcome which many important intellectuals and academics provided, and his love for Persian culture, led him to stay in Tehran and resulted in the foundation of the Department of Iranology of the French Institute in the same city.

Appointed in 1954 to the Section des Sciences Religieuses of the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes in succession to Louis Massignon, he split his activities equally between France and Iran. From 1949 he also attended each year the Eranos Circle in Ascona, where he met, among many other intellectuals of the utmost importance, C. G. Jung, M. Eliade and G. Scholem. It is within the context of these meetings that he published a very important part of his work, which he tirelessly continued until the end of his life. Upon retiring

from the Sorbonne Corbin became a member of the Iranian Academy of Philosophy founded by S. H. Nasr and taught there until 1978 and the illness which resulted in his death.

Corbin's work is very rich and variegated, and treats the philosophical and spiritual heritage of Islam in three main ways.

Sacred and Hermeneutic Writing

Henry Corbin undertook a deep reflection on what he called "prophetic philosophy" which is acquired by adherence to a revealed text. Believers – whether Muslim, Christian or Jew – find themselves necessarily in a hermeneutic situation. They seek in the Book for meanings which they discover and test against all that they know and experience in the world. Conversely, the Book will turn around the axes of its own life and will colour its most intimate acts. Hence the facts of one's existence are determined by the act of interpreting oneself, and through this hermeneutic Corbin tried to grasp the basic spirit of some Christian theologians (Luther, Hamann), but especially of Islamic philosophy. This can be particularly observed in the question raised by Shi'ism. After the revelation of the Qur'ān to the Prophet, a new demand was born – to discover the depth of the divine message without altering its outward sense. For those believers who cannot be limited to a literal and agnostic application of the law, there is a need to uncover the hidden, the esoteric (bātin), which is the inner aspect of what is the apparent meaning (zāhir). It is to

answer this need that we get the mission of the possessor of walāyah, that is, the Shi'ite Imām. He does not live in the community of the faithful only in order to guide their exegesis and to be the guarantor of the divine mission. As a receptacle, the bearer of heavenly light, he becomes himself the object of this exegesis. If the Imām is the Perfect Man, the first model of creation, that implies that the Qur'ān, which is the emanation of the first word and divine archetype, both indicates and completely forms the person of the Imām.

A very similar view is found in Sufi gnoseology, where the notion of wālayah is entirely separated from the historical figure of the Imāms originating with Alī in order to be applied to the invisible hierarchy of saints (awliyā; walī in the singular). The work of Haydar Āmulī in particular (see Corbin (1991), 3) underlines the deep similarities between the fundamental intuitions of the Shi'ire gnosis and the doctrine of the greatest of the Sufi theosophers, such as Ibn 'Arabī (Corbin 1977).

The hermeneutic strategy discussed here is not limited to the mere understanding of the Qur'ānic text. The variety of meanings, the discovery of an internal meaning, can be applied to any conscious act. Some alchemists like Jābir ibn Hayyān or Jaldakī (Corbin 1986) discovered a divine image in their laboratory work. The great Sufi Rūzbihān Baqlī saw in the love of feminine beauty the supreme supernatural beauty (Corbin (1991), 3). But this perception itself requires a place and a form for the object perceived, just as it assumes that the hermeneuticist has an organ of metaphysical perception. It is at this point that we need the concept of 'ālam al-mithāl, the "imaginal world" or the creative imagination, about which Corbin wrote so extensively.

The Imaginal World and Angelology

To make progress in the understanding of the Divine by interpreting the Qur'ān and the world through transcendental exegesis (ta'wī l) assumes in effect some intermediary stages of existence between God and human consciousness. For God in Himself is unknowable, indescribable and impenetrable. This leads to the dangerous theological position which Corbin characterizes as the "paradox of monotheism", whereby believers try to describe God using their normal concepts and mental images, but succeed only in making Him out to be rather like the believers themselves. In order to worship this God they fall into an involuntary idolatry. To avoid this pitfall we can refuse all theological or philosophical reflection (as in Hanbalism and Zāhirism), which leads to a pious agnosticism which says in a legalistic manner, "God has not to be known, but to be obeyed."

Now, the mystics of Islam felt that between our terrestrial domain and the divine Absolute, the universe has stages, distinct worlds which are in correspondence with each other. Immediately higher than the human terrestrial world is the world of angelic beings, equipped with subtle bodies, which is the intermediary world where the spirits take form
before becoming events in the terrestrial world, and it is the first paradise where the souls rise after their separation from their bodies. From our life here, each person can have access to the vision of "suspended images" (Ibn 'Arabī) through visions during sleep or while awake, and by intuitions which,

are for them just signs on their internal journey. It is in order to distinguish these visionary apperceptions from what language commonly calls "imaginary" that Corbin had recourse to the Latin term "imaginal", emphasizing thus both their ontological consistency and their transformational impact and the metamorphosis of the human soul.

Corbin shows how this intermediary world of angelic entities has played an essential role in the development of theosophy in medieval Islam. The cosmology and the noetic of Ibn Sīnā are expressed by a procession in which each "sacred-holy angel" stands in for each of the ten intellects emanating from the Necessary Being (Corbin 1979). It is at this point, as Corbin frequently emphasized, that the negation by Ibn Rushd of this angelic structure marks a rupture which is essential to the history of philosophy, notably in the impact of this "Averroist" philosophy on Latin Europe. The intermediary function of the angel was emptied of meaning by philosophical and theological thought, and believers in the West had to direct their faith towards an immense and incommensurable deity. The world of the prophet and that of the philosopher would in future be separate and virtually independent of each other.

It is Suhrawardī (Corbin (1991), 3) who first described with demonstrative precision the ontological status of this imaginal world, presented under the form of a complex angelology and playing a role in the noetic and interior experience of the mystic. The 'ālam al-mithāl makes possible the meeting of individual souls with archangelic powers and also creates a space where the path of the philosopher and that of the interpreter of the Qur'ān can come together in a common experience of spiritual life. But it is Mullā ṣadrā, a passionate

reader and commentator on Ibn Sīnā like Suhrawardī and Ibn Arabī, who accomplished the most gripping synthesis of "prophetic philosophy" in Islam. Turning back to the Ibn Sīnan perspective, he gave to existence primacy over essence. It is the very act of existing which is in some way the essence of each individual. This act has different states of intensification ("intrasubstantial movement") which cross between the ascending and descending ontological levels where the imaginal world quite naturally finds its place.

Suffering God and Mystic Union

All the philosophical enterprise of Ibn Sīnā, Suhrawardī, Mullā Ṣadrā and many other philosophers and theosophers studied by Henry Corbin have only one end: making clear the route to the understanding of the Absolute,
towards that experience of union with the One who is the ultimate goal of both the medieval philosopher and the mystic. It is probably in the work of Ibn ʿArabī that we can find the most detailed description of this experience of the Divine, and this is where the majority of the great spiritual thinkers of Islam in the following centuries went to understand their own spiritual lives. For a long time Ibn ʿArabī dwelt on the nature of the origin of instantiation. Unknowable Divine Essence, hidden, wishing to be known, creates the world and people in particular, and calls the latter to re-cognize themselves in their turn under the influence of this creative nostalgia. He also insisted on the individual aspect of the Sufi experience. All believing servants (ʿabd)

investigate the consciousness not of the totally unpredictable cosmic God, but of their rabb, of their Master, of this particular aspect of the Divine which has been manifested in them and which they have the responsibility to actualize. This aspiration of the servant to encounter and really to become the Master is not a purely mental investigation. It involves all one's being, and shows itself by awakening in the heart of the Sufi a love for God which itself is only a refraction of divine eternal Love (Corbin 1977). However, Corbin did not limit his study to the Sufism oi Ibn 'Arabl. He published substantial studies on dozens of other outstanding authorities on mysticism and Islamic theosophy.

Conclusion

The legacy of Henry Corbin is of decisive importance, not only for the understanding of a part of Islamic thought previously little known or understood but also because it made the Western public aware of an agenda and a spirituality which had been forgotten or repressed, and which is common to all the "religions of the Book". Believers seek sense in their lives in the comprehension of a revealed message, but they can understand this divine message only in so far as they open themselves up as transcendent subjects.

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(Translated by O. L.)

CHAPTER 70

Islamic philosophy in Russiaand the Soviet Union

Alexander Knysh

This chapter concentrates on the Soviet period because, before the Bolshevik revolution of 1917, studies of Islamic philosophical thought (in contrast to those which focused on the religious, social and political aspects of Islamic civilization) were few and far between. In prerevolutionary Russia, the study of "Oriental philosophy" occupied a fringe position between "religious studies" and the political and social history of the Muslim world. As in the West, such studies were conducted primarily by philologists. No wonder, then, that Russian Orientalists normally addressed falsafah only in passing, as an aside to the treatment of their principal topics, the Muslim religion and belles lettres. As exception to the rule, I would cite a brilliant, if concise, study of Persian mystical philosophy by V. Zhukovski, Chelovek i poznanie u persidskikh mistikov ("Man and Gnosis in [the Teachings of] Persian Mystics") (St Petersburg, 1895). A thorough and original analysis of Mu'tazilite thought based on rare manuscripts was carried out by P. K. Zhuzé (i.e. Jawzi), a scholar of Syrian–Lebanese background turned Christian

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Semenov and V. Barthold, can hardly be described as "philosophical" in the strict sense. Owing to a lack of special philosophical training, these scholars approached falsafah as philologists and culturologists par excel
lence. Their primary goal was to understand Muslim literary works better rather than Muslim theoretical thought.

Under Soviet rule, philosophical discourse in general came to be dominated by the official Marxist—Leninist ideology with its heavy emphasis on the purportedly perennial struggle between "materialism" and "idealism", and the resultant conflict between an unbending religious "obscurantism" fostered by the ruling elites and a more secular "free thinking" associated with the struggle for social equality and intellectual emancipation of the masses. These motifs and the resulting stereotypes became so deeply embedded in the mentality of Soviet scholars that even the cleverest among them could not help paying tribute, wittingly or not, to this rigid ready-made scheme. Only in the 1980s, and especially with the advent of glastnost (openness and free speech) and perestroyka in 1985, did Russian students of Islamic

philosophy, as well as their colleagues in related fields of intellectual endeavour, became cognizant of the inherent biases and pitfalls of the orthodox Marxist approach. Their attempts to remedy the "past transgressions", however, were brought to a halt by an overall collapse of academic publishing and the growing indifference to their studies on the part of the readers who were reduced to bare survival by the economic dislocation of the post -perestroyka period.

As Russian academia begins to shake off the stupor induced by the "time of troubles", one may predict that the "revisionist" trend in the Soviet/Russian humanities, which was propelled into prominence by the perestroyka mentality, will continue to hold sway over Russian researchers. At this point, however, it is difficult to foretell what concrete forms this "revisionist" stance will take in the long term, and whether or not one should expect a comeback of a revamped Marxist concept of intellectual history some time in the future.

Turning to the concrete studies of Islamic philosophy in the former Soviet Union, I would stress its overriding emphasis on the "rationalist" tradition at the expense of the religious, mythological, mystical, legal, etc. aspects of the Muslim intellectual tradition. Some Muslim thinkers received the lion's share of the scholars' attention, whereas others – including such important figures as Miskawayh, al-Kindī, al-Ash'arī, Abu Bakr al-Razī, the Ikliwan al-Safa and the Mu'tazilites, al-Juwaynī, al-Tawhidī, al-Ghazzalī, Suhrawardī al-Maqtul, Ibn Arabī, al-Taftazanī, etc. – were largely (and unjustly) neglected. For a number of reasons (the emergence of nationhood and the resultant "cultural" competition among the Central Asian nation states being among the most

important), several Muslim thinkers became the preferred subjects of academic investigation that was sometimes conducted by the entire local institutes of Oriental studies. Among these "lucky ones" were (in order of priority) Ibn Sīnā, al-Farabī, al-Blrunī and - to a somewhat lesser extent Nasir-i Khusraw, Ibn Tufayl, Ibn Khaldun, Ibn Rushd and Nasīr

al-Din al-Tüsí. Studies devoted to these thinkers – especially the first three of them - are legion.

A few of these are: A. S. Ivanov, Uchenie al-FArabī o poznavatel'nykh sposobnostyakh cheloveka ("Al-Fárábl's Doctrine of the Epistemological Faculty of Man") (Alma-Ata, 1977); Al-FArabī: nauchnoe nasledstvo ("AJ-FArabī's Scholarly Legacy"), a collection of articles (no known editor) (Moscow, 1975); Zh. M. Abdilin and M. S. Burabaev (eds), Al-FArabī: Istoriko-filosofskie traktaty ("A I-FArabī: Historical and Philosoph ical Works"), translated from the Arabīc (Alma-Ata, 1985); Muhammad Khayrullaev, Abu Nasr al-FArabī (Moscow, 1982) (this is just one of at least five books on al-Fárábí written by this prolific Central Asian scholar); Khayrullaev (ed.), Filosofskoe nasledie narodov Sredney Azii i bo'ba idei ("Philosophical Legacy of the Peoples of Central Asia and the Struggle of Ideas") (Tashkent, 1988); A. H. Kasimdjanov, Abu Nasr al-FArabī (Moscow, 1982). An annotated bibliography on al-FArabī in Soviet studies can be found in A. V. Sagadeev, "Otechestvennaya literatura ob al-FArabī v god ego 1100-letnego yubileya", Narody Azii i Afriki (currently Vostok), 6 (1977): 190–7.

Equally vast is the volume of scholarly literature devoted to Ibn Sīnā. Apart from several complete and selected

translations (with copious annotations) of his works into Russian, Uzbek and Tajik, mention can be made of the following study of the Shaykh al-Ra'ls: Ibn Sine (Avitsenne) 1000 let: materialyyubileynykh konferentsiy ("A Thousand Years Anniversary Since Ibn Siná's Birth") (Moscow, 1980). This work faithfully represents the spectrum of approaches to Ibn Síná in Soviet Orientalist scholarship and, moreover, furnishes a helpful bibliography.

Al-Blrüní's philosophical views are treated in a collective study entitled Beruni i gumanitarnie nauki ("Blrünl and the Humanitarian Disciplines") (Tashkent, 1972) and a host of other studies of Bírünl's Weltanschauung produced in the capital of the former Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic. Ibn Khaldün's "philosophy of history" was treated in a monograph by S. M. Batsieva, Istoriko-sotsiologicheskiy traktat Ibn Khalduna "Mukaddima" ("Ibn Khaldün's Tract on History and Sociology: The 'Muqaddima'") (Moscow, 1965). She also made a complete Russian translation of the Muqaddimah which, unfortunately, remains unpublished.

Of general studies of Islamic philosophy mention should be made of the following: S. N. Grygoryan (ed.), Iz istorii filosofii Sredney Azii i Irana ("Notes on the History of Central Asian and Iranian Philosophy") (Moscow, 1960) (contains translations of original Islamic texts, including al-Ghazzali's al-Munqidh min al-dalal, etc.); G. B. Shaymuhambetova, Araboyazyehnaya filosofía srednevekov'ya i klassicheskaya traditsia ("The Medieval Arabophone Philosophy and the Classic [Greek] Tradition") (Moscow, 1979); E. Frolova, Problema very i znaniya v arabskoy filosofii ("The Problem of Faith and Knowledge in Arabīc Philosophy") (Moscow,

1983); M. T. Stepaniants, Musul'manskie konlseptsii v filosofii i politike: XIX—XX vv. ("Muslim Concepts in Philosophy and Politics: the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries") (Moscow, 1982); V. Burov, D. Djohadze et al. (eds) Filosofskoe nasledie narodov Vostoka i sovremennost' ("The Philosophical Legacy of the Oriental Peoples and the Contemporary World") (Moscow, 1983); Iz istorii filosofii osvobodivshikhsya stran ("Towards the History of the Philosophical Traditions of the Liberated | i.e. Third World] Countries") (Moscow, 1983) (collection of articles on the history of Islamic philosophy); N. Kyrabaev, Sotsyal'naya filosofia musul'manskogo Vostoka: epokha srednevekov'ya ("Social Philosophy of the Muslim East in the Middle Ages") (Moscow, 1987).

Isma'lll philosophy and mystical thought have been treated in many studies, including H. Dodikhudoev, Filosofia krest'yanskogo bimta ("The Philosophy of Peasant Uprising" - i.e. Isma'llism - sic'-) (Dushanbe, 1987);

Ismatov, Panteistichekaya filosofskaya traditsiya v persidko-tajikskoy poezii IX-XV vv. ("Pantheistic Strand within the Perso-Tajik Poetry of the 9th-15th Centuries") (Dushanbe, 1986); M. Stepanyants, Filosofskie aspekty sufizma ("Philosophical Aspects of Sufism") (Moscow, 1987) English translation 1989); N. Prygarina (éd.), Sufizm v kontekste musul'- manskoy kul'tnry ("Sufism in the Context of Muslim Culture") (Moscow).

. A fuller annotated bibliography of Sufi studies in Russia and the Soviet Union can be found in my chapter on Sufism in S. Prozorov, Islam: Istoriograficheskie ocherki ("Islam: Studies on Historiography") (Moscow, 1991): 109–207.

Most of the studies listed above, as well as my own, are marred by the typical biases and prejudices of the "ideological" view of religion and philosophy that the Communist Party imposed on the official Soviet academia. They hinge on the obsessive search for "materialist tendencies" in the works of the great Muslim philosophers as well as a disparaging critique of the "bourgeois" and "idealistic" treatment of Islamic history and culture.

Llead and shoulders above most of these works stand the studies by Artur Sagadeev, whose Ibrt Rushd (Averroes) (Moscow, 1973) and I bn Sina (Avicenna), 2nd ed. (Moscow, 1980) are solid and original contributions to the field. Collective works published under his editorship are also marked by a (relatively) high standard of scholarship and original research rather then the reshuffling of the ideas freely borrowed from Western scholars – a feature that is typical of the many works mentioned in the previous paragraphs. See, e.g., Sagadeev (ed.), Filosofskaya i obshchstvennaya mysl' stran Azii i Afriki ("Philosophical and Social Teachings of Asia and Africa") (Moscow, 1981); Filosofia zarubezhnogo Vostoka o sotsial'noy such- nosti cheloveka ("Oriental Philosophy on the Social Nature of Man") (Moscow, 1986) (includes Sagadeev's contribution on the philosophical ideas of Ibn Tufayl, pp. 54—78). See also his article "Gumanisticheskie

idealy musul'manskogo sredenevekov'ya" ("Humanistic Ideals of the Muslim World in the Middle Ages"), pp. 43—62, in an interesting collection, Chelovek kak filosofskaya problema: Vostok—Zapad ("Man as a Philosophical Problem: East and West"), ed. N. Kyrabaev (Moscow, 1991).

Sagadeev's lifelong study of Islamic philosophy is summarized in his only major work (aside from a few articles) published in English, namely Taufic Ibrahim and Artur Sagadeev, Classical Islamic Philosophy (Moscow).

— a real tour de force by the two prominent Russophone experts on Islamic philosophy. Another translation of some Russian works on falsafah is M. Stepanyants (ed.), Muslim Philosophy in Soviet Studies (New Delhi, 1988). This book includes essays on the Islamic Peripatetic tradition, Ibn Sīnā, Ibn Tufayl, Ibn Rushd and Ibn Khaldun, as well as Rum! and Muhammad Abduh.

This is not the place to dwell on the merits and drawbacks of all these works. In general, their scholarly level is inferior to that of their Western counterparts. Furthermore, they are riddled with the stereotypes and biases outlined at the beginning of this chapter. This, however, does not mean they can be indiscriminately brushed aside without even being looked into. Some of the studies of falsafah produced in the Soviet Union contain interesting insights and new approaches to the subject which are not to be found in the works of Western Islamicists.

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(M. Stepanyants and N. Efremova assisted with the bibliography. (O. L. and S. H. N.))

CHAPTER 71

The possibility of a philosophy of Islam

Shabbir Akhtar

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Magic and arguably poetry are arts condemned by the Author of the Qur'ān (2: 102; 26: 224—6). Would academic philosophy of religion have escaped condemnation if the Sacred Text had been revealed in a different age or in a different culture (like, say, Socrates' Greece)?

Ever since the first currents of Hellenic philosophy overwhelmed the simple literalism of the Muslim creed, Islamic "orthodoxy" has never ceased to frown on the power of philosophy to plague its labours. Philosophy, we are told, creates at worst unnecessary doubts and hesitations, and at best mere conjecture and confusion; scripture by contrast, it is said, offers assurances for Paradise. The "orthodox" view prevalent among Muslims, as among orthodox Jews and orthodox Christians, is simple: there is neither the time nor the need for philosophy in a world under the burden of divine nemesis and blessed with the benefits of divine tuition. Does not the book of Allah contain sufficient guidance and education for the faithful student?

Here I intend to explore and refute various religious objections to any philosophical approach to the Muslim faith. I begin with the important if standard religious objection about the essential impiety of philosophical method when applied to revealed conviction. How can the philosopher judge the Word of Allah - one's Lord? Muslim scholars have, from the earliest times, emphasized the Qur'ān's role as final arbiter, as secreting a criterion (Furqdn; 25: 1; 3: 4) for judgment. Thus, revelation supplies, we are told, a supernatural verdict on humanity and all things natural or human, including human reason ('aql). God judges us; we do not judge God or His message. "Is not Allah, " asks the Qur'ān rhetorically, "the best of judges?" (95: 8).

Allah is indeed the best of judges. It is of course true - necessarily
true – that what God says about us is superior in insight to what we might say about ourselves or God. To say, however, that God's (alleged) revelation should be assessed by use of the normal methods of scrutiny is not to deny the ultimacy or primacy of God's views. It is merely a comment on how to seek to determine what God's views actually are, and the recommendation is that we should use the only apparatus we possess, namely, the methods of reason. (Remember that rejecting the supremacy of reason is one thing; rejecting the importance of reasoning is quite another.)

Related to the first objection is the accusation that reliance on reason in discussions of revealed claims is in effect intellectually idolatrous. The philosopher is an idolater. To obey the voice of reason rather than the revealed commands of scripture is sinful.

This is the most irritating of all the religious objections to rational method. For it is not as though, in the manner of a Faust, one were to sell one's soul in exchange for knowledge, aware of the superior worth of preserving one's soul in order to seek the pleasure of God. Our situation today is hardly that grandiose. At the very least, our alleged intellectual idolatry is unintentional. We are simply ordinary folk caught up in some messy epistemological predicaments in an age of uncertainty. Perplexed people, seeking to know the truth about life before leaving a scene where discordant cries of conflicting views assail them from all sides, are forced to rely upon their intellectual apparatus, modest as that may be for the purpose. Without the discrimination that reason provides, we cannot find our way out of the jungle. How is one to distinguish truth from falsehood – even revealed truth from merely impressive sounding untruth?

Nor is it as though one said, as a Nietzsche would in a defiant mood, "God has his own opinions: I prefer my own." One merely wishes to know what God's views really are. After these are known, it is, for a reasonable person, no longer an open question whether or not such views express an ultimate truth.

Anti-intellectualism runs deep in ordinary religious thought. Nor is it just plain religious folk or even plain religious thinkers who are under its spell. Many sophisticated philosophers believe that systematic rational theorizing about God is due to want of faith.

What are we to make of this? People engage in systematic theology and in philosophy of religion for many different reasons. While it is rare for an atheist to be interested in

Christian or Islamic theology proper, there is no shortage of disbelieving philosophers of religion. Now, presumably, the group accused of lack of faith are the believing theologians (isn't a Christian theologian necessarily a Christian believer?) and believing philosophers of religion, and not those who reject faith altogether. The believing theologians would find the charge of lack of faith a curious one:

after all they see themselves as professionally engaged in the service of their faith. Believing philosophers of religion may more plausibly be accused since part of their professional obligation qua philosophers requires them to suspend their religious commitments.

It is not easy to make the charge stick. As I understand it, it amounts to saying that, unless believing thinkers and theologians were assailed by doubts about their religious convictions, they would not need the props of academic theology or philosophy in the dark hour of scepticism. But how is this an accusation, even if we accept the foregoing reasoning as sound? Why should it be seen as culpable? We could say that believing writers who suspend their religious convictions temporarily (in the interests of objectivity) are people of "intermittent faith": they sometimes need to think and write like sceptics rather than as mosque- or church-going believers. But to be people of intermittent faith, in this sense, is not the same as being people of "little faith", in the derogatory sense in which this expression is employed in scriptural writings. And it is false to say that people of intermittent faith are people of no faith at all. For such a view would rule out the entire run of ordinary believers from the believing club, leaving only a few of the seminal religious figures (who lived in the heat of active faith and piety day and night) to qualify as genuine believers. Almost all believers

have their sceptical moments; believing thinkers or theologians merely seek to cultivate some kinds of sceptical moods as a part of their professional obligation in order to be objective about their religious convictions.

As it happens, the religionist's initial reasoning is itself unsound, inspired as it is by a mistaken view about the nature of faith. It is often said by religious writers that, once faith is proved or conclusively justified, it can no longer be an appropriate candidate for mere belief: one can only have faith where there is uncertainty. But, as the Christian thinker Terence Penelhum has ably shown, faith can incorporate knowledge just as it can incorporate doubts. Faith and knowledge, like faith and uncertainty, can co-exist in religious as in secular contexts. Thus, one can believe what one knows, have faith in what one knows; indeed one can even doubt what one knows or "knows very well". The Classical dichotomy between faith and knowledge, endorsed by such writers as St Thomas Aquinas and by many Muslim and Jewish religious thinkers, is actually untenable. It is surprising that theists should have seen faith as being incompatible with knowledge. After all, many of the seminal religious figures seemed to know that there was a God who cared about humankind and yet they were expected to have faith in him. The Qur'ān presupposes that one can possess knowledge ('Urn) while having faith (Iman)-, again, to turn to the Judaeo-Christian tradition, such men as Abraham, Moses and Jesus enjoyed such strikingly intimate relationships with God that one may say they had knowledge of the Divine while
simultaneously being faithful. To turn the religious coin, the whole scriptural emphasis on the perversity of rejection presupposes the compatibility of faith and knowledge. The

perversity of rejection (kufr) can be understood only in terms of people's wilful refusal to have faith in or believe in what they secretly know. The religious opposition to an intellectually sophisticated approach to religious issues is, then, in part the outcome of a misunderstanding about the nature of the life of faith, and of rejection.

At this stage, religionists may shift their ground in the hope of knocking out their opponents in the second round - supposing that all parties survive the opening scuffle. Even granted that the philosophical study of religious faith is religiously permissible, it will be said that it is none the less to be discouraged for various religious reasons. The Qur'ān is addressed to believers, at least in the first instance. ("O you who believe" is a frequent form of address in the sacred volume.) God is concerned to elicit a faithful response, not to make theologians or philosophers of us. The aim of revelation is not to provide us with the truth for truth's sake: the hope is that by knowing the truth we may be liberated from bondage to illusory divinities and attain success (faldh).

This objection is the outcome of confusing one correct observation with two incorrect inferences. It is true that the aim of the religious life is to find favour in the eyes of our Creator. In that sense, the purpose of revelation is not primarily to satisfy the intellect but rather to show us the way to Eleaven; a believer's motives in seeking to learn Allah's purposes from the teaching of the Qur'ān should primarily be practical and devotional rather than academic and controversial. But it does not follow from this correct claim that there is no room for reasoned speculation in the religious life or that the sole purpose of sacred literature is to preach to the converted.

Let me take these last two points in turn. There is both a place and a need for reflection, including detached reflection, about one's religious beliefs and allegiances. In the occasional cool hour, we need to ascertain, as far as it is humanly possible, the objective validity of our faithful convictions. Most of us can and should take off the religious cloak, if only occasionally, and if only to mend it for renewed service. This is the right thing to do given that we wish to live with intellectual integrity in an age of religious and ideological pluralism. Unlike some of the seminal figures of the theistic traditions, hardly any modern believer lives in the heat of an active religiosity day and night. For us, it is both possible and necessary to alternate in the roles of participant and critical spectator.

The Qur'ān is not, to pick up the second point, just a sermon for the faithful. Many of its verses are indeed addressed to or report the actual and normative deportment of believers; all of it was originally vouchsafed to one particular believer, Muhammad. But none of this could
imply that it is the exclusive property of the Muslim club; the document of revelation is the property of all mankind. The author of the Qur'ān has no hesitations about exposing the religious document and its credentials to the scrutiny of the idolaters, the rejectors, the hesitants, the Jews, the Christians and others. Is it too unnatural an extension to encompass the mild gaze of the believing thinker temporarily setting aside religious commitments and putting on the sceptical cloak in the interests of objective study?

The religionist could reply that the Qur'ān (56: 179) itself warns us that "none save the purified shall touch" the revealed Word of God. What are we to make of this? This

verse has been variously interpreted. It could mean that the heavenly version of the Qur'ān is inaccessible to those who are impure or it could refer to the Qur'ān in earthly currency being out of the reach of rejectors. The only plausible interpretation is that committed believers should place themselves in a state of ritual physical purity before perusing the Sacred Text: they should perform the necessary ablutions. Such a requirement cannot extend to those who disbelieve the Scripture's inspiration and claims. Any other interpretation is problematic. Muslims could argue that the Qur'ān should be inaccessible to non-Muslims and thus erect a high barricade of religious exclusivism. They could argue that rejectors are "impure"; and it is a short step from here to suggest that those whose orthodoxy is suspect are also impure even though they claim to be believers.

Patient religionists may feel that we have failed to get to the heart of the matter. Islam is not, they retort, some kind of spectator sport: one has to be a submitter to God's Will in heart and mind, in order to have any real idea about the whole thing. Submission to God's Will (i.e. Islam) must include intellectual submission. Can the rejector, or the detached scholar, really understand the quality of total submission, itself rooted in intellectual humility, that the Muslim faith demands? It is impossible, it will be said, to have a purely theoretical interest in Islam, for either one genuinely understands it and then rejects it out of perversity (since to understand all is here to embrace all) or else one simply fails to understand it. And how can the outsider or the thinker who suspends commitment to Islam even comprehend the faith and its scripture as momentous realities that secrete an immediate normative significance for all of us in this life?

Admittedly, one needs some imaginative sympathy with the religious ideal if one is to avoid serious misunderstanding, even a complete failure of understanding. However, sympathy with any religious ideal – though preferably a monotheistic one – usually suffices. (Certainly, it need not be a specifically Muslim ideal.) And most sceptics and secularists do have a participant's understanding of religious belief and practice: they were brought up in religious, including quite pious, homes.

The antipathy to detachment is inspired by the correct observation that to recognize the availability of religious knowledge is also partly to recognize the importance of pursuing it, indeed implementing it through a course of practical religious devotion. One cannot fully grasp the truth about the nature of religious belief without also realizing that it characteristically inspires specifically religious responses to reality. The religionist is mistaken, however, in concluding that one must be a religious believer in order to understand what religious belief is.

What, then, is the role of independent reason in the interpretation of scriptural claims? What is the true office of reason in theology? The Qur'ān itself implies an optimistic assessment of the potential of human intellect ('aql); people are constantly invited to think in order that they may believe. But, in the final analysis, faith has decisive priority over reason: faith defines the offices, power and the limits of reason in matters theological. The predominant view among Muslim theologians today as in the past is the view called "fideism" in Christian thought: an intellect unenlightened by God's grace cannot judge faith while an intellect enlightened by God's grace can only judge faith favourably. Faith does

not stand in need of rational justification; it is indeed, in religious domains, the arbiter of reason and its pretensions.

The primacy of faith is as much a feature of orthodox Islamic thought as of orthodox Christian thought. The Qur'ān does frequently invite us to ponder the signs of Allah in nature, society and the self. But the reality of Allah Himself is fully accessible only to faith – a faith that is itself a gift of grace. After all Allah is in the first instance the subject of faith and loving obedience, not of rational enquiry or purely discursive thought. Unaided human reason is inferior in status to the gift of faith. Indeed, reason is useful only in so far as it finds a use in the larger service of faith. For the orthodox believer, faith is a gift of grace, to be embraced on the authority of no less an authority than Allah Himself: credere Deum Deo (I believe in God on God's own authority) is the slogan.

The problem of the role of independent reason in the interpretation of religious claims brings us to the central issue. The disquiet is about the delicacy of combining a faithful fealty to Islamic convictions with an endorsement of free enquiry about their epistemological status. Can a Muslim, under the tuition of scripture, see the issue of the truth of Islam as an open one?

It is difficult to deny the irreducible tension involved in the making of two disparate commitments: one to the primacy of faith, the other to the primacy of reason. One way to effect an admittedly temporary armistice between faith and reason is to draw a distinction between the philosophy of religion, on the one hand, and theology proper, on the other. Now, the philosophy of religion is in effect the rational examination of

theological issues without reference to the authority of any revealed
dictum; theology, however, integrally relies on a supranatural authority. The philosophy of religion treats all types of religion and religious faith as its domain, not presupposing the privileged position of any type but aiming at discovering what religious truths, if any, are implied by the psychology, sociology and history of religion. Theology, however, simply starts with the faith of some particular religion, the Jewish or Christian, for example, and expounds that faith while accepting the central tenets of the religion in question as revealed or otherwise authoritatively grounded truths.

If we accept the legitimacy of this distinction, then the believing philosopher of religion will, in his or her philosophical capacity, seek exemption from the normal religious strictures on any criticism of the allegedly revealed bases of faith. The theologian may, however, work and think securely within the ambit of faith. Institutionally, faithful philosophers of religion may conscientiously teach the normal Western university syllabus while their theologically inclined co-religionists would most appropriately teach in a seminary (madrasah) set up by the religious authorities.

The Qur'ān itself does not outlaw free enquiry. But it would be self-indulgent to read into its verses any celebration of free enquiry in the modern sense of the term. There are no specifically Islamic reasons for encouraging Muslims to undertake any unduly critical study of their basic religious convictions. Indeed, free enquiry has always been a debatable concept in the madrasah-, what is the point of free enquiry if one already has the truth?

There remains a final question. What are the basic presuppositions of a philosophy of Islam? There are, I believe, at least three basic assumptions, each controversial, which any philosophy of religion must necessarily make.

Firstly, one needs to assume that religious belief is not sui generis-. it can be subsumed under a subsection of belief in general in the same way as historical or political or moral belief. Secondly, it has to be assumed that even if religious belief is indeed a special gift of grace, it is at another level simultaneously a purely human conviction whose content is subject to ordinary appraisal and scrutiny. Thus, even if it is true that authentic revelation is the only source of true religious ideas, the thinker may still reasonably assess the truth and plausibility of revealed claims once these have appeared on the mortal plane. And, thirdly, I take it that the actual existence of God is not a necessary condition of the very possibility of entertaining belief in God or belief that there is a God. Some religionists have, mistakenly, thought that the very fact that people actually believe in God implies that the human mind is an arena for the direct causal activities of God, Gabriel or the Holy Spirit.

The religionist may, rightly, argue that, in making these assumptions, I have begged the question against an important theological position
– the position one might call "Islamic neo-orthodoxy" or simply "Islamic orthodoxy". But if the philosopher cannot keep all the balls in the air, neither can the religionist. No method, whether religious or philosophical, is fully presuppositionless. The least controversial method is the one nourished by the minimum number of controversial

assumptions. But questions are bound to be begged. (Is the trick merely to beg them persuasively?)

In disputes of this kind, it is customary for both parties to contend that the burden of proof is on the opponent. While these arguments about the location of onus are not compelling, they do, if successfully made, indicate a direction of enquiry. In this secular age, the burden of "proof" (or at least of plausibility) is on the believer's shoulders. If in the past men sought to subsume their world under the aegis of revelation, today they seek to interpret revealed dicta through the primacy of the purely huma

We have here a difference in temper, a conflict of loyalties: a religious mentality views scepticism and suspended commitment as being foreign to genuine faith while the secularized mentality seeks exemption from the dogmatic pressures of revealed conviction. These are genuinely opposed moods which cannot be fully reconciled without a retreat from integrity. Philosophy, as an autonomous branch of learning, can at best only indirectly serve religious ends. In the first instance, it has to be in what it takes to be the service of disinterested truth, whether that be religious or secular. Since philosophers cannot conscientiously assume that they, as philosophers, will always arrive at conclusions favourable to their religious convictions, they must part ways with the religionists. Philosophy can only be an apology for truth.

XI

Bibliography

A guide to bibliographical resources

Oliver Leaman

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Much Islamic philosophy is not published in the ordinary journals which specialize in philosophy, nor by publishers who have philosophy lists. Publications in English are sometimes noted in The Philosopher's Index, but this is not a good guide to the area. Far better for a whole variety of languages is the Répertoire bibliographique de la philosophie (Louvain) which in three out of four issues a year contains a section on "philosophie arabo-musulmane". For recent work there is the very useful "The Study of Arabic Philosophy Today" by Charles Butter-worth, in the MESA Bulletin, 18 (July and December 1983), parts 1 and 2: 8–24, 161–72), which has also been published with an appendix covering 1983–7 in T.-A. Druart (ed.), Arabic Philosophy and the West: Continuity and Interaction (Washington DC 1988): 55–116, and the appendix (1983–7): 117–40. In the 1987 issue of the Bulletin de Philosophie Médiévale (edited by the Société Internationale pour l'étude de la Philosophie Médiévale, Louvain), 29: 24–47 G. Anawati published a "Bilan des études sur la philosophie médiévale en terre d'Islam, 1982–1987", and this has been updated by Thérèse-Anne Druart and Michael Marmura in the 1990 edition of the Bulletin, 32, to cover 1986–9 (pp. 106–35).

This is updated in Bulletin, 35 (1993). The best source of bibliographies on individual thinkers is in books dealing with them, but two important sources should be mentioned here. For Ibn Rushd (Averroes) there is P. Rosemann, "Averroes: a Catalogue of Editions and Scholarly Writings from 1821 Onwards", Bulletin, 30 (1988): 153–215, and for Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna) there is the masterly J. Janssens, An Annotated Bibliography on Ibn Sīnā (1970–1989) Including Arabic and Persian Publications and Turkish and Russian References (Leuven 1991): xxviii–358.

Those journals which specialize in Islamic themes often carry articles and reviews of Islamic philosophy, as do those concerned with issues in religion and Semitic studies in general. There are even some journals such as Arabic Sciences and Philosophy (Cambridge University Press) which are specifically concerned with historical aspects of Islamic philosophy, and the general range of intellectual journals in the Islamic world will often have articles on this topic. The books in the series Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Science, edited by Hans Daiber and David Pingree and published by Brill, usually have extensive bibliographies. Some publishers have quite extensive list of books on Islamic philosophy, in particular Routledge, State University of New York Press, Oxford University Press and other leading English-language publishers, while European publishers often do bring out the occasional book in the area. There are no series devoted exclusively to Islamic philosophy, though, and books tend to be grouped with others dealing with general issues relating to Islam and its culture.

There is a range of publications which deal with references to articles and books in a variety of languages. The Geschichte

des arabischen Schrifttums is useful in this respect, especially volumes 1 (1967) and 9 (1984). This is edited by F. Sezgin and published by Brill of Leiden. They also publish A Greek and Arabic Lexicon, the first fascicule of which appeared in 1992, and it is edited by G. Endress and D. Gutas. The Quarterly Index Islamicus (Cambridge) provides extensive lists of current books, articles and papers on Islamic subjects, and is compiled by G. Roper. The Geschichte der arabischen Literatur, ed. Carl Brockelmann (Leiden, 1937–43), with its supplements, is useful. The main scholarly effort in the area is the second edition of the Encyclopaedia of Islam, which appears in fascicules, and which has sections on philosophy of considerable length and excellent quality. The first edition is available, and has interesting information on philosophers and concepts. As one might expect, the various histories and encyclopedias which deal with the Islamic world have sections on philosophy. There are useful bibliographies in the journals Muslim World Book Review, Hamdard Islamicus, The Muslim World, The Middle East Journal, MESA (Middle East Studies Association) Bulletin and I.e Monde Arabe la Recherche Scientifique which appear on a regular basis.

The study of Islamic philosophy has the unusual feature that many of the raw materials, the manuscripts themselves, have not been edited, printed or even catalogued. There are a great number of manuscripts in Middle Eastern libraries about which very little is known, and the study of the documents in libraries throughout the world has been pursued only slowly by a relatively small number of scholars. Editions are frequently being improved by later discoveries, and work which was thought to have been completely lost is sometimes discovered. Attribution of authorship

sometimes changes as new facts come to the surface, and it becomes easier to date works as more are analysed and prepared for publication. Texts which have not been printed were copied by hand, and one is very reliant upon the skill of the copyist for the accuracy of this work. Although many of the copyists were very careful in their work, it is inevitable that some problems crept in and that sometimes copyists replaced an original term which they did not understand with another which they thought fitted the context better. Some of these copies did not survive in the best physical condition, so it is clear that the scholar who deals with such manuscripts has a very slow and difficult task to undertake. To add to the problems, some manuscripts survive only in translation, so the scholar has to try to work out what the original text was like by examining the translation, and when one considers that the original document may not itself have been a perfect copy of the original, the potential for confusion is obvious.

So many of the most important and interesting manuscripts in the area are difficult to read and edit, and much work remains to be done to bring texts to light. This is only the most dramatic aspect of the present state of affairs, though, since many of the surviving documents are in reasonable shape and not difficult to find. The main problem is the paucity of scholars who are capable of dealing with them. In some ways, the research field which is available to those trained in Islamic philosophy is wide open. They are often not in the position of those in other fields of the humanities of discussing texts which have been worked over for many years or even centuries. It is not difficult to find an interesting text, edit it (or make preparatory moves towards this end), translate and discuss parts of it, and point out how the author contributed to the debate of his times in ways which had

previously been unacknowledged. As far as texts are concerned, one suffers from an embarrassment of riches.

Why are there not more people who are capable of dealing with such texts? When one considers the skills which are required, it is not difficult to answer this question. The student of Islamic philosophy will need to have a good understanding of a variety of languages which are becoming less prevalent today among those in higher education. If students have a good grasp of Arabic and perhaps Persian, then they will also require an understanding of Greek and perhaps of some of the European languages in which many of the main philosophical ideas may have been comprehensively discussed. If students have a background in modern European languages, then they will need to acquire some linguistic facility in the Classics and in philosophical thought, along with at least Arabic. This is not to suggest that the whole of Islamic philosophy originates with the Greeks, which it certainly does not, and the reader of these volumes will be aware of the very rich and continuing tradition of such thought which is far removed from the principles of Greek

philosophy. None the less, it is undeniable that it is important to have an understanding of the basic arguments of the Greek thinkers, since they form such a significant part of the setting of the problems which the philosophers in the Islamic world go on to consider. An equally important form of knowledge is the Islamic sciences, and even Muslims may find that the basic grasp which they have acquired of these through their religious education has not really prepared them for the sophisticated conceptual work of philosophy. Those who are not Muslims will have to try to grasp the principles of the sciences of Islam without seeing them through the conceptual spectacles of their own religion or culture, which is hardly an

easy task. There are good reasons, then, for the relative paucity of those who are in a position to study and develop the leading works of Islamic philosophy.

The contributors to these volumes have come from a wide variety of countries and regions of the world, and the place in which one works inevitably has an important effect upon the nature of the approach to the material which is undertaken. The presiding cultural interests will tend to inform the way in which Islamic philosophy is pursued. This is especially the case in the Islamic world, and individual philosophers will be taken up if it is felt that they have a part to play in contributing to current ideas and controversies. One of the exciting features of Islamic philosophy is the variety of hermeneutic approaches which are adopted in its analysis. The field is not homogenous enough for just one approach to dominate the whole area, and unless there are future radical developments it is likely that this state of affairs will continue.

This is an observation which is hardly limited to Islamic philosophy, though. Philosophy as a whole represents a wide gamut of methodological approaches and ideas which frequently display no general agreement as to how to proceed. When one combines the variety of philosophy with the different ways of interpreting Islam and related religions, it is easy to see that the prospect of having any one approach to solving philosophical problems which is going to be accepted by everyone is vacuous. The richness of Islamic philosophy lies precisely in its very diverse ways of addressing conceptual issues. These volumes represent many of these approaches and have set out to respect their variety.

General introductions to Islamic philosophy

Oliver Leaman

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