

Chapter 47: The School of Ispahan

A. Introduction

It is one of the most curious aspects of the Western study of Muslim intellectual life that with one or two exceptions practically no serious research has ever been made into the spiritual and intellectual treasures of 12 Imam Shi'ism in any of the European Languages.¹ As a result, not only Westerners but even the Muslims whose contact with the Shi'ah world is mainly through Western sources have remained totally ignorant of the remarkable intellectual life which has persisted to this very day in the centres of Shi'ism, especially in Persia. Inasmuch as it was mostly in the Shi'ah world that much of the intellectual life of Islam, especially in the sciences and traditional wisdom (*Hikmat*),² took refuge after the seventh/13th century this ignorance has helped to strengthen the totally erroneous notion that Islam fell into complete decadence after the Mongol invasion.

Just as a closer study of the Muslim world at large will show that in art, government, Sufism and many other aspects of Muslim life there was anything but decadence until fairly recently, a study of the Shi'ah world will reveal that even in the sciences, philosophy, and gnosis the Muslims have, with one gap of a century and a half, continued to flourish up to the present century. It will reveal that just as Safawid art is one of the high points of Muslim art, so the intellectual life of Shi'ism in this period one of the apogees of Muslim history, producing sages like Sadr al-Din Shirazi, usually known as Mulla Sadra.

Perhaps one day histories of philosophy will not have chapters on Islam which end abruptly with ibn Rushd or possibly ibn Khaldun but will trace the chain to the present century and end once and for all the dangerous illusion that the present day Muslims are separated from their own tradition by centuries of Safawid Persia, where 12 Imam Shi'ism became for the first time a completely independent political and cultural entity, an entity which has dominated every phase of life in Persia ever since.

The coming to power of the Safawids in Persia is one of the most fascinating chapters of Muslim history and marks one of the instances in which the influence of Sufism upon the social and political life of Islam is felt directly. Beginning as a Sufi brotherhood which traced its lineage as well as its name to the great

saint Sheikh Safi al-Din Ardibili,³ the Safawids soon developed into a well organized political unity for the first time since the fall of the Sassanid Empire.

The Sufi order continued under the spiritual direction of a series of descendants of Sheikh Safi, and its members in the ninth/15th century adopted a 12-sided red hat for which they became known as the *qizil-bash* (red heads). The order grew in power in the politically disorganized Persia of the ninth/15th century and under Isma'il (892/1487 – 930/1523 – 24) succeeded in defeating the local rulers and unifying the whole of Persia.

Shah Isma'il was crowned in Tabriz in 905/1499 marking the beginning of the reign of the Safawids which was to last over two centuries until in 1133/1720 the Afghans conquered Persia, sacked the Safawid capital at Ispahan and killed Shah Hussein, the last of the Safawid rulers. During this wavering between these two orthodox perspectives of the Islamic revelation, became completely 12-Imam Shi'ah and Shi'ism, which had until now remained a minority creed, found itself as the official religio of an empire and had to face political and social issues it had never been forced to face before.⁴

No longer molested by an external force and face with a large number of practical social problems, Shi'ah theology, *Kalam*, which had always served as the walls of the citadel of the faith,⁵ lost much of its earlier vigour while jurisprudence, *Fiqh*, having to face new situations, became highly developed. More important for our purpose is the fact that the pre-dominantly Shi'ah culture of Persia prepared the background for the flourishing of the doctrines of *israqi* gnosis (illuministic wisdom),⁶ philosophy, and the sciences. The efforts of the chain of sages after Khuwaja Nasir al-Din Tusi, who had kept the study of these subjects alive suddenly found the necessary environment for the development of this form of wisdom.⁷

We have connected this wisdom symbolically with the school of Ispahan, which spread throughout Safawid Persia as well as in Iraq, Syria, and India with which the Persians had very close contacts. The centres of its life were not only Ispahan, the Safawid capital, but also other cities like Shiraz, Kashan, Qazwin, and Tabriz. Furthermore, some of the most important figures like Sheikh Baha' al-Din Amili, and Sayyid Ni'matullah Jaza'iri, who played a vital role in the establishment of Shi'ism in Persia, were Arabs from Amil near Damascus and Bahrain, two centres which had been preserving the Shi'ah tradition for centuries.⁸

The Shi'ahs have developed the Ja'fari School of Law named after the sixth Imam, Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq, as well as theology (*Kalam*) and other traditional studies, namely, language, history, hadith and commentary upon the Qur'an, jurisprudence (*Fiqh*), principles of jurisprudence (*Usul*),⁹ theology,¹⁰ and *Hikmat*, this last being a combination of gnosis, theosophy, and philosophy which forms the main subject of our present study.

B. Hikmat

The form of wisdom which has survived until today in the Shi'ah world as *Hikmat* can neither be wholly identified with philosophy as currently understood in the West, not with theosophy which has unfortunately become identified in the English speaking world with pseudo-spiritualist movements, nor with theology. ¹¹ As developed in the Safawid period and continued to the present day, *Hikmat* consists of several threads knit together by the matrix of Shi'ism.

The most important of these elements are the esoteric teachings of the Imams, especially as contained in the *Nahj al-Balaghah* by the first Imam 'Ali, the *ishraqi* wisdom of Suhrawardi which contains in itself aspects of ancient Persian and Hermetic doctrines, the teachings of the earlier Sufis, especially the gnostic doctrines of ibn 'Arabi, and the heritage of the Greek philosophers. It is, therefore, not too surprising if many of the treatises on *Hikmat* begin with logic and end with ecstasy experienced in the catharsis (*tajrid*) and illumination of the intellect. They contain as a necessary basis some preparation in logic which they share with the Peripatetics (Masha'iyun), but instead of remaining bound to the plane of reason they use this logic as a springboard for their flight into the heaven of gnosis.

The group of sages who between the death of ibn Rushd, the so-called terminating point of Muslim philosophy, and the Safawids prepared the ground for the intellectual revival of the school of Ispahan are usually not much better known outside Persia than the Safawid sages themselves. They include a series of philosophers and scientists like Khuwaja Nasir al-Din Tusi, better known in the Western world as a scientist than a philosopher and theologian, Qutb al-Din Razi, Mir Sayyid Sharif Jurjani, Jalal al-Din Dawwani, and ibn Turkah Ispahani, ¹² all of whom sought to reconstruct Muslim intellectual life through a gnostic interpretation of the writings of ibn Sina, Suhrawardi, and the Sufis, and who carried further the attempt already begun by al-Farabi, extended by ibn Sina in his Qur'anic commentaries, and carried a step further by Suhrawardi, to correlate faith (*iman*) with philosophy. ¹³

The precursors of the Safawid sages include also a series of pure gnostics, both Shi'ah and Sunni, although this distinction is not essential in Sufism, who spread the doctrines of ibn 'Arabi, the Andalusian sage and the formulator of gnostic doctrines in Islam in the Eastern lands of Islam. ¹⁴ These Sufis include Sadr al-Din Qunawi, Fakhr al-Din 'Iraqi, 'Abd al Razzaq Kashani, 'Ala al-Daulah Simnani, ¹⁵ 'Abd al-Rahman Jami, ¹⁶ and two others who are especially important in introducing the gnostic doctrines of ibn 'Arabi into the Shi'ah world, ibn Abi Jumhur and Mulla Haidar 'Ali Amuli. ¹⁷ One must also mention another great spiritual leader, Maulana Jalal al-Din Rumi, whose influence has extended throughout Persia during the past seven centuries.

C. Major Figures of the School of Ispahan

To write down even the mere names and works of all the important authors of the Safawid period would in itself require a book because in nearly every field of religious science many notable figures arose

during this period of great intellectual activity. In theology, jurisprudence, and related sciences it is enough to mention only a few names like that of Zain al-Din ibn ‘Ali ibn Ahmad Jaba’i (911/1505 – 966/1558), commonly known as the second martyr (*shahid-i thani*) because of his having been put to death by the Ottomans, the author of numerous treatise which still form a part of Shi‘ah religious education, ‘Ali ibn ‘Abd al-‘Ali ‘Amili known as Muhaqqia-i Karaki (d. 945/1538), the author of *al-Najmiyyah* in theology and many other treatises and commentaries, the two Majlisis, Mohammad Taqi (1003/1594 – 1070/1659), the author of *Raudat al-Muttaqin*, and his son Mohammad Baqir (1037/1628 – 1110/1699), the greatest of the Safawid theologians and scholars to whom we shall turn later. [18](#)

As for the *hukama’*, those who cultivated this particular form of wisdom which they called *Hikmat*, they include Sadr al-Din Shirazi, better known as Mulla Sadra, to whom a separate chapter has been devoted in the present work, Sayyid Ahmad ‘Alawi, Mir. Damad’s Sabziwari (d. 1090/1669), the commentator of the *Isharat* and the metaphysics of the *Shifa’*, and the *Dhakhirat al-Ma’afi*, Rajab ‘Ali Tabrizi (d. 1080?/1670), a thinker with nominalist tendencies and the author of *Risaleh-i Ithbat-i Wujud*, ‘Abd al-Razzaq Lahiji (d. 1071/1661), a student of Mulla Sadra and author of some of the most important books on *Hikmat* in Persian like the *Guhar Murad*, *Sarmayeh-i Iman*, and the *Mashariq al-Ilham*, glosses upon the commentary of Khuwaja Nasir al-Din Tusi upon the *Isharat*, and the commentary upon Suhrawardi’s *Hayakil al-Nur*, and Qadi Sa’id Qumi (1049/1640 – 1103?/1692), a gnostic and theologian, the author of the *Ara’inat*, *Kilid-i Bihisht*, and a commentary upon the *Athulujjiyya* attributed to Aristotle but now known to be a paraphrasis of the *Enneads* of Plotinus.

In addition to these authors, there are a few other major figures about whom we have chosen to speak somewhat more fully hoping that in this way we can depict the various aspects of the intellectual life of the Safawid period. These figures include Sheikh Baha’ al-Din Amili, Mir Damad, [19](#) perhaps the central figure in the school of Ispahan, Mir Abu al-Qasim Findiriski, Mulla Musin Faid Kashi, and the second Majlisi whom we have already mentioned.

If space had allowed, we would have also considered the purely Sufi writings like the commentary upon the *Gulsham-i Raz* by Mohammad Lahiji, which is one of the best books on Sufism in Persian, and the works by the masters of other Sufi orders like the *Tuhfih’*– by the *Dhahabi* sheikh, Sheikh Mu’adhhdhin Khurasani.

[Sheikh Baha’ al-Din ‘Amili](#)

The most colourful figure of the Safawid period was without doubt Baha’ al-Din ‘Amili, better known as Sheikh-i Baha’i. [20](#) His father was the leader of the Shi‘ah community of ‘Amil and a student of Shahid-i Thani. After his teacher’s death in 966/1559, he set out with his son towards Persia. Baha’ al-Din, who was born in Baalbek in 953/1546, was then only 13 years old and well qualified to master the Persian language. In Persia he continued his studies in the religious sciences, poetry, and *Hikmat* and soon became the leading scholar of his day and the *Sheikh al-Islam* of Ispahan. Despite his nearness to the Court and necessary participation in the worldly life he was a gnostic and spent many of the last years of

his life travelling with the dervishes and visiting various Sufi masters. He finally passed away in 1030/1622 while returning from Hajj.[21](#)

Sheikh Baha' al-Din was the leading theologian and jurist of his time and the leader of the '*ulama*' of Ispahan. He was at the same time an outstanding Sufi, one of the best of the Safawid poets who revived the 'Iraqi style and wrote poetry in the tradition of Rumi and Hafiz, the leading architect of the Safawid period, whose masterpieces like the Shah mosque of Ispahan still stand among the summits of Muslim architecture,[22](#) and the greatest mathematician and astronomer of his period.

In an age when the theologians, jurists, *Hakims*, natural historians, sophists, logicians, and Sufis were well-marked groups, sometimes in external conflict with one another, Sheikh-i Baha'i was respected by all these groups, from the wondering dervishes, the *qalandars*, to the Court '*ulama*' each of which considered the Sheikh its own. His genius lay precisely in showing the nothingness of all sciences before divine gnosis, while at the same time having a mastery of each science. Yet each of Sheikh-i Baha'i's writings has become a standard source of reference in its own field.

Some of his important works include *Jami'i-i 'Abbasi* on theology in Persian, *Fawa'id al-Samadiyyan* on Arabic grammar which is still in wide use, a treatise on algebra, the *Khulasah fi al-Hisab*,[23](#) several treatises on astronomy including the *Tashrih al-Aflak*, a treatise on the astrolabe, '*Urwat al-Wathqa*, general Qur'anic commentaries, many works on various aspects of the Hari'ah, the *Kashkul*, a collection of Arabic and Persian writings which ranks among the most famous Sufi works, and a series of *mathnawis* like *Bread and Sweet*, *Cat and Mouse*, *Milk and Sugar*, and the *Tuti-Nameh*.[24](#)

It is especially in the didactic poems, the *mathnawas*, that the particular genius of Sheikh-i Baha'i for expressing sublime truth in simple language and in witty anecdotes becomes manifest. In these poems his spirit is very similar to that of Maulana Jalal al-Din Rumi whom he follows in spirit as well as in form. In the long poem of *The Cat and the Mouse* in which the cat symbolizes exoteric and formal knowledge and the mouse esotericism, the theme is the danger of hypocrisy which the exoteric view always faces and the necessity in the religious and social structure for exoteric knowledge. Sheikh-i Baha'i also emphasizes throughout the work the supremacy of intellectual intuition over discursive knowledge. As an example we mention below the story of Mu'tazilite and a Sufi who appears in the guise of a madman named Buhlul.

During the reign of one of the Caliphs, a Mu'tazilite was chosen as the Imam of the mosque. One day Buhlul entered the mosque with a brick hidden under his dress and joined the congregation after the prayers to listen to the Imam's sermon. The Imam in the Mu'tazilite fashion mentioned that Satan is not harmed in hell because he is made of fire and since a thing cannot harm its own kind, the fire of hell cannot harm him. Upon hearing this, Buhlul became infuriated but held back his anger.

The Imam continued his sermon by saying that both good and evil are by divine consent. Again Buhlul became angry but once again succeeded in remaining quiet. The Imam added that on the Day of

Judgment man would actually be able to see God. Upon hearing this, Buhlul took out the brick from under his dress, threw it at the Imam injuring his head and ran away. The Caliph raging with fury was about to call for Buhlul when he walked into the palace and without any greetings sat at the head of the Court. The Caliph asked him with great anger as to why he had attacked the Imam. Buhlul answered by pleading to the Caliph to give him permission to explain how by his act he had done nothing discourteous and when given permission addressed the bleeding Imam and said that since according to his own words a thing cannot harm its own kind, a brick cannot harm the Imam's head since both are made of clay.

Furthermore, he asked the Imam if he had felt any pain upon being hit on the head and if he could see the pain. Upon receiving the reply that the Imam did not see the pain, Buhlul asked how a man could be unable to see pain, a creation of God, see the Creator. Finally, Buhlul added that since all acts are done through divine consent, God must have given consent to his throwing the brick and so the Imam should not complain of an act to which God had consented. Upon hearing this, the Imam, the symbol of rationalism, had to remain silent before Buhlul, the symbol of intellectual intuition.[25](#)

The writings of Sheikh-i Baha'i are also replete with passages about the nothingness of all human knowledge as against divine gnosis. For example, in the poem *Nan wa Halwah* (Bread and Sweet) he says:

Formal science is nothing but altercation,
It results in neither intoxication[26](#) nor contemplation.
It continually brings congelation to man's nature,
What's more, the Maulana[27](#) does not believe in it.

If someone tells thee that of thy life,
There remains with certainty but a week,
Thou in this one week will busy thy self
With which science, oh accomplished man!
There is no science but the science of love,[28](#)
The rest is the deception of the wretched Satan.
There is no science but the Qur'anic commentary and Hadith,
The rest is the deception of the perverse Satan.

The mysteries will never become known to thee,
If thou hast for student a hundred Fakhr-i Razi.[29](#)
All who do not love the face of the beautiful
The saddle and the rein are appropriate for them[30](#)
That is, he who does not have love for the Friend,
Bring for him the saddle and the headstall.[31](#)
He who has not fallen in love with his beautiful Face,

Erase his name from the tablet of humanity.
A breast that is empty of the love of the Beautiful,
Is an old leather bag full of bones.
A breast if devoid of the Beloved,
Is not a breast but an old chest.
A heart which is empty of the love of that Beauty,
Count it as a stone with which the Devil cleans himself.

These sciences, these forms and imaginings,
Are the excrements of Satan upon that stone.
If thou allowest other than the science of love in thy heart,
Thou wilt be giving Satan the stone to clean himself.
Be ashamed of thyself, oh villain,
That thou carriest the Devil's cleaning stone in thy pocket.
Wash the tablet of the heart from the Devil's excrement,
Oh teacher, give also the lesson of love.

How long wilt thou teach the wisdom of the Greeks?
Learn also the wisdom of those who have faith.³²
How long with this jurisprudence and baseless theology,
Wilt thou empty thy brain? Oh exuberant one,
Thy life is spent in discussing conjugation and syntax,
Learn also a few words about the principles of love.

Illuminate thy heart with resplendent lights,
How long wilt thou lick the bowl of Avicenna?
The Lord of the universe, the King of this world and the next³³
Called the left-over of the believer a remedy, Oh grieved one,
But the left-over of Aristotle and Avicenna,
When has the illuminated Prophet called it a remedy?
Go rip thy breast in a hundred places,
And clear thy heart of all these stains.³⁴

Not only does Sheikh-i Baha'i suggest that man should not busy himself solely with formal science and that he should seek to reach the divine gnosis hidden in the revelation, but he also reminds man that he should not become so accustomed to his world as to forget his original home. It has been a constant theme of the gnostics throughout the ages that the spiritual man being a stranger in this world must take the perilous journey to return to his original abode.³⁵ In the same *Nan wa Halwah*, while commenting upon the Prophet's saying, "The love of the country comes from faith," he writes,³⁶

"This country is not Egypt, Iraq or Syria,

It is a city which has no name.
Since all these countries belong to this world,
The noble man will never praise them.
The love of this world is the source of all evil,
And from evil comes the loss of faith.

Happy is the person who, through divine guidance,
Is led in the direction of that nameless city.
Oh son, thou art a stranger in these countries,
How wretched art thou to have become accustomed to it!
Thou hast remained so long in the city of the body,
That thou hast completely forgotten thy own country.
Turn away from the body and gladden thy soul,
And remember thy original home.
How long wilt thou, oh victorious falcon,
Remain away from the sphere of the spirit?
It is a shame for those, oh artful one,
To shed thy feathers in this ruin.
How long, oh hoopoe of the city of Saba,^{[37](#)}
Wilt thou remain in estrangement with feet tied?
Seek to untie the cords from thy feet,
And fly where ‘there is no space’”.^{[38](#)}

Shekhi-i Baha’i was one of those rare falcons who, while outwardly in the midst of this world, had flown to the “land of nowhere.” He did not write in the technical sense so much about the *Hikmat* as Mir. Damad or Mulla Muhsin Faid did, but he reached such a degree of spiritual realization above and beyond theoretical formulations that all of his writings are spiritually precious. Even his compositions in the various religious and natural sciences bear the perfume of his spirituality. His writings present a balance between the exoteric and the esoteric, the metaphysical and the cosmological, which serve as an example of what the relation between the various aspects of a tradition, might be and could be when the principal integrating influence of gnosis is present.

Mir Damad

One of the most influential figures of the Safawid School was Muhammad Baqir Damad, better known as Mir Damad. He and his student, Mulla Sadra, must be considered to be the greatest *Hakims* of the period. Being the grandson of Muhaqqia-i Karaki and descendant of a distinguished Shi’ah family, Mir Damad received the best education possible in all branches of learning. His most famous teacher was Sheikh Hussain ibn ‘Abd al-Samad ‘Amili, the father of Sheikh-i Baha’i, who later on became his most intimate friend and companion at the Safawid Court.^{[39](#)} Mir Damad soon became a leading authority on

Kalam, Hikmat, Fiqh and even in the occult and natural sciences.[40](#)

In Isfahan he attracted numerous students to himself. His most famous disciples were Mulla Sadra, Sayyid Ahmad 'Alawi, the commentator of the *Shifa'*, Mulla Khalil Qazwini whose commentary upon the *Usal al-Kafi* is very well known in Persia, and Qutb al-Din Ashkiwari, the author of a universal sacred history and several philosophical and gnostic treatises.[41](#) Mir Damad, more than anyone else, was responsible for the revivification of ibn Sina's philosophy and *ishraqi* wisdom within the context of Shi'ism and for laying the ground for the monumental work for Mulla Sadra. Mir. Damad did much to revive what he referred to as the Yamani wisdom (*falsafih-i Yamani*), the wisdom of the prophets, in contrast to the more rationalistic philosophy of the Greeks.[42](#) He has been entitled the Third Teacher (*Mu'allim-i thalith*) after Aristotle and Farabi.

The writings of Mir Damad, both in Arabic and Persian, many of which are incomplete, are written in a very difficult style which adds to the difficulty of understanding their contents. These writings include several treatises on *Kalam*, works on *Fiqh* like *Shari' al-Najat*, *al-Ufuq al-Mubin* on Being, time, and eternity, *al-Sirat al-Mustaqim* on the relation between the created and the eternal, *Taqwim al-Imam* on Being, creation, and God's knowledge, several other major treatises on *Hikmat* including the *Qabasat*,[43](#) *Taqdisat*, *Jadhawat*, and *Sidrat al-Muntaha*,[44](#) several Qur'anic commentaries like *Amanat-i Ilahi*, commentaries upon the *Istihisar* of Khuwaja Nasir al-Din Tusi and the metaphysics of the *Shifa'*, the *Khalsat al-Malakut* on gnosis,[45](#) and a collection of poems in Persian and Arabic including the *Mushariq al-Anwar*, written under the pen name, *Ishraq*.

After a life-time spent in writing, teaching, and reading the Qur'an to which he was much devoted, and having prepared the ground for the whole group of sages, especially Mulla Sadra, who were to carry his ideas to their ultimate perfection, Mir Damad died on the way between Najaf and Karbala in Iraq in 1041/1631.

The thought of Mir Damad is marked by two features which distinguish him from the other *Hikims* of the period, the first the organization of his treatises and the second the notion of eternal creation, *huduth-i dahri*, which is the central and ever-recurring theme in his writings. As for the organization of his works, like the *Qabasat* and *Taqdisat*, it differs for the most part from that of the traditional Muslim books on philosophy and *Hikmat* which usually begin with logic and then proceed to natural philosophy (*tabi'iyat*), mathematics (*riyadiyyat*), and theology (*ilahiyyat*).[46](#)

For example, in the *Qabasat* the ten chapters of the book concern the various meanings of creation and the division of Being, kinds of anteriority, multiplicity, appeal to the Qur'an and the Hadith, nature, time, and motion, criticism of logic divine omnipotence, and intellectual substances, chain of Being, and finally pre-destination.[47](#)

The second marked feature of Mir Damad's exposition of *Hikmat* concerns the notion of time. It is well known that the question whether the world is created (*hadith*) or eternal (*qadim*) has been one of the

major points of dispute between the philosophers and theologians in both Islam and Christianity as well as among the Greeks.⁴⁸ Mir Damad seeks a solution to this question by dividing reality into three categories: *zaman* or time, *dahr*, and *sarmad*; the latter two are kinds of eternity. This division is ontological and not just logical or theoretical.⁴⁹

The divine essence or ipseity (*dhat*) is above all distinctions and qualities; yet it is also the source of the divine names and attributes which are both one with the essence and yet distinct from it. This immutable relation between the essence and the attributes, which cannot be changed from either side, the attributes being a necessary determination (*ta'ayyun*) of the essence to Itself by Itself, Mir Damad called *sarmad*. It is an eternity in the absolute sense, above all contingencies. The names and attributes, which are the same as the archetypes, Platonic ideas, or the lords of the species (*rabb al-nau'*) as the Ishraqis call them, in turn generate the world to change.

They are the immutable intelligences of this world, and each species in this world is a theurgy (*tilism*) for its archetype. The relation between the immutable archetypes and the world change is like the reflection of the moon in a stream of water in which the image of the moon remains unchanged while the substance in which it is reflected, i.e. water, flows on continually. This relation between the immutable and the changing Mir Damad calls *dahr*. Finally, the relation between one change and another is called time (*saman*), in the sense of quantity and measure of change as Aristotle had already described it.⁵⁰

Since the world was brought into being through the intermediate world of archetypes, its creation is *dahri* not *zamani*, i.e. the world was not created in a time which existed before the world came into being but with respect to a *dahr* which stands above the world.⁵¹ The creation of this world is, therefore, *huduth-i dahri*, *ibda'*, and *ikhtira'* and not *huduth-i samani*, *wad'*, and *lakwin*. Time has a reality in its own plane of being, but the world of *dahr*, the world of the archetypes, time does not even exist. Moreover, the changing physical world (*'alam-i jismani*) depends for its existence upon non-existence (*'adam*) in the world of archetypes.

While it exists in time (*zaman*), it is non-existent in *dahr* and has no share in the angelic mode of being, proper to the world of *dahr*, of which it is no more than coagulation. Likewise, the world of *dahr*, of the archetypes, is non-existent in the divine essence, in the world of *sarmad* (the eternal world). In the divine essence (*dhat*) there is neither *dahr* nor *zaman*, neither archetype nor body; God is alone in His majesty.⁵² Yet, *dahr* exists on its own level and *zaman* on its own. *Sarmad* is the cause of *dahr* and *dahr* the cause of *zaman*,⁵³ so that ultimately the divine essence is the cause of all things, while in its essence nothing may even be said to exist.

The *Jadhawat*, the contents of which we will now briefly survey, is one of the works in which Mir Damad presents the complete cycle of his metaphysical ideas combined as usual with the Qur'anic text, the Hadith, and his own verse.⁵⁴ In the first *judhwah* or particle of fire, of which the word *jadhawat* is the plural, Mir Damad divides the "book of divine existence," of the chain of Being, into two parts, one in which there is an effusion or theophany (*tajalli*) away from the divine essence and the other in which

there is a return to the origin: the first extending from the divine essence to prime matter or *hyle* and the other from the *hyle* back to the origin of all existence. Moreover, each chain is divided into a longitudinal (*tullil*) order and a latitudinal (*'ardi*) order.⁵⁵ The longitudinal order of the chain of effusion includes five essential degrees:

1. The degree of pure intelligences, the Victorial lights (*anwar-i qahirah*) the first member of which is the universal intellect (*'aql-i kull*), i.e. the first light to issue forth from the Light of lights (*nur al-anwar*).
2. The degree of heavenly souls (*nufus-i falakiyyah*), the governing lights (*anwar-i mudabbirah*), the first number of which governing the first heaven is called the universal soul (*nafs-i kull*).
3. The degree of the natural souls (*nufus-i muntabi'ah*) and the archetypes of the heavens, the planets, the four natures, the elements, and compounds.⁵⁶
4. The degree of bodily form (*surat-i jismiyyah*), i.e. the Aristotelian form, which is an extended substance and is of one species.
5. The degrees of *hyle*, from the matter of the highest heaven to that of the world of generation and corruption.⁵⁷

As for the longitudinal order of the chain of return to the divine essence, it too, includes five stages:

1. The degree of absolute body (*jism-i mutlaq*) and bodies comprising the elements and the heavens.
2. The degree of composed bodies which come into being from the combination of the elements and have a species of their own, e.g. minerals.
3. The degree of plants possessing the vegetative soul.
4. The degree of animals possessing the animal soul.⁵⁸
5. The degree of men possessing the intellectual soul which is of the same substance as the intelligences of the descending chain, above both of which there is nothing but the Truth (*Haqq*) Itself.⁵⁹

Each of these degrees, both in the descending and the ascending chains, have their several members that constitute the latitudinal extension of each degree.

The world of the intelligences (*mujarradat*) is called the world of the invisible (*ghaib*), or command (*amr*), or *malakat*, or intellect (*'aql*) or life (*hayat*), or light (*nur*), while the world of bodies is called the world of creation (*khalq*), vision (*Shahadat*), or dominion (*mulk*), or death (*maut*), or darkness (*zulmat*). Man's nature is composed of these two worlds in such a way that he contains the whole world in himself; he is the microcosm as the world is the macrocosm. His intellect is like the sun, his soul like the moon, and his body like the earth, and as is the case with the heavens, man can also have an inner eclipse, i.e. the earth of his body can prevent the light of the sun of the intellect to shine upon the moon of the soul. The

purpose of the two chains of descent and ascent is to bring into being man, who contains both the chains within himself and who can, therefore, ascend to heaven as well as descend to the lowest depths of existence.

The macrocosm is a conscious being whose head is the highest heaven, whose heart is the sun and whose other organs correspond with those of man. It is compared symbolically to a man whose head is pointed towards the North Pole, the right side towards the west, the face towards heaven, the feet towards the south, and the left side towards the east.

The totality of these degrees, the macrocosm and the microcosm together, is the book of God, in which each being is a word or rather a letter.⁶⁰ These words and letters are written by the divine Pen (*qalam*) which symbolizes the intellect. The Pen writes the truth of things upon the human soul which is called the *ispahbad* light (*nur-i ispahbadi*). More specifically, the Pen writes the truth of things upon the soul of the prophet who in turn “writes” the knowledge of things upon the soul of man and through the intelligences, upon the pages of creation and existence. The intelligences are not limited to the nine heavens, but as the Ishraqis have asserted, in number they equal the fixed stars in addition to the heavens and extend all the way down to the heaven of the moon. The intelligence of this heaven is called “the giver of forms” (*wahib al-suwar*) or the active intellect (*aql-i fa‘al*) which gives being as well as form to the sublunary region.⁶¹

The heaven of the fixed stars is the meeting place of the corporeal and intellectual lights, the boundary between formal and formless manifestation. This heaven has its own soul and intelligence but, in addition, each star in it is also a possessor of intelligence and a soul proper to itself. As to the other heavens, they also have their general intelligence and soul as well as particular intelligences and souls all of which cast their illuminations upon the sublunary region. The intelligence of the heaven of the sun is Gabriel whose grace is spread throughout the heavens and the earth.

Having considered the chain of Being, Mir Damad turns to a discussion of unity (*tauhid*) starting from “there is no divinity but God” (*la ilaha illa Allah*) to, “there is no being but He and no truth but He” (*la maujudun illa Huwa wa la haqqun illa Huwa*).⁶² For the real gnostic every being is nothing but Being. Mir Damad compares the relation of Being to existence with that of the number one to other numbers, which runs through all numbers without entering into them, which relation neither the soul nor the intellect can understand, yet its effect is felt everywhere.⁶³

The Divine Being by His essential unity encompasses all things; His unity is before, with, and after both *dahr* and *zaman*. His unity before *dahr* is the unity of His command, with *dahr*, the unity of the universal intellect, after *dahr*, the unity of the universal soul, unity with time (*zaman*) and unity of the elements and compounds.

As for the generation of multiplicity from unity, Mir Damad rejects the Peripatetic view of authors like ibn Sina who consider that the first intellect brings multiplicity into being by the three relationships possible

for it: necessity by something other than self, the intellection of the divine essence, and the intellection of its own essence. For Mir Damad just as the number of intelligences is unlimited so are there possible relationships beyond the number determined by the Peripatetics.⁶⁴ Likewise, the intelligences have a great many illuminations and effusions beyond the categories set forth by the Aristotelians, one intelligence being victorial (*qahir*) and the other passive and receptive (*maqhur*). Each heaven as well as each body, simple or composed, has its archetype (*rabb al-nau'*) in the world of divine command (*'alam-i amr*) which is changeless and is to its species what the soul of man is to his body.

Between the world of intelligences and the physical world there is an intermediary world, the so called eighth climate which Mir Damad, following the ancient Ishraqi sages calls *hurqalya*,⁶⁵ the world of separated imagination (*khayal-i munfasil*), or the purgatory (*barzakh*). Human imagination regarded as a gulf extending from this vast cosmic ocean. This world contains the forms or Platonic ideas of all physical bodies without being in a specific place. The mythical cities of Jabulqa and Jabulas⁶⁶ are located in it, and bodily resurrection on the Last Day, miracles, and the passage of great distances in a short time, all take place in this intermediary world which is a bridge to be crossed before reaching the spiritual world.

In order to cross this bridge and make the return journey through the ascending chain, man must become familiar with the divine names, especially the Great name (*ism-i a'zam*) which contains all the others. All the prophets and saints derive their being from these names, and the creatures are their effects. The spiritual world is called the world of invocation (*'alam-i tasbih*) because the realities of that world are the divine names. Man, therefore, can regain the world only by invoking the names and becoming unified with them.⁶⁷

The gnostic who has achieved this end sees the whole world through the intelligible world; in fact, he sees nothing outside the Divine. As long as man lives in this world no matter how much he has separated his soul from his body and achieved *catharsis* (*tajrid*), he is still in time and space. It is only when he dies and leaves the world of darkness for that light that he becomes completely free from the conditions of terrestrial existence of *zaman*, and it is only then that he enters into eternity (*dahr*).

The inner constitution of man forms a bridge between the worlds of time and eternity, the sensible and the intelligible. Man possesses four degrees of perception: sensation (*ihsas*), imagination (*takhayyul*), apprehension (*tawahkum*), and intellection (*ta'qqul*), the degrees which stretch between these two worlds; on the one hand, it abstracts perceptions from the sensible world and, on the other, receives the illumination of the intelligible world which it clothes in the forms of sensible, i.e. words and names which are the external dress of truth.⁶⁸

Mir Damad echoes earlier Sufi and Pythagorean doctrines in assigning a particular significance to the numerical symbolism of letters. He writes, "The world of letters corresponds to the world of numbers, and the world of numbers to the world of Being, and the proportion of the world of letters to the proportion of the world of numbers and the proportion of the world of numbers to the combinations and

mixtures of the world of Being.”⁶⁹ He calls the sciences of the properties of letters and their combination divine medicine and says that letters have come into being from the conjunction of planets with the signs of the Zodiac, for example *alif* has come into being by Mars crossing the first degree of Aries. He establishes correspondence between the 28 letters of the Arabic alphabet and the equal number of the stations of the moon and works out this correspondence in great detail.⁷⁰

In establishing a relation between numbers, letters of the alphabet, and the heavens, Mir Damad, like many sages before him, seeks to point out the common ground between the book of revelation and the book of nature, as well as the relation between the sensible world and the intelligible world. In his writings it is quite clear that both metaphysics and cosmology are to be found in the esoteric (*batini*) meanings of the Qur’an and that through the understanding of the symbolism of letters and numbers and the sapiential exegeses of sacred books one can come to know not only the Qur’an which corresponds to the world of creation, the *Qur’an-i tadwini*, i.e. the *logos* or the reality of Mohammad (*haqiqat al-Mohammadiyyah*).

Mir Abu al-Qasim Findiriski

The third famous triumvirate of sages from Isphan,⁷¹ Mir Findiriski, spent much of his life travelling outside Persia, especially in India where he was highly respected by most of the princes and where he made the acquaintance of many Hindu sages. He became well acquainted with Hinduism and even wrote a commentary upon the Persian translation of the *Yoga Vasistha* by Nizam al-Din Panipati, which is one of the major works on Hinduism in Persian. In the Muslim sciences he was a master in philosophy (*Hikmat*), mathematics, and medicine and taught the *Shifa’* and the *Qanun* of ibn Sina in Ispahan where he died in 1050/1640.

The most interesting aspect of Mir Findiriski’s life is his complete detachment, even externally, from the world. As a Sufi, in spite of his having advanced very far upon the Path and having reached the state of pure contemplation and illumination, he mingled with the common people and wore the coarsest wool and yet he was one of the most respected men in the Safawid Court.⁷² His manner resembled that of the Hindu Yogis with whom he had had so much contact. He was a real man among men and one of the most striking Sufis of his time. While completely detached from the world and even from purely formal learning, he composed several important treatises including one on motion (*al-harakah*), another on the arts and sciences in society (*sand’iyyah*), the book on Yoga already mentioned, *Usul al-Fusul* on Hindu wisdom and a history of the Safawids.

Moreover, he, like Mir Damad and Sheikh-i Baha-i, was an accomplished poet showing the development in him of the gnostic element which is the only possible common ground between traditional philosophy and poetry. The most famous of his poems is a *qasidah*, based upon that of Nasir ibn Khursau Dehlawi, which is one of the best known poems on *Hikmat* in Persian. It has been taught and commented upon many times since its composition, the more famous commentaries on it being those of Mohammad Salih Khalkhali and Hakim ‘Abbas Darabi. Because of the importance of this poem

in summarizing some of the basic elements of *Hikmat* as it was revived during the Safawid period, English translation of some of the verses is given below.

“Heaven with these stars is clear, pleasing, and beautiful,
Whatever is there above has below it a form.[73](#)

The form below, if by the ladder of gnosis
Is trodden upward, becomes the same as its principle.
No outward apprehension can understand this saying,
Whether it be that of an Abu Nasr or of an Abu ‘Ali Sina.[74](#)

If life were not an accident under this ancient heaven,
These bodies would be forever alive and erect.
But whatever is an accident must first have a substance,
The intellect is our loquacious witness to this claim.
If one can obtain these qualities[75](#) from the sun,
The sun is itself light and shines upon all things while keeping the unity.

The intellect form which is endless and immortal
Of the life of the universe, I say that if thou knowest the relation of the soul and the body,
In the heart of every particle, then life becomes both evident and hidden.
God has placed seven heavens above us,
And seven others on the other side of the world in the life to come.
Thou canst reach heaven by their means,
Be true and walk the straight path for there is no falsehood there.
He who worships the world, the door of heaven will never open to him,
The doors will not open even if he stands before them.
He who is annihilated in Him finds eternal life,
He who is busy with himself, his affair is doubtless a failure.
The jewel is hidden in the mysteries of the ancient sages,
Only he who is wise can discover the meaning of these mysteries.

Pass beyond these words for they are forsaken by the people of the world,
Find the Truth and tread its path, if thou art righteous.
Whatever is outside the essence will do thee no good,
Make thyself harmonious whether it be today or tomorrow.
The Being that is pure has no limit or description,
It is neither outside of us, nor with us, nor without us.

A beautiful thought is only beneficial when combined with virtuous deeds,
A thought with virtuous action is competent and beautiful.
To talk of goodness is not like doing good,

The name of sweetmeat on the tongue is not like sweetmeat itself....

In this world and the next, with the world and without it,

We can say all these of Him, yet He is above all that.

The intellect is a ship, passion a whirlpool, and knowledge the mast,

God is the shore and the whole cosmos the sea.

The shore is reached with certainty; the sea of the possible has become the necessary...[76](#)

How good it would be if the sages before us had said everything completely,

So that the opposition of those who are not complete[77](#)would be removed.

Desire keeps the soul in bondage in this world,

While thou hast desire, thy feet are tied.

Each wish in this world is followed by another wish,

The wish must be sought beyond which there is no other.”

Mir Findiriski occupied himself not only with metaphysics and the theoretical sciences but also with the sciences of society, of traditional society in which the social structure itself has a direct bearing in metaphysical principles. In this treatise on arts and sciences (*sana'iyah*),[78](#) he distinguishes 12 vocations or arts and sciences in society depending upon the subject with which each one deals. The subjects of the arts and sciences he enumerates are as follows: (1) The subject is universal and the discussion concerns knowledge as well as action from both of which there comes only good, (2) the subject is universal and the discussion concerns both knowledge and action from both of which there comes evil, (3) the subject is universal and the discussion concerns knowledge from which there comes only good, (4) the subject is universal and the discussion concerns knowledge from which there comes evil, (5) the subject is universal and the discussion concerns action from which there comes only good, and (6) the subject is universal and the discussion concerns action from which there comes evil.

To this list Mir Findriski adds a series of arts and sciences the subject of which is no longer universal. These include: (7) those arts and sciences the subject of which is particular and the discussion concerns knowledge and action from which there comes only good, (8) the subject is particular and the discussion concerns knowledge and action from which there comes evil, (9) the subject in particular and the discussion concerns only knowledge from which there comes only good, (10) the subject is particular and the discussion concerns the knowledge from which there comes evil, (11) the subject particular and the discussion concerns only action from which there comes only good, and, finally (12) the subject is particular and the discussion concerns only action which there comes evil.[79](#)

The first 12 categories listed above concerns the prophets, saints, and sages, the most exalted of men, who maintain the order of the universe, there being a prophet for each cycle of history and each people. The second concerns those who oppose the prophets and sages, those who are the deniers of truth, and the sophists and agnostics who are the lowest of men. The fourth class is the opposite of the first, i.e., the enemies of *Hikmat* and theology, of those who, seeing differences in the expressions of the

various sages, have denied the one truth which lies behind the diversity.⁸⁰ The fifth category is that of the jurists (*juqaha'*) who cultivate the practical sciences, and the sixth is that of their opposites like Mazdak,⁸¹ who concern themselves only with their bodies and remain oblivious of the order of both this world and the next.

The last six categories concern particular arts and sciences. The first of them, or the seventh in our list, is that of professionals in particular arts, like physicians, engineers, and astronomers, and the eighth is that of their opposites, i.e. those who misuse each of these arts. The ninth category is like the particular sense of an organ of the body and concerns people who have only a theoretical knowledge of various arts and sciences, like music, medicine, or the principles of jurisprudence. The tenth is its opposite and in it are included those who make a false claim to know those sciences theoretically. The 11th category concerns arts and sciences which are limited to a particular subject and the 12th its opposite which concerns the rejection of these same arts and sciences.

In this classification we can already see the hierarchic structure of society at the top of which stand the prophets and saints in whom knowledge and action are combined, below them the *hukama'* and the theologians, then those concerned with practical arts and the particular sciences. The nobility of a vocation in each case depends upon the nobility of the subject-matter treated. Likewise, the degree of degradation of a person or group depends upon the truth that has been denied, the higher the degree of a truth, the baser is he who denies it. The categories outlined by Mir Findiriski reflect the hierarchy within *Hikmat* itself. In both cases the religious sciences, like theology, and the wisdom of the prophets and saints above all the other categories.

Mulla Muhsin Faid-i Kashi

Mohammad ibn Shah Murtada ibn Shah Mahmud, better known as Mulla Muhsin or Faid-i Kashi, is the most famous of the sages of the generation following that of Mir Damad, Sheikh-i Baha'i, and Mir Findiriski. Born in Kashan in 1007/1600, he spent some years at Qum and then went to Shiraz to complete his studies with Mulla Sadra whose daughter he later married. He also studied with Mir Damad and Sheikh-i Baha'i but was more closely associated with Mulla Sadra. Just as Mir Damad produced a series of outstanding students, the best known of whom was Mulla Sadra – the greatest of the Safawid Hakims to whom we shall turn in a separate chapter – Mulla Sadra in turn produced a galaxy of famous students among whom Faid-i Kashi and Mulla 'Abd al-Razzaq Lahiji, both his sons-in-law, are the most important.⁸²

The genius of Mulla Sadra consisted largely in unifying the three perspectives of formal revelation of *shar'*, purification of the soul leading to illumination (*kashf*), and rational demonstration (*falsafah*) into a single universal vision in which all these paths lead to the same truth. All of his followers sought to preserve the unity established by their master, each emphasizing some one aspect of it. For example, later sages like Qadi Sa'id Qumi, Mulla 'Ali Nuri, and Aqa 'Ali Zunuzi sought to correlate revelation and reason, and Aqa Mohammad Bidabadi and Aqa Mohammad Rida' Qumshih, reason and gnosis. Others

continued the path trodden by Mulla Sadra himself and emphasized the harmony of all the three paths mentioned above. Mulla Muhsin Faid and Haji Mulla Hadi Sabziwari, the most famous Persian thinker of the last century, belong to the last group. Mulla Muhsin's writings display a harmonious integration of reason, revelation, and gnosis with lesser emphasis upon reason. He succeeded perhaps more than anyone else in the Shi'ah world to bring about a complete harmony between Law and spiritual life, *Shari'ah* and *Tariqah*.

In many ways Mulla Muhsin may be considered to be a Shi'ah Ghazali, not only because of his pre-occupation with harmonizing the exoteric and the esoteric views, but also for his treatment of a spiritualized ethics which forms the requirements for the following Path. He even re-wrote the well-known *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* of Ghazali under the name of *al-Mahajjat al-Baida' fi Ihya' al-Ihya'*, substituting traditions (Hadith) from the Shi'ah sources for those from the Sunni ones given by Ghazali.⁸³

The writings of Mulla Muhsin both in Arabic and Persian are too numerous to mention here.⁸⁴ Among the more famous, one may name *Haqq al-Yaqin*, *'Ain al-Yaqin*, and *'Ilm al-Yaqin* on *Hikmat*, *al-Safi*, *al-Wafi*, and *al-Shafi* on Qur'anic commentary and Hadith, *Mafatih al-Sharaya'* on jurisprudence, *al-Tathir* on ethics, *Jala al-'uyun*, *Zad al-Salik*, and *Kalimat-i Maknunah* on Sufism, numerous treatises on esoteric meaning of acts of worship, on various invocations, on particular sciences including astronomy, selections from and commentaries on the *Rasa'il* on the Ikhwan al-Safa, the *Futuh al-Makkiyyah* of ibn 'Arabi, and the *Mathnawi* of Jalal al-Din Rumi, and a large collection of poems consisting mostly of verses of Sufi inspiration. His works both in poetry and prose have remained very popular in Persia and ethical and social teachings have attracted particular attention in the past decades.

Mulla Muhsin's thought marks the final integration of *Hikmat* into Shi'ism. *Hikmat* in Persia had been moving in this direction for many centuries from the time of al-Farabi and ibn Sina. Suhrawardi Maqtul took the decisive step in regarding knowledge as personal illumination by the heavenly guide or "guardian angel." Mulla Sadra following him made the universal intellect the criterion of knowledge. Mulla Muhsin took a further step in this direction in identifying this intellect with the Shi'ah Imams, in whom the light of Mohammad (*al-nur al-Mohammadiyah*) is manifested and who are called the innocent (*ma'sum*) intellects.⁸⁵ Only by union with them, with the pure intellects, can one gain ultimate knowledge.

One of the important treatises of Mulla Muhsin, in which gnosis, *Hikmat* and *Shar'* are blended in characteristic fashion in the *Kalimat-i Maknunah* written in a mixture of Arabic and Persian.⁸⁶ It treats a complete cycle of theoretical gnosis so that its discussion gives a fair example of the totality of Mulla Muhsin's general perspective.

The work begins by assuring the reader that there is no way of reaching the essence of the Truth because the Truth encompasses all things. Everything is its manifestation, but only the *elite* (*khwass*) know what they see. Being is like light, but since its opposite does not exist in this world as in the case

of light which stands opposed to darkness, one cannot come to know it so easily. God is hidden because of the excess of His light, no veil can cover Him because every veil is a limitation and God is above all limitations.⁸⁷ Being *is* the Truth which subsists by Itself, while everything else subsists by consisting only of a reflection of Being itself.

The divine attributes and names are identical with the divine essence, while in themselves they are distinct. Likewise the forms of all beings in the divine intellect, i.e., the quiddities or essences, the *mahiyat* or *a'yan al-thabitah*,⁸⁸ are in one respect identical with and in another distinct from essence. Each being subsists by one of the divine names and its very existence consists in the invocation of that name. The archetype, *a'yan al-thabitah*, have two aspects; on the one hand, they are hidden and Truth is manifest, and on the other, Truth is the mirror in which they are reflected, in which case truth is hidden and they are manifest. These two aspects correspond also to two states of contemplation: one of Truth (*Haqq*) and the other of creation (*khalq*). The perfect gnostic contemplates both mirrors, he sees the cosmos as a mirror in which Truth is reflected, and his own essence as a mirror in which both the cosmos and Truth are reflected. Mulla Muhsin advises the sage to take a further step in eliminating himself also so that there remains nothing but Truth.⁸⁹

Mulla Muhsin follows certain earlier Sufis in considering the world to be re-created at every instant,⁹⁰ so that its continuity is only apparent. The real continuity is “vertical,” i.e. between Truth and its manifestations, not “horizontal” and “substantial,” i.e. between parts and instances of the created world. The world is like a flowing stream which, although apparently a continuous and subsistent body, changes at every instant and a new particle coming to take its place.

The creation of the world or the effusion of unity into multiplicity does not take place immediately but through the divine names, each creature being the theophany (*tajalli*) of a particular name. The name Allah is the supreme master (*rabb al-arbab*) of all the names of theophany of which is the universal man (*al-insan al-kamil*). Although the stages in which creation comes into being are numerous, Mullah Muhsin names five degrees which mark the main steps. In the first degree is the divine essence which is above all distinctions and determinations; in the second are the names which are the manifestations of Truth in the world of divinity, *uluhiyyah*, in the third are the divine acts and world of spirits which are the manifestations of Truth in the world of Lordship, *rububiyyah*, in the fourth is the world of “ideas” and imagination (*khayul*)⁹¹ which is the manifestation of Truth in the world of varying forms, and in the fifth is the world of the senses which is the manifestation of Truth in determined forms.⁹² Everything in the physical world has its archetype in the world of imagination, while everything in the world of lordship is a form of one of the divine names, each name an aspect of the divine essence.

Man alone among creatures is able to cast aside these veils and reach the divine origin of things. He has a particular soul brought into being with his body, which soul is independent of matter, and also a universal soul which exists before the body and is manifested only in the spiritual *elite*. Moreover, man has a vegetative soul consisting of the faculties of attraction, repulsion, digestion, growth, and retention

originating in the heart, a sacred rational soul (*nafs-i natiqah-i qudsiyyah*) with the faculties of meditation (*fikr*) and invocation (*dhikr*), and the universal divine soul (*nafs-i kulliyah-i ilahiyyah*), not possessed by all men, with the faculty of reaching the station of annihilation (*fana`*) in the Divine.⁹³

The goal of each man should be to awaken the potential faculties within him until all the accidental obstacles are removed and he becomes identified with the universal man, the theophany of the supreme name. Then he will be able to contemplate Absolute Being and thereby fulfil the purpose of all creation and sustain the whole universe.

The universal man is either a prophet or a saint. Absolute prophethood (*nubuwwat-i mutlaq*) is the supreme station, the perfect “form” of unity, the first pen, and the Pole of Poles, *qutb al-aqtab*, upon which all the prophets and saints depend. The inner (*atin*) dimension of this prophecy is absolute sainthood (*wilayat-i mutlaq*). Mulla Muhsin identifies absolute prophethood with the light of Mohammad, and absolute sainthood with the light of ‘Ali. The prophethood of all prophets depends upon absolute prophecy as the sainthood of all saints depends upon absolute sainthood. Prophethood began with Adam and found its completion in Prophet Mohammad. Sainthood will reach its completion gradually until it culminates in the 12th Imam, the Mehdi. Absolute prophethood is the treasure of all possible perfections and the whole cosmos in the expansion and manifestation of its inner qualities.⁹⁴

Gnosis and illumination are themselves the fruit of the tree of prophethood. Mulla Muhsin insists that the source of *Hikmat* was originally the sacred spirit of the prophets; this wisdom, however, was misunderstood and misinterpreted by men of the later period, i.e. the Peripatetics and other later schools of Greek philosophy, and was revived only in the light of the revelation of the Prophet of Islam and his family. He who wishes to be initiated into it must, therefore, seek the aid of the prophets and saints and this can be achieved only by invocation and meditation and the purification of the heart. Only he who has trodden this path and become a true Hakim can be considered the real heir to the saints and the prophets.⁹⁵

Mulla Mohammad Baqir Majlisi

One cannot terminate a study of the intellectual life of the Safawid period without mentioning the two Majlisis, father and son, especially the son Mohammad Baqir who stands as one of the outstanding figures of the period. The first Majlisi, Mohammad Taqi (1003/1594 – 1070/1659), was one of the students of Sheikh-i Baha’i and an outstanding theologian and Sufi of his time.⁹⁶ His son, the second Majlisi (1037/1628 – 1110/1699), however, surpassed his father in fame and power and became the most dominant figure of Shi’ism. Having studied with his own father, Mulla Khalil Qazwini and Mulla Muhsin Faid, he in turn became the master of over a thousand disciples including Sayyid Ni’matullah Jaza’iri, well known for his many writings, especially the account of his own life as a student.

The second Majlisi is especially famous for revivifying the various branches of the Shi’ah sciences and for assembling the writings of the earlier doctors of Shi’ism and prophetic *hadith* into encyclopaedias

which have henceforth become the main reference for all who undertakes religious education in the Shi'ah *madrasahs*. The most important and famous of these is the *Bihar al-Anwar* summarized in the *Safinat al-Bihar* of Sheikh 'Abbas Qumi, the lithographed edition of which occupies 24 volumes: *Haqq al-Yaqin* in *Usul*, *Hayat al-Qulub*, a commentary upon the *Mir'at al'Uqul*, a 12 volume commentary writing career enters into purely intellectual (*'aqli*) questions and treats of many essential religious subjects, especially eschatology and the conditions before the appearance of Mehdi, from an intellectual rather than a purely "confessional" point of view.⁹⁷

Of special interest in the religious life of Persia is Majlisi's opposition to Sufism and even the denial that his own father, the first Majlisi, was a Sufi.⁹⁸ Furthermore, supported by the Court and many of the theologians and doctors, he opposed the intellectual method of the Hakims and philosophers with the result that both the Sufis and the Hakims fell into disgrace and had a lot of difficulty in official religious circles. The dynasty which had begun as the extension of Sufi order ended by opposing all Sufism and gnosis itself. It was not long after the death of the second Majlisi in fact that the Safawid dynasty itself fell before the Afghans, and Ispahan, the historic as well as the symbolic centre of this period of great intellectual activity was sacked and its libraries burnt.

D. Conclusion

This form of wisdom or *Hikmat*, some features of which we have sought to outline here, did not die with the termination of the Safawid dynasty. In the 13th/18th century Sufism was revived in Persia by Ma'sum 'Ali Shah and Shah Tahir Dakani, two Ni'matullahi masters sent by Rida' 'Ali Shah from the Deccan to Persia. It was persecuted for a period but began to expand with the establishment of the Qajars. Likewise, the school of *Hikmat* continued through the students of Mulla Sadra and others from one generation to another until it produced Sheikh Ahmad Absai'i, the founder of the Sheikh movement,⁹⁹ Haji Mulla Hadi Sabizwari, and several other outstanding figures in the Qajar period, the light of whose teachings has not yet disappeared from the horizon of Persia. One can hardly understand the intellectual life of Islam in its totality without taking into account this last major period of Muslim intellectual activity, lasting from the Safawid period to the present, to the understanding of which we hope this chapter will serve as an introduction and as an incentive for further exploration.

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1. A few authors like Gobineau, Donaldson, and E. G. Browne have touched upon certain aspects of Shi'ism in their writings. The only European author, however, who has delved with serious intention into the Shi'ah intellectual world is Henri Corbin, who during the past 20 years has done much to introduce the rich heritage of Shi'ism, especially as it has developed in Persia, to the Western world.
2. For the meaning of this word which denotes wisdom refer to the chapter on Shihab al-Din Suhrawardi Maqtul.
3. Sheikh Safi (647/1249 – 735/1334), one of the most important of Shi'ah Sufi saints, is still greatly respected by the Sufis, his tomb in Ardibil has remained until today an important place of pilgrimage. Being the disciple of Sheikh Zahid Gilani he was already a significant figure in his own day as testified by the biographical works like the *Safwat al-Safa'* by ibn Bazzaz, and Rashid al-Din Fadl Allah's letters to the saint and to the governor of Ardibil in his *Munsha'at-i Rashidi*. See also E. G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*, vol 4, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1924, Chap. 2.
4. For a history of the Safawid period, see E. G. Browne, op. cit., vol 4; L. Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safawid Dynasty and the Afghan Occupation of Persia*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1958, and the traditional sources of which some of the more important include the *Safawat al-Safa'* by ibn Bazzaz, *Ahsan al-Tawarikh* by Hassan Baik Rumlu, *Zubdat al-Tawarikh* by Mohammad Muhsin ibn 'Abd al-Karim, and the universal history *Nasikh al-Tawarikh* by Mriza taqi Sipihr.
5. The purpose of the theology is to protect the truth of a revelation against false reasoning; its role is, therefore, defensive. It is the shell which protects the inner spiritual life, not that life itself. If there were no danger of rationalism and false reasoning, there would be no need for theology. We, therefore, see theology coming into being with rationalistic philosophy, and where there is no tendency toward rationalism, there is no theology as this word is currently understood.
6. For a discussion of the meaning of ishraqi wisdom, refer to the chapter on Suhrawardi Maqtul.
7. The reason why the pre-Safawid sages of Persian like 'Ali Turkah Ispahani and ibn Abi Jumhur as well as the Safawid authors themselves have been neglected in the Western world, is that the quality of their wisdom is primarily gnostic ('irfani) like that of Sheikh al-Akbar Muhyi al-Din ibn 'Arabi by whose doctrines they were all influenced, that like him they can be understood neither by the rationalistic philosophers nor by the mystics as they have come to be understood since the Renaissance.
8. For the name of some of these Arab Shi'ah scholars, see E. G. Browne, op. cit., vol. 4, Chap. 8.
9. The science of Usul as an independent science has grown into monumental proportions only in the past few centuries reaching its height in the hands of Sheikh Murtada Ansari, the famous doctor of the Qajar period, who only a century ago made Usul into a science matching Kalam in its logical subtleties.
10. Shi'ah theology reached its height in the seventh/13th century in the hands of men like Khuwaja Nasir al-Din Tusi and 'Allamah-i Hilli.
11. See the chapter on Suhrawardi Maqtul. Generally, Hikmah in Arabic or Hikmat in Persian means wisdom in addition to the particular sense given to it as a divine science.
12. For the series of commentators and expositors of ishraqi wisdom, see the chapter on Suhrawardi Maqtul.

- [13.](#) It is unfortunate that in books treating of the relation between faith and reason in Islam like A. J. Arberry's *Revelation and Reason in Islam*, London, 1957, most of these authors are not taken into serious consideration.
- [14.](#) For an account of the doctrines of ibn 'Arabi, see T. Burekardt (Tr), *La sagesse des prophetes*, Paris, 1955; also idem, *Introduction to Sufi Doctrine*, tr. M. Matheson, Sh. Mohammad Ashraf, Lahore, 1959, which is an excellent general introduction to ibn 'Arabi's school of Sufism. See also Corbin, *L'imagination creatrice dans la souflame d'Ibn 'Arabi*, Flammarion, Paris, 1958, which contains some useful chapters on his ideas and their spread in the east.
- [15.](#) See S.M. Sadr, *Sheikh 'Ala al-Daulah Simnani*, Danish Press, Teheran, 1334/1915.
- [16.](#) This great Persian Sufi poet and sage has written several well-known summaries of ibn 'Arabi's doctrine including the *Lawa'ih* translated by Whinfeld and Qazwini, Luzac & Co., London, 1928, the *Asha'at al-Lama'at*, and the *Naqd al-Nusus*.
- [17.](#) The *Kitab al-Mujli* of ibn Abi Jumhur and *Jami' al-Asrar* and *Jami' al-Haqa'iq* of Mulla Haidar 'Ali Amuli are among the most important sources of Shi'ah gnostic doctrines.
- [18.](#) The best traditional sources for these earlier Shi'ah authors are the *Raudat al-Jannat* of Mohammad Baqir Khunsari, lithographed edition, Teheran, 1306/1888; *al-Dhari'ah* of Agh Buzurg Tihrani, al Gharra Press, Najaf 1355/1936 on; the *Tarikh-i Alam Ara-yi Abbasi* of Iskandar Baig Munghi, Teheran, 1334/1915; and of more recent composition the *Raihanat al-Adab* of Mohammad 'Ali Tabrizi, Sa'di Press, Teheran, 1331 – 33 Solar; the *Qisas al-'Ulama'* of Mirza Mohammad Tunikabuni, Islamiyyah Press, Teheran, 1313 Solar; *Fihrisi-i Kutub-i Ihada'i Aqa-yi Mishkat* by M.B. Danish Puzhuh, University Press, Teheran, 1335/1916; see als H. Corbin, "Confession extatiques de Mir Damad" in the *Melanges Louis Mussignon*, Institut Francais de Dames, Damas, 1955, pp. 331 – 78.
- [19.](#) See Corbin, op. cit., pp. 333ff.
- [20.](#) His name should not in way be connected with the heterodox Baha'i movement of the 13th/19th century.
- [21.](#) For an account of the life and works of Sheikh-i Baha'i, see *Tarikh-i 'Alam Ara-yi 'Abbasi*, pp. 155 – 57; also Naficy, *Ahwal wa Ash'ar-i Farsi-i Sheikh-Baha'i*, Eqbal Press, Teheran, 1316/1898.
- [22.](#) Sheikh-i Baha'i is said to have built a bath house name Gulkan which had always had hot water without any fuel being used in it. When it was pulled down, people discovered a single candle burning under the water tank.
- [23.](#) This book on mathematics which helped greatly in reviving the study of the mathematical sciences in Persia was a standard text-book for centuries and has been commented upon several times and translated into Persian by Mohammad Amin Najafi Hijazi Qumi and into German by G. H. F. Nesselmann who published the text and the translation in Berlin in 1843. Sheikh-i Baha'i revived the study of mathematics and astronomy in Persia after 100 years of neglect, having himself learned these sciences in Herat.
- [24.](#) For a list of the nearly 90 works attributed to him, see his *Kulliyat-i Ash'ar-i Farsi*, ed. M. Tauhidiput, Mahmudi Press, Teheran, 1336/1917, pp. 42 – 45.
- [25.](#) Ibid., pp 164 – 66.
- [26.](#) Intoxication symbolizes ecstasy and spiritual union.
- [27.](#) Maulan Jala'i al-Din Rumi is commonly referred to as Maulawi in Persian. This verse refers to Maulawi's well-known rejection of rationalism in favour of gnosis. (The leg of rationalist is a wooden leg...).
- [28.](#) Love symbolizes gnosis or the science which comes through contemplation and illumination rather than analysis and discursive thought.
- [29.](#) Reference is to the famous theologian Imam Fakhr al-Din Razi.
- [30.](#) This verse is in Arabic and is repeated immediately with only a little change in Persian.
- [31.](#) That is, he is like a beast of burden.
- [32.](#) Reference is to the wisdom of the Sufis are contrasted with that of the Greeks, the *Hikmat-i Imani* and the *Hikmat-i Yunani*.
- [33.](#) The Prophet Mohammad (upon whom be peace).
- [34.](#) Sheikh-i Bhah'i, *Kulliyat...*, pp. 18 – 19.
- [35.](#) This theme appears in certain Hermetic writings, the Acts of Thomas, the Grail story, as well as in Islam in the visionary narratives of ibn Sina and many of Suhrawardi's gnostic tracts like *Qissah Ghurbat al-Gharbiyyah*; see H. Corbin, *Avicenne et le recit visionnaire*, Institut Franco-iranien, Teheran, and A. Maisonneuve, Paris, 1952 – 54, vol. 1, chap. 3, and Suhrawardi, *Oeuvres philosophiques et mystiques*, vol. 2, Institut Franco-Iranien, Teheran, and A. Maisonneuve, Paris,

1954, Prolegomene by H. Corbin.

[36.](#) Sheikh-i Baha-i, *Kulliyat...*, p. 23.

[37.](#) A city in the south of Arabia with which the name of the Queen of Sheba is associated.

[38.](#) La makan, meaning beyond the world of cosmic manifestation. Suhrawardi refers to this point which is the top of the cosmic mountain Qaf, as na kuja abad; see Suhrawardi, "Le bruissement de l'aile de Gabriel," tr. H. Corbin and P. Kraus, *Journal Asiatique*, Juillet-Sept., 1935, pp. 41 – 42.

[39.](#) For an account of the life and writings of Mir Damad, see M. Tunikabuni, *Qisas al-'Ulmaa*, pp. 333 – 35; *Raihanat al-Adab*, vol. 4, pp. 117 – 21; *Raudat al-Jannat*, pp. 114 – 16; *Tarikh-i 'Alam Ara-yi 'Abbasi*, pp. 146 – 47; Danish Pazhuh, *Fihrist...*, Vol. 3, 1, p. 152 and the good Introduction of his life and thought by Corbin, "Confessions extateiques de Mir Damad," pp. 340ff.

[40.](#) It is said that he had a lot of interest in the life of the bees and had accumulated a good deal of observational data about them.

[41.](#) For an account of these and other students of Mir Damad, see H. Corbin, *op. cit.*, pp 345 – 46.

[42.](#) The "Yamani philosophy" means the wisdom revealed by God to man through the prophets and through illumination; Yaman (Yemen) symbolizes the right or oriental (Mashriqi) side of the valley in which Moses heard the message of God. It is, therefore, the source of divine illumination in contrast to the Occident, the source of Peripatetic philosophy, the Occident symbolizing darkness and being on the plane of philosophy, i.e. rationalism. See. H. Corbin, *Le recit d'initiation et l'hermetisme en Iran*," *Eranos Jahrbuch*, vol. 17, 1949, pp. 136 – 37. For the symbols of the orient and Occident in ishraqi wisdom see the chapter on Suhrawardi Maqtul.

[43.](#) This major work has been commented upon several times. One of its most curious commentaries is that of Mohammad ibn 'Ali Rida ibn Aqajani, one of the students of Mulla Sadra; it runs over a thousand pages.

[44.](#) These last two works are among the important books on Hikmat in Persian, the others being in Arabic. Some manuscripts attribute *Sidrat al-Muntaha* to Mir Damad's student, Sayyid Ahmad 'Alawi, although in the *Jadhawat* Mir Damad refers to this work as being his own. In any case it is a product of his school.

[45.](#) For a translation and discussion of this work, see H. Corbin, *op. cit.*, pp. 350ff.

[46.](#) See for example the *Shifa'* or *Najat* of ibn Sina and the *Kitab al-Mu'tabar* of Abu al-Barakat al-Baghdadi. In some cases as in the *Danish Nameh-i Ala'i* of ibn Sina and many later ishraqi writings, the book begins with metaphysics and then proceeds to natural philosophy in the manner of Plato rather than Aristotle.

[47.](#)

See Mir Damad, *Qabasat*, Sheikh Mahmud Burujirdi, Shiraz, 1315/1897.

[48.](#) For a general discussion of this question, see L. Gardet, *La pensee religieuse d'Avicenne*, J. Vrin, Paris, 1951, pp. 38ff, and A. K. Coomarasawany, *Time and Eternity*, *Artibus Asiaticae*, Ascona, 1947, Chap. 4.

[49.](#) Mr. Dmad, *Qabasat*, pp. 1 – 10.

[50.](#) *Ibid*, p. 7.

[51.](#) Mir Damad argues that time itself is the measure of the movement of the heavens and a condition for the existence of this world so that one cannot speak of a time before the creation of the world; *Qabasat*, p. 20.

[52.](#) For a comparison and affinity of these ideas with those of ibn 'Arabi, see *La sagesse des prophètes*, Chapters One and Two.

[53.](#) In presenting this view of creation, Mir Damad draws heavily on earlier writings from Plato's *Timaeus* and the so-called *Theology of Aristotle* to the *Shifa'* of ibn Sina and the *Kitab al-Mu'tabar* of Abu al-Barakat. In each case he also criticizes the view of the previous writers who considered the world either to be eternal in itself or created in time from outside. Mir Damad's *Risalah fe Madhhab Aristotalis* is devoted to a discussion of the difference between the views of Plato and Aristotle on the question time and eternity drawing on Farabi's *Kitab Jam' bain al-Ra'yain*. Mir Damad's treatise is published on the margin of the *Qabasat*, pp. 140 – 57.

[54.](#) The *Jadhawat* (Bombay, lithographed edition, 1302/1884, pp. 203) begins with a poem in praise of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib the first lines of which are as follows:

Oh herald of the nation and the soul of the Prophet,
The ring of thy knowledge surrounds the ears of the intelligences.

Oh thou in whom the book of existence terminates,
To whom the account or creation refers
The glorified treasure of the revelation,
Thou art the holy interpreter of its secrets.

[55.](#) Suhrawardi also divides the angelic world into the longitudinal and the latitudinal orders, a division the influence of which upon Mir Damad is easy to discern. On the question of angelology the Safawid sages remained faithful to the ishraqi scheme combined with that of ibn Sina. See the chapter of Suhrawardi Maqtul.

[56.](#) The natures refer to the warm and cold, wet and dry, and the elements to the four traditional ones, fire, air, water and earth.

[57.](#) Mir Damad and Mulla Sadra, unlike Aristotle and his followers, posit some form of matter in every degree of formal manifestation.

[58.](#) Mir Damad mentions that there are 1,400 species of animals, 800 belonging to sea and 600 belonging to land.

[59.](#) Jadhawdat, pp. 2 – 13.

[60.](#) Ibid., pp. 13 – 18.

[61.](#) Ibid., pp. 18 – 28.

[62.](#) Ibid., pp. 28ff.

[63.](#) In discussing tauhid, Mir Damad draws not only on ibn Sina and Suhrawardi but even on the Nahj al-Balaghah of the first Shi'ah Imam, the Sahifah-i Sajjadiyyah of the fourth Imam and other Shi'ah sources. He regards Pythagoras as the Imam of the Seitic sages (Hukama-i Sami) and one who received his wisdom through revelation. This view going back to Philo is held among the great majority of the Muslim sages and historians of philosophy.

[64.](#) Jadhawat, pp. 38ff.

[65.](#) This intermediary region plays an important role in the thought of Mulla Sadra and even more in the writings of Sheikh Ahmad Asha'i, the founder of the Sheikhis who still survive in Kerman.

[66.](#) These are two famous mythical cities through which initiates pass in their journeys and they appear often in initiatic narratives in Persian.

[67.](#) Jadhawat, pp. 54 – 63.

[68.](#) Ibid., p. 100.

[69.](#) Ibid., p. 103. In the same work, p. 92, the last part of which is wholly devoted to the important traditional Muslim science of jafr, he considers numbers to be the principles of beings, the illumination from the intelligible world, the "Michael of the degree of existence" and adds that if a person acquires all the knowledge of numbers he will gain complete knowledge of the physical world. This view is very close to that of Pythagoras and his school. See Aristotle, *Metaphysica*, Book 5. In both cases number is not just the quantity of modern mathematics, but a "personality," an entity which possesses a definite qualitative aspect. For the notion of the Pythagoreans, see H. Keyser, *Akroasis*, Verlag Gert Jatje, Stuttgart, 1947.

[70.](#) For a profound study of this subject as developed before Mir Damad, see S. T. Burckhardt, *La cle spirituelles de l'astrologie musulmane d'apres Ibn 'Arabi*, Editions Traditionelle, Paris, 1950.

[71.](#) The other two are Sheikh-i Baha-i and Mir Damad who were close friends of Mir Findiriski and shared with him the respect and honour of the Safawid Court. For an account of the life of Mir. Findiriski whose complete name is Mir Abu al-Qasim ibn Mirza Baik Husain Findiriski, see *Raihanat al-Adab*, vol. 3 pp. 231 – 32.

[72.](#) The story is told of him in most biographies that one day Shah 'Abbas, trying to admonish him for mixing with the common people, said, "I hear some of the leading scholars and sages have been attending cock-fights in the bazaar." Mir Findiriski, knowing that the remark was meant for him, replied, "Your majesty, rest assured, I was present but I saw none of the 'ulama' there." See *Riyad al-'Arifin*, p. 276.

[73.](#) The text of this qasidah and the commentary by Khalkali have been published in Teheran, lithographed edition, 1325/1907. This verse means the celestial archetypes of Platonic ideas and their earthly reflections or shadows.

[74.](#) Reference is to Farabi and ibn Sina, the two early masters of masha'i philosophy in Islam.

[75.](#) "Qualities" means multiplicity of forms which become evident only when light shines upon them.

[76.](#) The later Muslim authors following ibn Sina divide reality into the Necessary Being (*wajib al-wufud*), the possible being (*mumkin al-wufud*) and the being that is impossible (*mumtani' al-wujud*).

- [77.](#) All the arguments begin because each side considers only one aspect of the Truth. But those who are “complete,” that is, have a vision of the totality of the Truth, never enter into arguments.
- [78.](#) Mir Findiriski, Raisaleh-i Sand’iyyah, Sa’adat Press, Teheran, 1317 Solar.
- [79.](#) Ibid., pp. 13 – 54.
- [80.](#) Mir Findiriski adds that all the Greek philosophers before Aristotle were saying the same thing in different languages and that if one is instructed in the secrets (rumuz) of Hikmat, Hindu wisdom, and the Theology of Aristotle (i.e. the Enneads of Plotinus), all the different expressions will have the same meaning for him.
- [81.](#) Mir Findiriski mentions Mazdak as the person who by a false interpretation of the Avesta preached the communization of women and property. He also mentions Carmathians (Qaramitah) as belonging to this group.
- [82.](#) Mulla-i Lahiji, known as Fayyad author of several important treatises on Hikmat in Persian and Arabic mentioned already, deserves a separate study as one of the major figures of this period. There are brief accounts of him in E. G. Browne, op. cit., vol 4, pp. 408 – 09, 435. See also the introduction by Sayyid Mohammad Mishkat to the new edition of al-Mahajjat al-Baida’, vol. 1, Islamiyyah Press, Teheran, 1380 Solar, in which the significance of Faid’s doctrines and in particular the present work on ethics is discussed.
- [83.](#) See Mulla Muhsin Faid-i kasha, al-Mahajjat al-Baida’ fi lhya’ al-lhya’, four volumes, Islamiyyah Press, Teheran, 1380 – 81 Solar, in which in ten sections he deals with Sufi ethics based on Shi’ah sources but following closely the model of lhya’.
- [84.](#) The Raihanat al-Adab, vol. 3, pp. 242 – 44, mentions 120 works by him. For the account of Mulla Muhsin’s life and writings, consult also Qisas al-‘Ulama’, pp. 322 – 33, and Riyad al-‘Arifin, pp. 388 – 89.
- [85.](#) Mulla Muhsin Faid, A’inih-i Shahi, Musawi Press, Shiraz, 1320/1902, p. 5.
- [86.](#) Kalimat-i Maknunah, Teheran, lithographed edition, 1316/1898. Henceforth, our reference to this work will be to this edition.
- [87.](#) Ibid., p. 15.
- [88.](#) For an explanation of these terms see Seyyed Hossein Nasr, “Being and Its polarisation,” Pakistan Philosophical Journal, Vol. 3, No. 2, October 1959, pp. 8 – 13. In the general discussion among the Hakims as to whether these essences (or Being) are principal, Mulla Muhsin sides with the school of isalat-i wujud, the principality of Being, and considers the mahiyat to be the accidents of Being. This question has been dealt with in the chapter of Suhrawardi Maqtul.
- [89.](#) Kalimat-i Maknunah, pp. 31ff. Mulla Muhsin describes these stages also as the ‘ilm al-yaqin, in which one “sees” nothing but the divine essence names, and acts; the ‘ain al-yaqin, in which one “sees” nothing but the essence and names, and the haqq al-yaqin in which there remains only the divine ipseity.
- [90.](#) See T. Burckhardt, Introduction to Sufi Doctrine, pp. 64ff.
- [91.](#) This term should not be taken in its negative connotation; it has a positive meaning in Sufi cosmology and marks an intermediate stage between the sensible world and the spiritual world. See H. Corbin, Imagination creatrice..., Chap. 2.
- [92.](#) Kalimat-i Maknunah, p. 61.
- [93.](#) Ibid., pp. 74 – 75.
- [94.](#) Ibid., pp. 167ff.
- [95.](#) Ibid., pp. 214 – 19.
- [96.](#)
Raihanat al-Adab, vol. 3, pp. 460 – 62. The Mar’at al-Ahwal-i Jahan Numa’ by Ahmad ibn Mohammad Baqir Ispahani Bihbahani is devoted to his life and works.
- [97.](#) For the writings and life of the second Majlisi, see Raihanat al-Adab, vol. 3, pp. 455 – 60; Danish Pazhuh, Fihrist... vol. 5, p. 1137. The Faid-i Qudsi by Mirza Hussain Nuri is devoted completely to his life and writings. Majlisi wrote 13 Arabic and 55 Persian books with altogether occupy nearly a million and a half lines.
- [98.](#) He devoted a treatise, the ‘Itiqadat, to rejecting Sufism.
- [99.](#) Sheikh Ahmad is responsible for the last important religious movement within Shi’ism and should be studied separately as a founder of a particular sect. The leaders of this sect called the Sheikhs claim to have knowledge of all things, and so each of them from the time of Sheikh Ahmad to the present has composed a large number of treatises on all the sciences., For a list of the works of Sheikh Ahmad and other leaders of the Sheikhs, see Abu al-Qasim ibn Zain al-‘Abidin ibn Karim, Fihrist-i Kutub-i Marhum- Ahsu’i wa Sa’r-i Mashayikh-i ‘Izam, two vols. Sa’adat Press, Kerman, 1337, Solar.

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