A History of Muslim Philosophy Volume 2, Book 4

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Part 1. The Fall of Baghdad

Chapter 40: Fall of The ‘Abbasid Caliphate

The Mongol invasion, which shook the world of Islam to its very foundations in the seventh/13th century was an unprecedented phenomenon in the history of mankind. A people, hitherto unknown even to their neighbours, poured forth from the bare and bleak plateau of Karakorum (Mongolia) and with lightning speed overran the Asian and European continents from China to Hungary and East Prussia, and built up the largest empire know to man. These people were the Mongols[1] or Tartars as called by their contemporaries. Their invasion inflicted more suffering on the human race than any other incident recorded in history. They lived in a wild and primitive state of society. “They are,” says Matthew Paris, “inhuman and beastly, rather monsters than men, thirsty for and drinking blood, tearing and devouring the flesh of dogs and men...They are without human laws.”[2]

The Mongol storm burst on the Muslim world in two separate waves. The first dates back to 616/1219 when Chingiz Khan[3] (550/1155 – 625/1227), who first as the leader of a band of adventurers and later installed as their ruler in 603/1206 welded these barbarians into a strong and well-disciplined military force, attacked the Empire of the Khwarizm Shahs (470/1077 – 629/1231) which at the height of its power stretched from the Ural Mountains to the Persian Gulf and from the Euphrates to the Indus excluding the two Iranian provinces of Khuzistan and Fars. The second wave broke on Khurasan in 654/1256 when Chingiz Khan’s grandson, Hulagu Khan (614/1217 – 664/1265), was selected by his

brother, Emperor Mangu Khan (649/1251 – 655/1257), and the great *quriltay*, i.e. the Mongol assembly, held in 649/1251, to annihilate the ‘Abbasid Caliphate of Baghdad and the Isma‘ilis of Alamut and Quhistan in North Iran.

The first invasion, which probably could not have been averted, was provoked by a further incident in which the Governor of Utrar,[4] a frontier town in Khwarizm, murdered a number of Mongol tradesmen alleged to have been spies. Thereupon Chingiz Khan despatched an embassy consisting of two Mongols and one Turk to the Court of ‘Ala al-Din Mohammad Khwarizm Shah (596/1199 – 617-1220) to protest against this violation of the laws of hospitality and demanded that he should hand over the Governor to them or prepare for war. In reply Khwarizm Shah behaved in a queer fashion which was both foolish and arrogant. He killed the Turk and turned back the two Mongols with their beards shaved off. Upon this the Mongols held a *quriltay* and decided to attack Khwarizm.

This was not the only evidence of Khwarizm Shah’s suicidal policy. According to the contemporary historian, ibn Athir (d. 632/1234), ‘Ala al-Din Mohammad had already destroyed or weakened the neighbouring Muslim States in order to build up an unstable, sprawling empire, so that in the dark hour of trial when, instead of showing any signs of resistance, he adopted the ignominious course of continued retreat, and left his unfortunate subjects at the mercy of the relentless enemy, there was no Muslim power left to protect or defend them. His gallant son, Jalal al-Din Mankoburni (617/1220 – 629/1231), however, put up stiff resistance against the full might of the Mongol attack and for years continued to show acts of great heroism in unequal battles until, unaided and deserted, he met his tragic end. By his desperate and indomitable courage against the Mongol blast of death, the dauntless prince has left a permanent mark of gallantry in the annals of Muslim history.

A big factor which hastened the Muslim downfall was the atmosphere of intrigue prevailing in the Muslim world on the eve of the Mongol invasion. According to ibn Athir and al-Maqrizi (766/1180 – 846/1442), the ‘Abbasid Caliph al-Nasir (576/1180 – 622/1225) actually encouraged the Mongols to attack Khwarizm, little knowing that his own house was destined to perish at the hands of the same irresistible foe.

The storm burst in 616/1219 and soon engulfed Transoxiana, Khwarizm, Khurasan, the territories lying north of the river Indus, and North Iran, until, instead of turning south or west, it swept across the Caucasus into South Russia, finally to advance as far away as the Baltic and the Adriatic.

The second wave of invasion struck Khurasan at the beginning of 654/1256; the Caliphate of Baghdad was destroyed in 656/1258 by Hulagu Khan who had earlier wiped out the Isma‘ili stronghold at Alamut in North Iran in 654/1256. The Mongol army advanced further into Syria, sacked Aleppo, and threatened Damascus into surrender in 659/1260. It was at ‘Ain Jalut (Goliath’s Spring) near Nazareth, however, that the Mongol tide was firmly stemmed by the gallant Mamluks of Egypt who gave them a crushing defeat in 659/1260. After the death of Jalal al-Din Mankoburni this was the first Muslim victory in 30 years and it broke the spell of the Mongol invincibility.

The Mongols were essentially an engine of destruction. They mowed down all resistance and their opponents "feel to the right and left like the leaves down winter." They have been described by Sir Henry Howorth as one of those races "which are sent periodically to destroy the luxurious and the wealthy, to lay in ashes the parts and culture which grow under the shelter of wealth and easy circumstances."[5] According to 'Ata Malik Juwaini, Hulagu Khan's secretary, who was appointed Governor of Baghdad after the destruction of the 'Abbasid Caliphate, Chingiz Khan described himself at Bukhara as the "scourge of God" sent to men as a punishment for their great sins.[6]
The bewildering extent of the blood-thirsty ferocity, insatiable thirst for massacre, and devastating destruction which brought unprecedented suffering for the greater portion of the civilized world, would be just impossible to believe, had the facts not been confirmed from different sources, both Eastern and Western.

All historians agree that wherever the Mongols went they exterminated populations, pillaged towns and cities, wreaked special vengeance upon those who dared to resist them, converted rich and smiling fields into deserts, and left behind the smoke of burning towns. In the words of Chingiz Khan himself, quoted by Rashid al-Din Fadl Allah, the famous Prime Minister of the Mongol period in Iran and the author of *Jami al-Tawarikh*,[7] "the greatest joy is to conquer one's enemies, to pursue them, to see their families in tears, to ride their horses and to possess their daughters and wives." In old Mongol traditions there is a story that the future world conqueror was born with a piece of clotted blood in his hands.[8] The senseless destruction, cruelty, outrage, spoliation, and the lightning speed of the Mongol attack have been described by Juwaini in the pithy sentence uttered by a fugitive from Merv, "They came and uprooted, they burned, they slew, they carried off, and they departed."[9]

To have an idea of the brutal lust of conquest and ruthless ferocity shown by the Mongol hordes it would suffice to trace the wonton disregard of human life shown by them in some of the many prosperous cities and towns they ravaged. They reduced to ashes the city of Bukhara which was known for its magnificent palaces, gardens and parks stretching for miles on the banks of the river Sughd, put one million people to the sword in Samarqand, and brutally massacred all the inhabitants of Tirmidh and Sabziwar. Khwarizm suffered an equally tragic fate. According to Juwaini, 1,200,000 people were killed in the city. Amongst the scholars and saints who perished was the famous Shaikh Najm al-Din Kubra (d. 618/1221).

In Balkh the Mongol army came back a few days after the city's destruction to kill the poor wretches who might have survived the first holocaust, and, having dragged them out of the hiding places, butchered them in the true Mongol fashion. Bamiyan, where a Mongol prince lost his life, was wiped out of existence and orders were issued not leave even babies alive in their wombs. This kind of sadism was not a stray incident, for ibn Athir characterizes the Mongols as a people who "spared none, slaying women, men and children, ripping open pregnant women and killing unborn babies."[10] At Nasa they made a hecatomb of over 70,000 people. Merv, which was at the height of its glory, suffered, according to ibn Athir, a loss of 700,000 people, but Juwaini puts the figure at 1,300,000, excluding those bodies

that were hidden at obscure retreats. The survivors were traced out, as in Balkh and mercilessly killed.

Nishapur, which was like the bright Venus in the galaxy of cities,[11] was completely razed to the ground and every living thing, including animals, was massacred. Pyramids of skulls were built as a mark of this ghastly feat of military "triumph." According to Mirkhwand, 1,047,000 men were butchered in the city in addition to an unknown number of women and children.[12] He adds, however, that 40 artisans and craftsmen were given shelter and transported to Mongolia. In Herat these barbarian hordes set up a new record by putting 1,600,000 men to the sword.

These figures give an idea of the cold-blooded, passionless cruelty of the invaders who, in the words of Matthew Paris, "spared neither age, nor sex, nor condition."[13] Juwaini mourns the loss of life in Khurasan in the following words, "Not one-thousandth of the population escaped...if from now to the Day of Judgment nothing hinders the growth of population in Khurasan and 'Iraq-I 'Ajam, it cannot reach one-tenth of the figure at which it stood before."

With the destruction of the scores of cities of fame also perished the priceless treasures of art and literature. The letter of ibn Khallikan (608/1211 – 681/1282) which he wrote from Mosul after his flight from Merv to al-Qadi al-Akram Jamal al-Din Abu al-Hassan 'Ali, vizier of the King of Aleppo, pathetically describes the nature of the Mongol cataclysm. In this letter, written in 617/1220, the author pays his last tribute to the libraries of Merv which had made him forget his dear ones, his home, and country, and to the advanced state of civilization in Khurasan which, according to him, "in a word, and without exaggeration, was a copy of paradise."

He proceeds to laud the achievements of its doctors, saints, scholars, the monuments of science, and the virtues of the authors of this region and then laments the tragedy of Merv in these words, "Those palaces were effaced from the earth...in those places the screech owls answer each others' cries and in those halls the winds moan responsive to the simoom." Ibn Athir describes the loss of life and culture in the same strain, "Those Tartars conquered...the best, the most flourishing and the most populous part thereof (the habitable globe), and that whereof the inhabitants were the most advanced in character and conduct."[14]

The reckless assassination of thousands of scholars, poets, and writers, and the destruction of libraries and colleges wrought irreparable disaster upon the Muslim civilization which had flourished for centuries with such remarkable vitality. Transoxiana and Khurasan were the worst sufferers. Fertile plains and valleys in these regions were turned into wilderness. The great highways of Central Asia on which passed the merchandise of China to Western Asia and Europe also lay deserted.

For 20 years after the death of Chingiz Khan in 625/1227, the Mongols continued to pillage Kurdistan, Adharbaijan, and regions to the west of Iran, at times marauding right up to Aleppo. But the Caliphate of Baghdad had survived. The inevitable occurred in 656/1258 when Hulagu Khan stormed Baghdad after he had extirpated the Isma'ili power at Alamut in 654/1256. The city which been the metropolis of Islam

for more than five centuries 132/749 – 656/1258) was given over to plunder and flame. The massacre, according to Diyarbakri (d. 982/1574) in his *Tarikh al-Khamis*, continued for 34 days during which 1,800,000 people were put to the sword. For days blood ran freely in the streets of Baghdad and the water of Tigris was dyed red for miles. According to Wassaf, the sack of Baghdad lasted 40 days.[15] To quote *Kitab al-Fakhri*, "Then there took place such wholesale slaughter and unrestrained looting and excessive torture and mutilation as it is hard to be spoken of even generally; how think you, then, its details?" Al-Must'asim bi Allah (640/1242 – 656/1258) who was destined to be the last Caliph of this renowned dynasty was beaten to death, and, according to another version, trampled on by horses.

The sack of Baghdad was a supreme catastrophe of the world of Islam and of the Arabo-Persian civilization which had flourished so richly for many hundreds of years. Its magnitude surpassed the devastation of other cities, because the political and psychological implications of this tragedy had a far greater import. The Caliph was regarded as the spiritual and temporal head of the Muslim world and even in its days of decline the caliphate of Baghdad had retained the semblance of Muslim unity and homogeneity. Baghdad, therefore, was more than a city. It was a symbol. With the end of the Caliphate this symbol also vanished. It was also the centre of the most advanced civilization of the time and from it emanated the rays of knowledge which illuminated the world. The destruction of Baghdad, therefore, meant the extinction of learning.

With it were destroyed the great libraries and unique treasures of art, philosophy, and science, accumulated through hundreds of years. Books were consumed to ashes or thrown into the river. Mosques, colleges, hospitals, and palaces were put to fire. The awful nature of the cataclysm, which completely blocked the advancement of knowledge of Muslim lands, and thus, indirectly the whole world, is, in the words of Percy Sykes, "difficult to realize and impossible to exaggerate."[16] No wonder the great Sa'di (580/1184 – 691/1291) was moved to write in far-off Shiraz an elegy on the destruction of Baghdad and the fall of the caliphate, which has gone down in Persian poetry as one of the most pathetic poems of all times.

What deepened the sombre effects of this tragedy was the fact that, with the extermination of men of learning and the total destruction of Muslim society, the spirit of inquiry and original research so distinctly associated with Arabic learning was practically destroyed. Western Asia was no plunged into darkness as earlier Khurasan and Transoxiana had been wrapped in gloom. The two races – Arabs and Iranians – which together had contributed to the medieval world the highest literary and scientific culture parted ways. For centuries Arabic had been the language of religion, science, and philosophy in Iran, and all thinkers and scientists had chosen Arabic as the vehicle of expressing their thoughts. But henceforth Arabic lost its position of privilege and its use was restricted mostly to the field of theology and scholastic learning. The Arabs themselves lost even the shadow of a major role in Islamic history. The fall of Baghdad, therefore, was also an ominous sign of the loss of Arab hegemony.

The Mongol invasion by its accumulated horror and scant respect for human life and moral values

produced an attitude of self negation and renunciation in general and in Persian poetry in particular. The pantheistic philosophy of ibn ‘Arabi henceforth made a strong appeal to the minds of subsequent mystics such as Auhhadi Kirmini, Auhadi of Maraghah, and Jami.

The infinite havoc caused by this cataclysm constitutes a melancholy chapter in the history of Muslim civilization. What Juwaini had called the famine of science and virtue in Khurasan[17] came true of all lands stretching from Transoxiana to the shores of the Mediterranean. Never, perhaps, had such a great and glorious civilization been doomed to such a tragic fall. This tragic fall was not, however, a tragic end, for this civilization rose again and produced within two and half centuries three of the greatest empires of the world, and though the main current of its thought changed its course, even before, and long before, its political recovery, it produced the world’s first destroyer of Aristotle’s logic in ibn Taimiyyah and the first sociologist and philosopher of history in ibn Khaldun.

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1. The word is derived from the root mong which means brave.
2. E. G. Browne, A Literary History of Persia, vol. 3, p. 7.
3. His actual name was Temuchin. The title of Chingiz or Zingis Khan was presented to him by his people in recognition of his rising power. The word zin means great, gis is the superlative termination.
4. Also known as Farab.
5. Henry Howorth, History of Mongols Part 1, P. 10
6. ‘Ata Malik Juwaini, Tarikh-i Jahankusha, Vol. 1, ed. Mohammad ‘Abd al-Wahab Qazwini, Leiden, 1329/1911. p 81. ‘Ala al-Din ‘Ata Malik Juwaini (d. 682/1283) who belonged to a distinguished family of ministers and administrators was one of those Iranian officers whom the Mongols found indispensable in the civil service. He was Hulagu Khan’s secretary and had served him throughout his campaign. He was appointed Governor of Baghdad by Hulagu Khan a year after the conquest of the city and held this office position for 24 years. His famous book which was completed in 658/1260 contains a first-hand account of Hulagu Khan’s military exploits and is one of the most authentic books on the history of this period. It deals with the Mongols, the Khwarizm Shahs, and the Isma‘ili sect and ends with the events of the year 655/1257.
7. Rashid al-Din Fadl Allah (645/1247 – 718/1318), the renowned scholar-administrator of the Il-Khani (Mongol) period of the history of Iran, served as Prime Minister under three Muslim Mongol rulers, namely, Ghazan (694/1294 – 703/1303) who, along with 10,000 Mongols, embraced Islam on Sha‘ban 4, 694 A. H. and by declaring it the State religion restored its

supremacy in Iran; Uljaitu Khuda-bandeh (703/1303 – 716/1316). In spite of his pre-occupation as the Prime Minister of a great empire, Rashid al-Din found time to pursue research and write books, both in Arabic and Persian. Of these his Jami' al-Tawarikh, which, in the words of Quatremere, the French editor of portions of this work, "offered for the first time to the people of Asia a complete course of universal history and geography," is the most celebrated. Though it is a general history of the world, yet it contains a detailed and highly authentic account of the Mongol Emperors from the time of Chingiz Khan to the death of Sultan Ghazan.

8. Encyclopaedia of Islam, vol 1, Part 2, p. 856.
9. Juwaini, op. cit. p. 105.
10. E. G. Browne, op cit. vol 2, p 428.
11. Juwaini, op. cit. p. 133
12. Mirkhwand, Raudat al-Safa, vol. 5, p. 46.
13. E. G. Browne, op. cit. vol. 3, p. 7.
14. Ibid. vol. 2, p. 429.
15. 'Abd Allah ibn Fadl Allah Wassaf, Tarikh-i Wassaf, p. 87.
16. Percy Sykes, A History of Persia, vol. 2, p. 98.
17. Juwaini, op. cit., p. 4

Part 2. Theologico-Philosophical Thought

Chapter 41: Ibn Taimiyyah

A. Life and Works

After having seen the rise and development of theological and philosophical movement in Islam and the contributions made by the theologians and philosophers before the sack of Baghdad, we have now come to a point which may be called the pre-renaissance period in the history of Islam. By ibn Taimiyyah's time theology, philosophy, and jurisprudence had made remarkable progress and given rise to different schools of thought. But, unfortunately, political dissensions and doctrinal differences sapped the unity of the Muslims and made their countries easy prey to Mongol invasions in the seventh/13th century. It was at this critical juncture that Imam ibn Taimiyyah appeared as a *mujtahid* (one qualified to form an independent opinion in Muslim Law) and called upon the people to go back to the original teachings of Islam as they are found in the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet.

He had little respect for theology (*Kalam*) or philosophy and he could not be called a theologian or a philosopher in the truest sense of the terms, though he himself acted as a great theologian and a great philosopher. The excellence of Imam ibn Taimiyyah as an original thinker and a critic has been widely accepted, and he is generally considered to be the forerunner of Wahhabism, Sanusism, and similar

other reform movements in the Muslim world.

Taqi al-Din Abu al-'Abbas Ahmad ibn 'Abd al-Halim, commonly known as ibn Taimiyyah, was born in Harran,[1] a city near Damascus, on Monday, the 10th of Rabi' I 861/22nd January 1263.

During the year 667/1269 when ibn Taimiyyah approached the age of seven, the Mongols ravaged the city of Harran, and his father 'Abd al-Halim went to Damascus with all the members of his family and settled there. Here ibn Taimiyyah received an excellent education under his father who was a great scholar of the Hanbalite School. He also studied under 'Ali ibn 'Abd al-Qawi and mastered the Arabic grammar of Sibawaihi. He studied Hadith with more than 200 Sheikhs.[2] It is noteworthy that among the teachers, whom ibn Taimiyyah mentions in his Arba'un, were four ladies.[3]

It is difficult to say whether ibn Taimiyyah was influenced by any of his predecessors in his extra-ordinary enthusiasm for introducing social and religious reforms in the Muslim community and for his unsympathetic attitude towards the theologians, the philosophers, and the Sufis. A close examination of his works suggests that he followed none but the early pious Muslims (*salaf al-salihun*) in formulating his scheme of reform. This is why his movement is often called the *Salafi* movement. His motto was, "Go back to the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet." He protested vehemently against all sorts of innovations (*bid'ah*). He believed that Islam was corrupted by Sufism, pantheism, theology (*Kalam*), philosophy, and by all sorts of superstitious beliefs. He aimed at purging the Muslim society of practices resulting in undue homage to the tombs of prophets and saints. During his stay in Syria from 692/1292 to 705/1305, ibn Taimiyyah, therefore, wrote books and treatises against the Sufis, the Mutakallimun, and the Aristotelian philosophers.

It was during the early part of this period that he personally took part in the war against the tartars and the Nusairis. In 702/1302, he participated in the battle of Shaqhab (a place near Damascus) where he met Caliph al-Malik al-Nasir, Mohammad ibn Qalawun,the Mamluk Sultan and other notables, and urged them all to join the holy war. Towards the end of 704/1304, he led an army against the people of Jabal Khusruwan in Syria and inflicted a crushing defeat on them. Hence, ibn Taimiyyah can also be called a *mujahid* (fighter for the cause of Islam). In 705/1305, ibn Taimiyyah faced the criticism of his antagonists in open meetings in the presence of the Deputy of Mamluk Sultan, al-Malik al-Nasir, and defeated them by his clear and cogent arguments. In this very year he proceeded to Cairo and faced a *munazarah* (legal debate) in which an Indian scholar named Sheikh Safi al-Din al-Hindi played an important part.

It was on the suggestion of this Sheikh that ibn Taimiyyah was ordered to be imprisoned in the dungeon of the mountain citadel with his two brothers for a year and a half.[4] He also suffered imprisonment at different places for his *fatwas* (legal decisions) and *rasa'il* (treatises) against certain social and religious practices; these excited the indignation of the scholars of his time, until at last he was interned in the citadel of Damascus on Sha'ban 726/July 1326. Here his brother Zain al-Din was permitted to stay with him, while ibn Taimiyyah's student ibn Qayyim al-Jauziyyah was retained in the same prison for his

support. In this prison, ibn Taimiyyah wrote books and pamphlets defending his own view, and it is said that here he prepared a commentary on the Holy Qur'an in 40 volumes called *al-Bahr al-Muhit*. Some of these books fell into the hands of his enemies and he was most ruthlessly deprived of his books, and pen and ink, after which he wrote with charcoal. Having been left alone in prison, he passed his time in devotion to God until his death on Monday, the 20th of Dhu'l Qa'dah 728/ 27 September 1328.[5]

Ibn Taimiyyah was a prolific writer. Nobody could give a definite number of his works though al-Kutubi tried to enumerate them under different heads.[6] He left innumerable books, religious decisions, letters, and notes, most of which he composed while he was in prison. Al-Dhahabi gives the number to be approximately 500.

In his *Rihlah*, ibn Battutah says that he himself happened to be in Damascus at the time of the last imprisonment of ibn Taimiyyah, and that the Sultan al-Malik al-Nasir released ibn Taimiyyah after the completion of *al-Bahr al-Muhit*, but on a Friday, while he was delivering the *Jum'ah* sermon on the pulpit of the city mosque, he uttered the following words, "Verily, Allah comes down to the sky over our heads in the same fashion as I make this descent," and he stepped down one step of the pulpit. This was vehemently opposed by a *faqih* (jurist), but ibn Taimiyyah had his supporters who attacked the *fiqih* and beat him severely with fists and shoes, causing his turban to fall down to the ground and making his silken *shashia* (cap) visible on his head.

People objected to his wearing the silken cap and brought him to the house of the Hanbalite Qadi 'Izz al-Din ibn Muslim, who ordered him to be imprisoned and put to torture. But the Maliki and the Shaf'i doctors disapproved of this judgment, and brought the case to the notice of Saif al-Din Tankiz, one of the best and most pious nobles of Damascus, who forwarded the matter to al-Malik al-Nasir along with some other charges against ibn Taimiyyah, such as his decision (*fatwa*) that a woman divorced by triple repudiation in one utterance will receive one *talaq* only and that one taking the journey to the tomb of the Prophet should not shorten his prayers. The Sultan, convinced of these charges, disapproved of ibn Taimiyyah's standpoint and ordered him to be thrown into the dungeon again.[7] This report of ibn Battutah is not chronologically sound. It will be discussed again in connection with the charge of anthropomorphism against ibn Taimiyyah.

Though ibn Taimiyyah was not successful in his mission during his lifetime, it became clear at his funeral that he exercised a great influence upon the public. It is said that more than two lacs of men and women attended his funeral ceremony. Except three persons who were afraid of being stoned to death for their hostility towards him, all attended his funeral and the military had to be called in to guard the crowd.[8]

B. Attitude towards Theology and the Theologians

Ibn Taimiyyah has left us a number of books and treatises on theology, but in none of them is he systematic in his treatment of the subject. Problems of theology and philosophy are scattered throughout his writings, and, according to al-Kutubi's enumeration, many of them have not yet seen the light of

day.[9] A number of manuscripts left by ibn Taimiyyah on theology are also available in England and Germany among which are his *Mas'alat al-'Uluw, al-Kalam, 'ala Haqiqat al-Islam, Su'al li ibn Taimiyyah*,[10] etc., etc.

In his *Minhaj*[11] as well as other books, ibn Taimiyyah boldly declares that theology and philosophy have no place in Islam, and that theologians like al-Juwaini,[12] al-Ghazzali, and al-Shahrastani[13] who devoted their lives to these sciences, ultimately understood their defects and returned to the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Shahrastani, he adds, confessed that it was folly to discuss theology, al-Razi, in his opinion, contradicts himself in matters of theology and admitted his perplexity.
In the *Minhaj*[14] as well as in his *Majmu'at al-Tafsir*,[15] ibn Taimiyyah cites the opinion of Imam Ahmad and Abu Yusuf who said that he who would seek knowledge by the help of scholastic theology (*Kalam*) would turn into an atheist. He also mentions the opinion of Imam Shafi'i that theologians should be beaten with shoes and palm-branches, and paraded through the city so that people may know the consequence of the study of theology.

In his *Tafsir Surat al-Ikhlas*,[16] he tells us that the early leaders (*aslaf*) tabooed theology since it was vanity, falsehood and saying unfitting things about God.

Among the later thinkers Imam Ash'ari (d. 330/941) defended theology in his *Risalah fi Istihsan al-Khaud fi al-Kalam*. In it, he supported the theories of *harakah* (motion), *sukun* (rest), *jism* (body), *'ard* (accident), *ijtima'* (union), *iftiraq* (separation), etc., by the help of the Qur'an. In his opinion, all religious orders, be they relating to action or belief, have been based on rational arguments and, thus, it is not unlawful to enter into discussion with them.[17] But ibn Taimiyyah considered the above theories to be Hellenistic and against the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

About the Jahmites,[18] ibn Taimiyyah quotes the views of Imam Ahmad who said that they told lies about God when they denied attributes to Him, and spoke about Him through ignorance. Abu al-'Abbas ibn Suraij, he adds, disapproved of the theories of atoms and accidents. Once, in answer to a questions raised in *Kalam*, he said, "The doctrine of the unity of God to the vain of the people is to enter into discussion of atoms and accidents (*jawahir wa a'rad*)." These terms did not exist in Islam during the time of the Prophet. It was the Jahmites and the Mu'tazilites who first invented them; Ja'd ibn Dirham[19] was mainly responsible for this invention. This Ja'd was executed by ibn 'Abd Allah ibn al-Qasri[20] at Wasit on account of *Kalam* (theology). The story goes that before executing Ja'd, ibn 'Abd Allah stood on a pulpit (*minbar*) and addressed the people saying, "Oh men, offer your sacrifice to God. Surely I am offering my victim in the person of Ja'd who says that God did not take Abraham as His friend, nor did He speak to Moses. God is far above what Ja'd attributes to Him." He then got down from the pulpit and cut off Ja'd's head.[21]

Ibn Taimiyyah refutes the view of al-Imam Hilli who expressed in his *Minhjaj al-Karamah*[22] that Hadrat 'Ali was the originator of theology. Ibn Taimiyyah opposes this theory as 'Ali could not go against the Qur'an and the Sunnah, and none among the Companions (*Sahabah*) or their followers (*Tabi'un*) ever

discussed the phenomenal nature of the world as derived from the origination of bodies (*huduth al-ajsam*). He repeats that theology came into existence at the end of the first/seventh century. It was Ja'd ibn Dirham and Jahm ibn Safwan who introduced it, and eventually the students of 'Amr ibn 'Ubaid like Abu al-Hudhail al-'Allaf and others carried it on. The object of 'Amr and Wasil in propagating the above theory was to introduce into Islam the idea that God's power is not unlimited and that sinners will abide in hell forever.[23]

From the foregoing statements, it is evident that ibn Taimiyyah generally uses *Kalam* in its pre-Ash'arite sense of Mu'tazilite theology, though later he does not spare the Ash'rite views either.

Let us now discuss the divine attributes with reference to ibn Taimiyyah's refutation of the Jahmite and the Mu'tazilite views.

According to ibn Taimiyyah, it was Ja'd ibn Dirham, a Jahmite, who first professed that "God is not seated on His Throne, "and that *istiwa'* means *istaula*," that is, God is the master of His Throne and not that "He is settled on it." This idea was then taken up by Jahm ibn Safwan (d. 128/745). Consequently, a new system of scriptural interpretation became popular at the close of the second/eighth century at the hand of Bishr ibn Ghiyath al-Marisi (d. 218 or 219/833 or 834) and his followers.[24] The Mu'tazilite doctrine of divine attributes was publicly preached during the last part of the third/ninth century[25] and then the Shi'ite doctors, Mufid,[26] Musawi,[27] and Tusi[28]adopted it.

The beliefs that God is eternal and that "He exists without His attributes" are dogmas of the Jahmites and the Mu'tazilites. In regard to God's knowledge, power, seeing, hearing, etc. the older ultra-Imami sect was downright anthropomorphist, while subsequent generations went further and denied the existence of all divine attributes.[29] The Karramites,[30] in his opinion, were anthropomorphises. The Sunnites were unanimous in declaring that God was totally unlike men in His essence, qualities, and actions. The traditionists, the hermeneutists, the Sufis, the four jurists and their followers, never believed in anthropomorphism. The accusation that has been levelled at jurists like Malik, Shafi'i, Ahmad and their followers, is based on sheer misunderstanding. These jurists in affirming the divine attributes never maintained that these attributes resembled bodily forms.[31]

Ibn Taimiyyah further maintains that the word *qadim* (eternal) relating to God, on which the Jahmites and their followers base their arguments, has not received a place among His *asma' al-husna* (beautiful names) though the word *awwal* (first) is one of them. *Awwal* does not signify that God alone exists without His attributes from eternity and pre-existence. The attributes that are always associated with God's eternity needs some additional eternal essence. The statement that the divine attributes are additional to His essence (*dhat*) is to be taken in the sense that they are additional to the concept of the essence held by the *nufat* (deniers of God's qualities) and not in the sense that there is in God an essence denuded of attributes and the attributes are separate from and additional to the essence.[32] For example, whenever an attribute is attached to a locus (*mahall*), its relation is established with the object itself and not with anything else.

When a thing is associated with blackness and whiteness, is set in motion, it is sure to move with those qualities alone and not with anything else. God, to who are attributed speech, volition, love, anger, and pleasure, must actually be associated with all of them without any additional qualities that have not been ascribed to Him. One who is speechless, motionless or inactive cannot be called speaker (*mutakallim*), mover (*mutaharrik*), or doer (*fa'il*). So to attribute life, power, knowledge, etc., to God without associating them with His essence, as the Jahmites and their followers do, indicates that God lives without life, is powerful without power, and knows without knowledge, while the Qur'an and the Sunna abound with proofs that God is associated with His attributes.33

Ibn Taimiyyah's Anthropomorphism

From the above discussions and the similar contents of his *al-'Aqidat al-Mamawiyyat al-Kubra*,34 people misunderstood ibn Taimiyyah and suspected him to be an anthropomorphist. They thought that he taught, according to the literal meaning of the Qur'an and the Sunnah, that God has hands, feet, face, etc., and that He is settled on His Throne. The objection of the theologians was that if God possessed limbs and sat on the Throne, then He must be possessed of spatial character (*tahayyuz*) and subject to division (*inqisam*). Ibn Taimiyyah refused to admit that "spatial character" and "divisibility" are the essence of bodies (*ajsam*). Ibn Battutah's statement that in Damascus he heard ibn Taimiyyah addressing the people saying, "Verily, God descends to the sky over our world (from heaven) in the same way as I make this descent," while he stepped down one step of the pulpit, is nothing but a canard.

This story, as we have noticed,35 has been so skilfully concocted that it appears to be a real occurrence. But when we examine this report, we cannot believe that such a thing could have happened during the visit of ibn Battutah to Damascus. Ibn Buttutah, as we understand from his own description, entered Damascus on the 19th of Ramadan 726/23 August 1326, whereas ibn Taimiyyah had been imprisoned more than a month earlier (on the 26th of Sha'ban of the same year) without being allowed to come out before his death in 726/1328.36 In his *al-Aqidat al-Tadmuriyyah*,37 ibn Taimiyyah clearly states, "Whoever considers God to be similar to the body of men or an originated thing to be similar to Him, is telling a lie about God. He who maintains that God is not a body and means by it that no originated thing is similar to Him is right, though the word body (*jism*) is applied here is an innovation (*bid'ah*)."

He further says that we should say of God what He has said of Himself or what the Prophet has said about Him, and declares that the early Muslims ascribed to God attributes "without asking how" (*bila kaif*), and without drawing analogy (*tamthil*), or making alterations (*tahrif*), or divesting Him of His attributes (*ta'til*).38 Ibn Taimiyyah believes in "God's settling Himself on His Throne, as it befits Him, without any resemblance to human action. He quotes the opinion of the early Muslims who stood between *ta'til* and *tamthil*.39

The above evidence clearly shows that in his interpretation of the divine attributes, ibn Taimiyyah attempted rather to guard himself against the charge of anthropomorphism. While refuting the Jahmite

and the Mu'tazilite conception of the divine attributes, he vehemently opposed their views which divested God of the Qur'anic expressions of face, hands, etc, as understood by the Arabs and attempted to substitute the usual meanings of these expressions by metaphorical interpretations. In his opinion, it would be absurd to suppose that the later generations should have a deeper insight into a better understanding of the divine attributes than the Prophet and his Companions who never attempted to explain them in terms of philosophy. It is for this reason that he attacked the theologians who attached the highest value to human reason as a criterion for understanding the divine attributes. Unlike other European scholars, H. Laoust is also of the opinion that the charge of anthropomorphism against ibn Taimiyyah is incompatible with his methodology and with "the positive content of his theodicy."[40]

Al-Qur'an Kalam Allah Ghair Makhluq

Al-Qur'an Kalam Allah Ghair Makhluq (The Holy Qur'an is the Uncreated Word of God)

With regard to this problem, ibn Taimiyyah not only accuses a section of people of maintaining that the Qur'an is created, but goes a step further and interprets words *ghair mukhluq* (uncreated) as eternal (*qadim*). He considers this an innovation (*bid'ah*) which resulted from their controversies with the Mu'tazilites and Kullabites in defining the uncreatedness of the Qur'an. Such a theory was unknown to the early Muslims. It was Ja'd ibn Dirham along with Jahm ibn Safwan who first introduced the heretical theory that the Qur'an is created, whereas it is the Word of God, and so uncreated.[41]

Wahi (Revelation)

Ibn Taimiyyah admits the commonly accepted view as to the three forms of revelation received by the Prophet: received (1) in waking state as well as in dreams, (2) from behind a viel, and (3) through an angel.[42] But to these he adds a fourth, namely, revelation common to all (*al-wahi al-mushiarak*), prophets and others. This he derives from a saying of 'Ubadah ibn Samit and from the verses in the Qur'an which speak of revelation to people other than prophets;[43] for example, God speaks with His servants in their dreams. It is this common revelation which the philosophers like ibn Sina and others are said to have gained.

But he emphatically denies that Aristotle had any share in prophecy. His contemporaries were worshippers of planets and were unaware of the prophets like Abraham or Moses. Unlike Empedocles, Pythagoras, Socrates, and Plato who believe at least in the origination (*huduth*) of the celestial spheres, Aristotle professed "the doctrine of the eternity of the heavens," which, according to ibn Taimiyyah, clearly shows that he had no share of *wahi al-mushtarak*, mentioned above.[44]

C. Attitude towards Philosophy

In his refutation of Aristotelian metaphysics and logic, ibn Taimiyyah left the following independent books in addition to what he wrote against them in many other writings:

1. *Kitab al-Radd 'ala al-Montiqiyyin*, edited by 'Abd al-Samad Sharaf al-Din al-Kutubi, Bombay, 1949.

2. *Bayan Muwafiqat Sarih al-Ma'qul li Sahih al-Manqul* on the margin of *Minhaj al-Sunnah*, four volumes, Cairo, 1321/1903.

3. *Naqd al-Montiz*, edited by Sheikh Mohammad Hamid al-Faqqi, Cairo, 1370/1951.45

4. *Al-Radd 'ala Falsulafat-i ibn Rushd* published at the end of *Fasl al-Makal* and *al-Kashf* of ibn Rashd, Cairo, n.d.

5. *Kitab al-'Agl w-al-Naql* on the margin of his *Minhaj al-Sunnah*, Cairo, 1321 – 23/1903 – 05.

His *Tafsir Surat al-Ikhlas* (Cairo, 1323/1905) also sheds sufficient light on his views on philosophy and theology.

Ibn Taimiyyah is not the first man to speak against the unsoundness of Aristotelian philosophy. In his *Kitab 'ala al-Montiqiyyin*, ibn Taimiyyah mentions that Hassan ibn Musa al-Naubakhti, under whom Thabit ibn Qurrah and others translated Greek sciences, had written his *Kitab al-Ara' w-al-Diyanah* pointing out the fallacies of Aristotle. Moreover, Hibat Allah ibn 'Ali Abu Barakat, a courtier of Mustanjid bi Allah, left a book on the refutation of Aristotle's philosophy.46 The famous Muslim physician and philosopher Abu Zakariyah al-Razi (d.c. 313/925) was a great opponent of Aristotle's philosophy and supported Pythagoras. In his opinion, Aristotle "had not only ruined philosophy but had also perverted its very principles." Ibn Hazm of Andalus (d. 456/1063) and the Mu'tazilite al-Nazzam (d. 231/845) were also against the philosophy of Aristotle. Abu 'Ali al-Jubbai'i (d.303/915) left a book in refutation of Aristotle's book *De generatione et de corruptione*.47

In his *Kitab al-'Aql w-al-Naql*, ibn Taimiyyah says, "Look at the followers of Aristotle! They are following him blindly, while many of them know full well that their master's theories are wrong. Still it is their pious belief which prevents them from refuting them in spite of the fact that many wise men have proved that there are undeniable and indubitable errors in his logical system, and they support them only for the reason that they are associated with his name. In metaphysics also Aristotle and his followers have committed blunders."48

In his *Kitab al-Radd 'ala al-Mantiqiyyin*,49 ibn Taimiyyah says that, according to Aristotelian logic, knowledge is of two kinds, namely, based on concept (*tasawwar*) and that on judgment (*tasdiq*), both of which are either immediate (*badihi*) or mediate (*nazari*). It is evident that all kinds of knowledge cannot be immediate or self-evident. Similarly, all kinds of knowledge cannot be mediate or acquired as in that case, to gain the knowledge of a mediate concept; one would have to depend on another *mediate* concept leading to a circle (*daur*) or endless chain (*tasalsul*) both of which are logically impossible. Logicians further hold that the concepts and judgments which are mediate (*nazari*) require some means to reach them, and, therefore, the way through which concepts are reached, is called *hadd* (definition), and the way through which judgments are arrived at is called *qiyas* (syllogism). Hence *hadd* and *qiyas*

are the two fundamental bases on which the whole structure of Aristotelian logic stands. In order to refute the Aristotelian logic, ibn Taimiyyah endeavoured to demolish the fundamental bases at four points which serve as the four main chapters of his *Kitab al-Radd 'ala al-Mantiqiyyin*:

1. The desired concept cannot be obtained except by means of definition (*hadd*).

2. Definition gives the knowledge of concepts.

3. The desired judgment cannot be obtained except by means of syllogism.

4. Syllogism or ratiocination gives the knowledge of judgment.

It may be noted here that of the above propositions the first and the third are negative, while the second and the fourth are affirmative. The main targets of ibn Taimiyyah's refutation were the "definition" and "syllogism" of Aristotelian logic.

1. The first basic proposition of the logicians that concepts cannot be obtained except by means of definition has been refuted by ibn Taimiyyah on the following grounds:[50]

A. It is a negative proposition for which the logicians have not advanced any proof (*dalil*). Such a negative proposition cannot be accepted as the basis of positive knowledge. Therefore, the very first proposition of Aristotelian logic is based on a wrong foundation. Hence, such logic cannot be treated as a science which, according to the logicians, only protects human understanding from committing mistakes.

B. When the definition is the word of the definer, the definer will understand the thing defined either with the help of a (previous) definition or without any definition. Now, if he understands the thing defined by a previous definition, then his words in the second definition will be as good as his words in the first definition which will necessarily lead to a circle (*daur*) or endless chain (*tasalsul*) in the reasoning process, both of which are impossible. If he understands the object defined without any definition, then the assertion in the proposition that "concepts cannot be obtained except with the help of definition" stands refuted.

C. People of different branches of learning and professions know their affairs well without taking recourse to definition.

D. No definition universally agreed upon has yet been found. For instance, nobody has so far been able to offer any definition of the two famous terms "man" and "sun" on which all could agree. In philosophy, theology, medicine, grammar, etc. many contradictory definitions have, thus, come down to us.

Now, the logicians maintain that concept is dependent on definition, but as no agreed definition of anything has yet been made, ibn Taimiyyah declares that no concept in the proper sense of the term has yet been formed. Similarly, the logicians believe that judgment is dependent on concept (*tasawwur*), but since concept has not yet been obtained (in the proper sense of the term), judgment also has not yet

been arrived at. The result, in the opinion of ibn Taimiyyah, is the worst type of sophistication.[51]

E. Logicians say that the concept of quiddity (*mahiyyah*) can only be arrived at by definitions which are composed of genus (*jins*) and *differentia* (*fasl*). The logicians themselves have admitted that this sort of definition is either impossible or rarely found. But ibn Taimiyyah opines that the true significance of things may be achieved by men without definition and, therefore, concepts are not dependent on definitions.

F. To the logicians correct definitions are the combination of genus and differentia, but that which is simple and unitary, like each of the "intellects" (*'uqul*), has no definition; still they define it and hold it to be a concept. This shows that sometimes concepts do not need definition. If this is possible, then the species which are nearer to perception and are visible can be conceived in a way which is surer and better than the type of knowledge which is derived from the combination of genus and differentia.

G. The definition of a thing consists of several terms each of which indicates a definite meaning. Unless a man knows the terms and their meaning beforehand, it is not possible for him to understand the definition itself. For instance, a man who does not know what bread is cannot know it by its definition. Here ibn Taimiyyah makes a distinction between conception (*taswir*) and differentiation (*tamiz*) and sides with the Mutakallimun (scholastic theologians) who hold things are actually known by differentiation and not by definition.

H. When the definition is the word of the definer, the definer must have the knowledge of the object defined before defining it. It is, therefore, wrong to say that the conception of a thing depends on definition.

I. Concepts of existing things are derived either through external senses or through internal senses, none of which stands in need of any definition. Here ibn Taimiyyah observes that whatever cannot be known through the senses can be known through valid inference but not through definition.

J. Logicians say that a definition should be rejected by means of refutation and contradiction. Ibn Taimiyyah argues that refutation or contradiction is possible only when one has already formed a conception of the object defined. So it is proved that concepts may be formed without the help of definition.

K. Knowledge of a particular thing may be self-evident to some, but acquired by others. Similarly, things which are not self-evident to some may be self-evident to others who would, therefore, need no definition for their knowledge of them. Hence it is wrong to say that knowledge depends on definition.

2. The refutation of the second proposition of the logicians, that definition gives the knowledge of concept, forms the second chapter of ibn Taimiyyah's *Kitab al-Radd*.[52] In the opinion of ibn Taimiyyah, logicians and scholastic theologians gave different interpretations of definition. Greek logicians and their Muslim and non-Muslim followers claimed that definition contained the description of the object defined,

while the prominent scientists held that definition served as a distinction between the object defined and the object not defined. Therefore, definition cannot give the knowledge of a concept. That definition offers true significance of the object defined and gives the knowledge of concept, has been refuted by ibn Taimiyyah on the following grounds.

A. Definition is a mere statement of the definer. For example, when man is defined as “rational animal,” it is a statement that may be right or wrong. It is a mere assertion without any proof. The listener may understand it with or without its definition. In the former case, he knows it without proof which may or may be correct, while in the latter case the definition serves no purpose.

B. Logicians say that definition neither rejects the proof nor needs it. Unlike syllogism (*qiyas*), definition can be rejected by refutation or contradiction. To this ibn Taimiyyah replies that when the definer fails to advance any proof in favour of the correctness of the definition, the listener cannot understand the object defined by a mere definition which may or may not be correct.

C. If the conception of the object defined is attained by the definition, then it is obtained before one has known the correctness of the definition, since the knowledge of the correctness of the definition is not attained except after one has known the object defined.

D. The knowledge of the object defined depends on the knowledge of the thing (named) and of its attributes which the logicians call essential attributes (*al-sifut al-dhatiyyah*) and names as “the parts of definition,” “parts of quiddity,” etc., etc. If the listener does not know that the object defined is attributed with those attributes, he cannot conceive it. If he knows that the thing is attributed with those qualities, he has known them without any definition.[53]

Ibn Taimiyyah then advances four similar arguments and proves that definitions do not offer true significance of the objects defined.[54]

3. The third proposition of the logicians, that judgments cannot be attained except by means of syllogism, has been refuted by our author on the following grounds:[55]

A. It is an uncertain claim and a negative proposition in favour of which they have not advanced any proof. According to ibn Taimiyyah, both the self-evident (*badihi*) and the acquired (*nazari*) forms of knowledge are relative. If some people failed to attain judgments without the help of syllogism, it does not mean that nobody from among the children of Adam knows the judgments without syllogism.

B. Knowledge of a thing does not depend on a *particular* syllogistic process of thinking. *Khabar al-mutawatir* (universally accepted traditions and experiences) gives the knowledge of judgments, while syllogism does not. To one a premise is perceptible, while to another it is not. Therefore, its conclusion (*natijah*) is undependable.[56] Ibn Taimiyyah admits that when the premises are correct, the conclusions are also correct, but then he does not admit that knowledge depends on syllogism.[57]

C. According to the logicians, the syllogistic process of gaining knowledge requires two premises, but ibn Taimiyyah says that such knowledge may be attained by one, two, three, or even more premises according to the needs and requirements of an argument. Some persons, he adds, may not require any premise at all, since they know the matter by some other source (e.g. intuition). The saying of the Prophet, "Every intoxicating thing is wine, and all kinds of wine are unlawful," does not, in any way, support the syllogistic process of thinking in Islam. The prophet never adopted such a process in gaining knowledge of a thing. Every Muslim knows that wine (*khamr*) is unlawful, and he does not stand in need of two premises to prove that all intoxicating drinks are unlawful.58 The very first figure of syllogism, therefore, says ibn Taimiyyah, does not require the roundabout way of inference for obtaining the conclusion.59

The logicians claim that ratiocination gives the benefit of perfect knowledge, and that it deals with the knowledge of "universals," the best of which are the ten intellects (*al-'uqul al-'ashrah*) which do not accept any change or alteration and through which the soul (*al-nafs*) attains perfection. The "universals" are attained by intellectual propositions which are necessary such as "All men are animals," and "Every existing thing is either necessary or possible," and the like which do not accept any change. Ibn Taimiyyah opposes this claim on the following grounds:60

A. According to the logicians, since ratiocination deals with intellectual matters having no connection with the physical world, it gives no knowledge of existing things. We may, therefore, consider it useless for all practical purposes.

B. Ratiocination does not help us in understanding the Necessary Existent (*wajib al-wujud*), the ten intellects (*al-'uqul al-'ashrah*), the heavens (*al-aflak*), the elements (*'anasir arba'ah*), or the created things (*muwalladat*) in the animal, vegetable, and mineral kingdoms.

C. The science of divinity to the logicians is not the knowledge of the Creator nor that of the created. They call it metaphysics (*'ilmu ma ba'd al-tabi'ah*), but some name it as "the science of divinity," the subject-matter of which is the "simple universals" which they divide into "necessary, possible, eternal, accidental, essence, accident," all of which have no existence in the physical world.61

Ibn Taimiyyah then traces the origin of logic to geometry. He, therefore, says that:

D. Logicians gave the geometrical forms of argumentation in their logic and called them "terms" (*hudud*) like those of Euclid's geometry in order to transfer this method from the physical object to the intellectual one. This is due to the bankruptcy of their intellect and their inability to derive knowledge through a direct process. But Allah has given the Muslims more knowledge and perspicuity of expression combined with good action and faith than to all classes of people.62

The logicians admit that divine knowledge is not objective. It follows that it has no existence either in the intellectual or in the physical world. It is a "universal knowledge" which does not exist except in the imagination. Therefore, there is nothing in this knowledge for the perfection of the soul.

E. Perfection of the soul depends on both knowledge of God and virtuous action (*'amal salih*), and not on philosophy. Knowledge alone cannot elevate the soul. Good action must be there, because the soul has two functions, one theoretical and the other practical. Service to God consists of knowledge of God and love for Him, and God sent the prophets to call people to worship Him. Similarly, faith (*iman*) in God does not mean knowledge of God only, as the Jahmites believe. It consists of both knowledge and practice.63

F. The fourth proposition of the logicians, that syllogism or ratiocination gives the knowledge of judgments (*tasdiqat*), has been refuted by ibn Taimiyyah in the fourth section of his book where he discusses the topic elaborately in about 300 pages.64 In this section, the author seeks to prove the futility of syllogism in attaining knowledge, and often ridicules the renowned logicians by citing their alleged death-bed recantations.65 Here he repeats in a new way almost all that he has said in the previous chapters about definition and syllogism of Aristotelian logic and brings in many irrelevant topics in favour of his arguments. He considers that syllogistic process of thinking artificial and useless. In his opinion, God has endowed human beings with "necessary knowledge" to understand their Creator and His attributes. But men invented, from very early times, various sciences which the *Shari'ah* of Islam does not require for the guidance of mankind.66

Syllogism, as has been said before, does not give us the knowledge of existing things even when it is apparently correct. Sure knowledge or judgment may be attained even by a single premise without undergoing the syllogistic process. Here, ibn Taimiyyah blames the philosophers who, from differences in the movements of the stars, inferred that there are nine heavens and that the eighth and ninth heavens are the *kursi* (Chair) and *'arsh* (Throne) of God, respectively. He hates Aristotle and his followers for believing in the eternity of the world (*qidam al-'alam*), though most of the philosophers were against this view. They put forward further different theories regarding the life-span of this world based on the calculations of the movements of the heavens. Some said that the world would be destroyed after 12,000 years, while others held that it would last up to 36,000 years, and so on. To ibn Taimiyyah, these inferences were baseless and unfruitful.67

Ibn Taimiyyah considers Aristotle to be ignorant of the science of divinity, and accuses ibn Sina of having adulterated it with heretical views of the Batiniyyah who interpreted Islamic *Shari'ah* according to their whims and false ratiocination. Some of them, according to our author, said that the Prophet was the greatest philosopher, while others went so far as to say that the philosophers were greater than the prophets. Sufis like ibn 'Arabi, ibn Sab'in, al-Qunawi, Tilimsani, etc. followed these heretical views of the Batiniyyah and used Islamic terms in naming their theories. Some of these Sufis, namely, ibn Sab'in and his followers, did not distinguish between Islam and other religions like Christianity and Judaism. Followers of any religion could approach them and become their disciples without changing their faith.68 To ibn Taimiyyah, knowledge of the particular is surer than knowledge of the universal. Therefore, there is not much benefit in the study of inductive logic in which knowledge of the individuals leads to knowledge of the universal. Moreover, knowledge of the individual is derived more quickly than

knowledge of the universal which is often gained (by common sense or intuition) without undergoing any syllogistic process.69

Ibn Taimiyyah opines that in syllogism (*qiyasw*) conclusion may be drawn out of one term only, and that it does not require *sughra* and *kubra* (minor and major) terms for drawing conclusions, because he who knows the universal quality is available in every individual.70 Ibn Taimiyyah further believes that the teachings of the prophets include all the scriptural and the rational proofs. In support of his view, he cites a number of Qur'anic verses, e.g.:

"Lo, those who wrangle concerning the revelation of Allah without a warrant having come unto them, there is naught else in their breasts but (the quest of) greatness, which they shall never attain to."71

"And when their messengers brought them clear proofs (of Allah's sovereignty), they exalted in the knowledge they (themselves) possessed and that which they were wont to mock befell them."72

Keeping in view the real existence of concepts, ibn Taimiyyah adds that the philosophers divided knowledge of things into three classes: physical, mathematical, and philosophical. Of these, philosophical knowledge deals with some theoretical problems relating to the existence of simple universals.73 It has nothing to do with practical purposes and is, therefore, useless.

Ratiocination, in the opinion of our author, does not prove the existence of the Creator. The Universals, according to the logicians, have no independent external existence of a definite being distinguishable from the rest of existence.74 Moreover, in syllogism a complete conception of the middle term saves us from logical inference. Because a person, who knows that wine is forbidden and every intoxicating (drink) is wine, certainly knows already that every intoxicating (drink) is forbidden (without going through the syllogistic process of thinking).75

Such are the arguments of ibn Taimiyyah in proving his assertion that syllogism does not give us the benefit of a new judgment.

Now, let us see how ibn Taimiyyah refutes the views of the scholastic philosophers by tackling the theories of atom, body, similarity of bodies (*tamathul al-ajsam*) etc. and declares that all these are innovations in Islam, and that scholars have failed to come to any agreement about them.

Theory of the Atom

This theory was held by most of the scholastic theologians including the Jahmites, the Mu'tazilites, and the Ash'arites. Some of these atomists held that bodies were combinations of atoms existing by themselves, and that God does not destroy any of them. He destroys only the accidents (*a'rad*), namely, their union (*ijtima'*), their separation (*iftiraq*), their motion (*harakah*), and their rest (*sukun*). Others maintained that atoms are phenomenal: God created them *ex nihilo*, and once they come into existence they are never destroyed, though accidents may be destroyed. This view was held by most of the

Jahmites, the Mu'tazilites, and the Ash'arites. Most of them, further, believed that it was supported even by *ijma'* (consensus). Ibn Taimiyyah rejects this theory on the ground that it is an innovation and that early Muslims knew nothing about it. Further, the theologians are not unanimous; some of them totally deny the existence of atoms and the composition of bodies from them.76

Theory of the Body

Some opine that a thing which is definite or which has dimensions is called a body, while others say that it is a combination of two atoms, whereas some people maintain that it is a combination of four atoms or make up to 32. Besides these, a class of philosophers holds that bodies are formed not of atoms but of matter and form, while many other scholastics and non-scholastics profess that bodies are neither a combination of atoms nor of matter and form. Even Imam al-Haramain al-Juwaini (d. 478/1085), the teacher of Imam al-Ghazzali, doubted the combination of matter and form, though it is reported that he himself transmitted this as a view accepted by *ijma'* (consensus).77

Theory of the Similarities of Bodies

This theory is popular among some Muslim philosophers. The upholders of this theory profess that bodies of all kinds are at bottom alike, because they are the combinations of atoms which are themselves like one another. The difference between one body and another is the difference of accidents (*a'rad*). Ibn Taimiyyah rejects this theory, first, on the ground that it has been refuted by Razi and Amidi along with many other philosophers. Secondly, because al-Ash'ari also rejects it in his *Kitab al-Ibanah* for being a theory of the Mu'tazilites. Thirdly, because the upholders of this theory, in accordance with the principles of the Jahmites and the Qadarites, maintains that each individual body God gives accidents (*a'rad*) peculiar to itself. According to them, the species (*ajnas*) cannot change from one into another. A body does neither turn into accidents nor one species of accidents into another.

If it is argued against them (the philosophers) that since all bodies are phenomenal and all phenomenal things turn from one to another, it necessarily proves the change of species, they would say in reply that matter (*maddah*) in all kinds of creation is the same. It is the qualities (*sifat*) that change due to union (*ijtima'*), separation (*iftiraq*), motion (*harakah*), and rest (*sukun*), while matter (*maddah*) remains unchanged at all stages of creation. To ibn Taimiyyah, this argument is a mere assumption of the philosophers who have observed only the phenomenal change in things without having any knowledge whatsoever of the essence which they claim remains unchanged. These philosophers, ibn Taimiyyah continues, further assert that all things are combinations of atoms preserved in matter, and then created afresh, while the other maintains that the parts of a body are separated but will again be united in the next world. Unfortunately, the latter have to answer a riddle.

If a man is eaten up by an animal (say a fish) and then the animal is eaten by another man, then how would he be raised on the Day of Resurrection? In reply, some of them say that in the human body there are certain parts that cannot be dissolved and in these parts there is nothing of that animal which has

been eaten by the second man. Ibn Taimiyyah objects to this and points out that according to the scientists (*'uqala'*) there is nothing in the human body that cannot be dissolved and that, according to the *aslaf* (earlier writers), the *fuqaha* (jurists) and also the people in general, one body (*jism*) turns into another by losing its identity completely. On the basis of this the jurists discussed the problem whether an impure thing may become pure when it is changed into another. For example, they agreed that if a pig falls into a salt-mine and becomes salt, it will be lawful for a Muslim to eat that salt. Thus, ibn Taimiyyah comes to the conclusion that the arguments in favour of the theory of the similarity of bodies are not sustainable. He believes that bodies are dissimilar and inter-changeable.

Theory of Motion

Philosophers among the Jahmites and the Mu'tazilites have argued about the origination of bodies (*huduth al-ajsam*) from the story of Abraham, who refused to call the stars, the moon and the sun his lords (*rubub*).[78] They hold that Abraham did not worship these heavenly bodies simply on the ground of their motion and shift (*al-harakat w-al-intiqal*) as suggested by the word *uful* in the Qur'an.[79] In other words, they maintained that *motion* and *shift* are the distinctive signs origination of bodies.[80] Ibn Taimiyyah rejects the theory on the following grounds:

1. No such theory was maintained by the Muslim scholars nor is there any indication anywhere that Abraham's people ever thought of it. Why Abraham's people worshipped the heavenly bodies may be attributed to their superstitious beliefs that they would bring them good luck and save them from evil. That is why Abraham said, "Oh my people, I share not with you the guild of joining gods with God."[81]

2. To the Arabs the word *uful* means setting (of the sun, the moon, etc.) and being covered by veils. They did not mean by it "motion" and "shift" as understood by these philosophers.

3. "Motion" and "shift" in the heavenly bodies exist at all times. There was no reason for Abraham to ascribe "motion" and "shift" to the heavenly bodies only at the time of their disappearance. He could recognize them even before they disappeared from the sky. It was on account of such misinterpretations that ibn Sina arrived at the wrong conclusion that "disappearance is the possibility of existence and everything the existence of which is possible is liable to disappear."[82]

The theory of indestructible atoms held by the philosophers goes against the agreement of the learned people (*'uluma'*) that one thing may turn into another and that the atoms have no existence, just as the intellectual atoms (*al-Jawahir al-'aqliyyah*) of the Peripatetics is mere conjectures.[83]

The actual cause of the divergence of opinion among the *'ulama'*, as suggested by ibn Taimiyyah, was their invention of certain equivocal terms. For example, what is an indivisible atom? It is obvious that most intelligent people have failed to conceive it. Those who are supposed to have understood it could not prove it, and those who were said to have proved it had to take shelter under long and far-fetched interpretations.[84] None of the Companions of the Prophet nor their Successors nor anyone prior to them

in natural religion (*din al-fitrah*) ever spoke about indivisible atoms. Naturally, therefore, it cannot be suggested that those people ever had in mind the term "body" and its being an assembly of atoms. No Arab could conceive of the sun, the moon, the sky, the hills, the air, the animals and the vegetables being combinations of atoms. Was it not impossible for them to conceive of an atom without any dimension? The traditionists, the mystics and the jurists never thought of such doctrines.85

Theory of the Necessary Cause (Mujib bi Dhat)

Ibn Taimiyyah refutes the philosophical interpretation of the necessary cause. He says that if by "necessary cause" the philosophers mean an existence which has no "will" and no "power," then such an existence bears no meaning, nor has it any significance externally, much less can it be existing necessarily. Ibn Rushd and other philosophers contradict themselves in their discussion of this problem. They postulate at the outset "a final cause" or *'illat al-ghayah* and then other final causes to assist it in creation (*khalq*) which needs volition (*irudah*). And since they interpret the final cause as mere knowledge and "knowledge" as the "knower," it becomes totally absurd and contradictory, because we know necessarily that volition (*iradah*) is not identical with knowledge, or knowledge with the knower.

With these philosophers, says ibn Taimiyyah, heterogeneous expressions may have only one meaning, by knowledge they mean power or volition, by attribution they mean attributed, just as by knowledge they mean the knower, by power they mean the powerful, by volition the volent, and by love the lover. Granted that there is a being without "will" and "choice," it is impossible for such a being to create this universe, because such a necessary cause needs its own causes and they cannot be independent.86

Theories of Harakat al-Falak, Namus, and Mumkin

Ibn Sina and his followers, in trying to compromise between prophecy and philosophy, invented the theory of *harakat al-falak* or movement of the sky. They maintain that the heaven moves in obedience to the "First Cause" (*al-'Illat al-Ula*). To these people the word *ilah* (deity) means a leader in obedience to whom the sky moves, and their highest philosophy is to remain obedient to leader. The "Maqalat al-Lam," Book 1, in Aristotle's *Metaphisca* supplies us with such a description.87

The philosophers believed in *namus*. By *namus* they meant government of the world run by wise men for the attainment of good and avoidance of oppression. Those amongst them who acknowledged "prophecy" maintained that all religious were of the type of *namus* brought to the world for the common good. Ibn Sina was one of those who held this view. In accordance with their grades of practical philosophy, those people considered the acts of worship (*'ibaddah*), revealed laws (*Shari'ah*), and injunctions (*ahkam*) to be moral, domestic, and civil laws respectively. Ibn Taimiyyah strongly opposes the theories of both *harakat al-falak* and *namus*, and condemns the philosophers for their vain attempt. He pronounces them all to be far from the truth and stigmatizes Aristotle, their first teacher, as the most ignorant of men (*ajhal al-nas*), who knew nothing of God though he was well versed in physics.88

As for the theory of *mumkin*, the scholastics are of the opinion that every possible thing (*mumkin*) either occupies space (*mutahayyiz*) or exists in that which occupies space (*qa'im bi al-mutahayyiz*). Ibn Sina and his followers, al-Shahrastani, al-Razi, etc., in affirming an existing thing different from these, postulate humanity, animality, or such other generic concepts. To ibn Taimiyyah these generic concepts exist only in the mind. He observed that people objected to such theories when the philosopher wanted to prove a thing which was beyond imagination or which existed by itself imperceptibly. He further disapproved of the theory that all exiting things must be visible to the eyes or perceptible to the senses.89

How far is ibn Taimiyyah justified in declaring, against the philosophers, that God is above us in the heaven? Can "direction" be applied to God?

According to Aristotle, upward and downward do not signify place, but the predicament "where," just as "yesterday" and "today" do signify time, but the predicament "when."90 This does not contradict the dialectics of ibn Taimiyyah who protests against those who say that God cannot be in any direction, because it signifies a place, and one who is in a place must have been created (*hadith*). In his opinion, those who say that God exists in some direction, meaning thereby that He is in some existing place within the universe, are wrong, but if a "direction" they mean some non-existing thing above the universe (*'alam*), then they are right, because above the universe there is nothing but God.91 Then the question arises, what is the Throne of God and why do men raise their hands upwards at the time of prayer?

Ibn Taimiyyah says that this is because, according to the Qur'an, God is on His Throne and the angels bear it.92 The early philosophers erroneously believed that the Throne meant the ninth heave (*al-falak al-tasi'*), because the astronomers could not discover anything beyond it. They further maintained that this ninth heaven was the cause of the movements of the other eight heavens. The ninth heaven was also called by them spirit (*al-ruh*), soul (*al-nafs*), or the Preserved Table (*al-lauh al-mahfuz*) as also active intellect (*al-'aql al-fa'al*) and so on. They further compared this ninth heaven in its relation to the other heavens with the intellect in human beings in relation to their bodies and their activities.93 All such theories are, in the opinion of ibn Taimiyyah, mere conjectures without any foundation.94 He quotes a tradition in defence of his belief that the *'arsh* is above all the heavens which are above the earth and is in the shape of a dome (*qubbah*).95

Granted that the *'arsh* is round and it envelops the whole creation, he further argues, it must be on top of all existing things from all directions, and a man will naturally turn his face upwards when asking for God's favour, and not downwards or in any other direction. If one who looks to any of the heavens in any direction other than upward must be counted as a fool, then what is to be said of a man who seeks God's favour but looks in any direction other than upward when upward is nearer to him than any other direction, right, left, front or back? Supposing a man intended to climb the sky or anything that is upward, he must begin from the direction that is over his head; no sensible person will ever advise him to rend

the earth and the go downward because that is also possible for him. Similarly, he will not run to his right or left, front or back and then climb, though that is also equally possible for him to do.[96]

By the time ibn Taimiyyah appeared with his polemics against all sciences and religious institutions whose origin could not be traced to early Islam, pantheism occupied the mind of a number of reputed Muslim scholars. Of these he mentions ibn ‘Arabi (d. 638/1240), ibn Sab‘in (d. 667/1269), ibn al-Farid (d. 577/1181), al-Hallaj (executed in 309/922), and a few others. Pantheism, according to ibn Taimiyyah, is based upon two wrong principles which are against Islam, Christianity, and Judaism and are contradictory to rational and scriptural arguments.[97]

Some pantheists who profess the doctrines of incarnation (*hulul*), unification (*ittihad*), or other closely related doctrine like “Unity of Existence,” maintain that “existence” is one, though there are two degrees of it. It is (1) necessary in the Creator and (2) contingent in the creation. To this group of pantheists ibn Taimiyyah assigns ibn ‘Arabi, ibn Sab‘in, ibn al-Farid, Tilimsani, etc. Of these ibn ‘Arabi distinguishes between existence (*wujud*) and affirmation (*thubut*) saying that “substances” do exist in non-Being (*‘adam*) independent of God, and that the existence of God is the existence of the substance themselves: the Creator needs the substances in bringing them into existence, while the substances need Him for obtaining their existence which is the very existence of Himself.[98] Al-Qunawi (d. 673/1274) and his followers made a distinction between “the general” and “the particular” (*al-itlaq w-al-ta‘yin*). They maintained that the necessary One is unconditionally identical with the existing things in general. To ibn Taimiyyah these are fantastic imaginings, because what is general in conception must be definite in individuals.[99]

Ibn Sab‘in and his followers hold that “the Necessary” and “the contingent” are like “matter” and “form.” Ibn Taimiyyah considers this view absurd and self-contradictory. In his opinion, it leads to the theories of incarnation and unity of existence. These people are the pantheists who failed to conceive of the divine attribute called *al-mubayanah li al-makhluqat*, different from originated things. They knew that God exists and thought that His Being is the same as His existence, just as a man looks to the ray of the sun and calls it the sun itself.[100] Ibn Taimiyyah quotes a saying of Sheikh Junaid Baghdadi, “To believe in the Unity of God is to separate the quality of origination from that of eternity,” and emphasizes that there must be a distinction between the Creator and the created; they cannot be one and the same.[101]

According to ibn ‘Arabi, non-existence is a positive thing even in its state of non-being.[102] He further maintains that the existence of such things is the existence of God Himself; they are distinguished by their essential characteristics which persist in the void, and are united with the existence of God, who knows them. Abu ‘Uthaman al-Shahham,[103] the teacher of al-Jubai’i, was the first to speak about it in Islam. These people argued in favour of their theory that had there been nothing in the void, there would not have been any difference between (1) things known, and (2) things unknown. Distinction, in their opinion, can exist only between positive things. Such a theory is absurd according to ibn Taimiyyah. The Sunnite Mutakallimun called these people heretics.[104] Ibn ‘Arabi’s theories generally revolve around this

point. Regarding the above doctrine of ibn ‘Arabi, ibn Taimiyyah remarks that the Jews, the Christians, the Magians and even the heathens never maintained such a belief. He, therefore, calls it a Pharaonic theory which had also been held by the Qarmatians.[105]

According to ibn Taimiyyah, ibn ‘Arabi’s theory reveals two things when analyzed: (1) denial of the existence of God, and (2) denial of His creation of creatures.[106] Besides, according to ibn Taimiyyah, ibn ‘Arabi maintains that sainthood (*wilayah*) is better than prophethood (*nubuwwah*) and that sainthood will never come to an end, whereas prophecy has already been terminated.[107]

Ibn Taimiyyah then gives various explanations of the pantheistic views of ‘Arabi, and declares them absurd. He compares ibn ‘Arabi to the deaf and dumb, and quotes the verse of the Holy Qur’an, ***“Deaf, dumb and blind, therefore, they shall not retrace their steps from error.”***[108] Similar attacks were made also by him against other Muslim philosophers.

We have seen ibn Taimiyyah’s attitude towards theology, logic, and philosophy. He quotes Imam Shafi‘i that theologians should be beaten with shoes and palm branches but while replying to theological as well as philosophical questions, he cannot help adopting theological and philosophical argumentation. From his method of discussion it is evident that in theology and philosophy he is able to put forward an argument by referring everything to the Holy Qur’an and the Sunnah declaring the rest to be innovations.

As for his views about Aristotelian logic, he exhibits his power of argumentation in an extra-ordinary way. He is, no doubt, an independent thinker and is free from the fetters of blind following (*taqlid*) in every matter. He may be called the precursor of the modern trend of anti-Aristotelianism.

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1. A place famous for its Hanbalite School. Here lived the Sabeans and the philosophers who worshipped the heavenly bodies and images after their names. Prophet Moses was sent to these people for their guidance. See MRK, vol. 1, pp. 425 et sq.
2. Fawat, vol. 1, p. 35.
3. Arba'un, pp. 34 – 36.
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5. Fawat, vol. 1, p. 141; Rihlah, vol. 1, p. 216; Majallah, vol. 37, part 3, p. 196.
6. Fawat, vol. 1, pp. 42 et sqq.
7. Rihlah, vol. 1, p. 217.
8. Majallah, vol., 27, Part 2, p. 193; Fawat, vol. 1, p. 41
9. Al-Kutubi, Fawat, loc. cit.
10. This treatise has been edited by Scrajul Haque in JASP, vol. 2, 1957.
11. M. Sunnah, Vol. 3, pp. 68 et sqq,
12. Imam al-Haramain Abu al-Ma'ali 'Abd al-Malik ibn Yusuf (d. 478/1085), the greatest theologian of the fifth/11th century.
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25. M. Sunnah, vol. 1, p. 172.
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27. Sharif al-Ridha' al-Musawi, Yaqut, vol. 5, p. 174
28. Mohammad ibn Hassan ibn 'Ali al-Tusi (d. 460/1067)
29. M. Sunna, vol. 1, pp. 172 – 74.
30. Followers of Abu 'Abd Allah Mohammad ibn Karram (d. 255/868)
31. M. Sunnah, vol. 1, pp 172 – 74.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid., p. 178
34. See MRK, vol. 1

35. Supra, p. 798
36. See the article by Bahjat al-Baitar in Majallah Majma‘ al-‘Ilm al-‘Arabi, Damascus, vol. 27, part 3, p. 411.
37. MS. Berl. No. 1995, fol. 54(b).
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45. This is perhaps identical with No. 1.
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51. Ibid., p. 8.
52. Ibid, pp. 14 – 87.
53. Ibid, p. 39.
54. Ibid. p. 32 – 39.
55. Ibid pp. 88, 240.
56. Ibid. pp. 92, 298.
57. Ibid. p. 298.
58. Ibid. pp. 168 et. sq.
59. Ibid. p. 200.
60. Ibid. pp., 122 – 26.
61. Ibid. p. 126.
62. Ibid. pp. 137 et sq.
63. Ibid. pp. 138, 144 et sq.
64. Ibid. pp. 246 – 545.
65. Ibid. pp. 248, 321
66. Ibid. pp. 256 et sq.
67. Ibid. pp. 267 et sq.
68. Ibid. pp. 278 – 83.
69. Ibid. p. 316
70. Ibid. pp. 337 – 40.
71. Qur’an 40:56
72. Ibid. 40:83
73. Al-Radd, pp. 324 et sqq.
74. Ibid. p. 344.
75. ibid. pp. 351 et sq.
76. Ikhlas, p. 16
77. ibid. p. 50
78. For the full story see the Qur’an 6:76 et sqq
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Part 3: The Sufis

Chapter 42: Jalal al-Din Rumi

A. Life

Jalal al-Din Rumi is the greatest mystical poet of Islam. It can be said without fear of contradiction that in the entire range of mystical literature of the whole world there is none to equal him either in depth or in comprehensiveness and extent. There have been mystics both in the East and in the West whose

experiences in the realm of the spirit may have equalled the spiritual perceptions of Rumi, but their emotional or intuitional side was not matched by an equally clear and powerful intellect. Rumi's uniqueness lies in the fact that in him reason is wedded to a wide and deep religious experience. The Muslim world has honoured him with the title of *Maulawi'i Ma'nawi* (the Doctor of Meaning), a religious scholar who is capable of philosophizing, of penetrating into the meaning of physical and spiritual phenomena, and lifting the veil of appearance to peep into the reality behind them.

When he argues he is a match for a superb dialectician of the stature of a Socrates or a Plato, but ever conscious of the fact that logic is a poor substitute for life. He inherited vast and rationalistic outlook of Hellenism sifting the grain from the chaff, separating the kernel from the husk. As a Muslim he has an heir to the spiritual wealth bequeathed to humanity by the glorious line of great prophets from Abraham to Mohammad. We find in him the sturdy ethics of the Israelite prophets, the dynamic view of life of Islam and the all-pervading love of Jesus. He calls his *magnum opus* the *Mathnawi*, the "Shop of Unity," wherein the diversities of life are harmonized and apparent contradictions transcended by creative unities. Nothing that is human or divine is alien to him. He expands with great force and conviction the original thesis of Islam, of the fundamental unity of all spiritual religions despite the contradictory dogmas that narrow theologies have formulated.

The windows of his soul are wide open in all directions. Although a believing and practising Muslim, he is temperamentally a non-conformist for he realizes the secondary nature of the form in comparison with the spirit. He is a Protestant of Protestants, never tiring in the exposition of his thesis that in the realm of the spirit mere authority without personal realization is of no avail. Faith in the sense of believing in the unbelievable and indemonstrable realities is repudiated by him in very strong terms. For him, God is a reality to be experienced and apprehended as more real than the objects of sense-experience; similarly, the relation of man to God is not a matter merely to be rationalized and moulded into a dogma but to be realized in the depth of one's own being where the human gets into tune with the divine and the finite is embraced by the infinite. It is impossible to put any label on a genius like him.

During his life rigid orthodoxy was extremely suspicious of his beliefs and averse to some of his practices which were stigmatized as innovations and aberrations. There was sufficient material in his beliefs and utterances to convict him of heresy before a court of inquisition. His biographers have related an incident in his life which throws light on his catholicity. It is said that the chief of orthodox would expose his heresies. At the very outset, Rumi was asked to declare as to which of the 72 sects he offered allegiance. Rumi gave a very unexpected answer by saying that he believed in all of them, meaning thereby that there is some truth in every sect which has been exaggerated and distorted by the fanatical exuberance of the blind followers of its tenets. The theologian was non-plussed, not knowing how to tackle a man of such an indefinite attitude. Piqued by this disconcerting reply the theologian, in an angry outburst, said that it signified that he was a heretic and an atheist. The reply to this was still more disturbing for the theologian: Rumi said that he endorsed even this judgment about him.

Let us start with a short biographical sketch of this remarkable religious genius to note his background and the influences that moulded him. He was born in 604/1207 during the reign of Mohammad Khwarizm Shah whose empire extended from the Ural Mountains to the Persian Gulf and from the Euphrates to the Indus. The family had been settled there for several generations. As Balkh was in the Persian domain and Rumi wrote in the Persian language, the modern Iranian scholars claim him as belonging to the Iranian nation. On the other hand, the Turks call him a Turk because after his early youth the family settled in Anatolia which was a Turkish province but was formerly a part of the Roman Empire, and hence the great mystic poet is Arab because at the summit of his genealogical table we find the great Caliph Abu Bakr, the first successor of the Prophet.

The spirit of Rumi, the universal mystic, must be smiling at these attempts of racial appropriation. In one of his lyrics he says that heaven is his original homeland, to which he craves to return. In another lyric he asks his fellow Muslims as to what he should say about himself, "As to my homeland it is not Khurasan, nor any other place in the East or the West, and as to my creed I am neither a Jew, nor a Zoroastrian, not even a Muslim as this term is generally understood."

In his ancestry we find great names, great not only as scholars and divines, but also from the mundane point of view. On the maternal side he is a grandson of the great monarch Mohammad Khwarizm Shah who had given his daughter in marriage to the famous mystic Husain Balkhi, Rumi's grandfather. The father of Rumi, Baha' al-Din was famous for learning and piety. He lectured from morning until evening on religious sciences as well as on mystical lore, and delivered sermons on Mondays and Fridays to crowded audiences. Commoners as well as scholars, aristocrats, and royalty gathered to hear him. The monarch held Imam Fakhr al-Din Razi, the commentator of the Qur'an and one of the great dialecticians, in great esteem and sometimes brought him along to hear Baha' al-Din.

Razi was reputed to be imbued with Greek dialectics, and attempted to prove religious truths by logic. Seeing Razi in the audience Baha' al-Din would pour his wrath on these attempts at the Hellenization of Islam, but the presence of the monarch and the prestige of the preacher prevented him from defending himself. Rumi as a young boy must have heard these denunciations from the lips of his learned father. In the *Mathnawi*, when Rumi takes up the cudgel on behalf of personal experience against mere logic-chopping, he points to Razi as a representative of a class of people who want to enter the realm of religious truth, walking on the wooden legs of mere argumentation:

"If dialectics alone could reveal the secrets of the spirit, Razi would have certainly reached them, but the feet of the dialectician are wooden and the wooden feet are most shaky."

It is said that Razi was so jealous of the popularity and prestige of Baha' al-Din that he poisoned the mind of the monarch against him by insinuating that, if the influence of this preacher were allowed to develop indefinitely, he would wield a power that would surpass the power of the sovereign. Autocratic rulers in Christendom as well as in Muslim kingdoms have often shown fearful jealousy of religious leaders, be they popes or priests. There is no wonder that Khwarizm Shah became apprehensive of the

growing influence and prestige of Baha' al-Din and his fears were fanned by the latter's rivals in the religious field. It is quite possible that Baha' al-Din left Balkh along with his whole family to forestall an adverse action against him. But there is also another version about his motive to migrate.

Shortly after he left Balkh the Tarter invasion over-whelmed the domains of Khwarizm Shah. It may be that Baha' al-Din had seen that it was imminent and so he decided to move to a safer region. The family moved first to Nishapur and then to Baghdad where Baha' al-Din stay was prolonged because Baghdad was a cultural centre of the Muslim world and attracted scholars from distant Muslim lands. A delegation from the Sultan of Rum, 'Ala al-Din Kaiqubad, happened to visit Baghdad during this period, its members were greatly impressed by Baha' al-Di's lectures and sermons. On their return to Anatolia they spoke to the Sultan about the spiritual eminence of Baha' al-Din and the Sultan persuaded him to come over to his realm. Baha' al-Din travelled from Baghdad to the Hijaz and passing though Syria he stayed for about a year in the town of Aque and then stopped for seven years in Laranda in Zinjan.

Here, in 662/1263, his illustrious son Rumi, now mature in mind and years, was married. It was here that Rumi's son Sultan Walad was born a year later. The Sultan invited the family to settle down in Quniya, capital of his kingdom. The Sultan with his retinue received him at some distance from the town and reaching the city wall he got down from his horse to escort the great divine on foot. Baha' al-Din's family were lodged in a palatial house and the Sultan would visit him on a regular basis.

We see from this family background that Rumi grew up in an atmosphere of religious learning in which religious problems were discussed and controversies entered into with great enthusiasm. Rumi must have learned much from his father and the great scholars who were devoted to him. The most eminent among them was Burhan al-Din Muhaqqiq whose title denotes that he carried on independent research (*tahqia*). Rumi's father entrusted the education of his promising son to this teacher who inculcated in his student the habit of independent thinking. Rumi's education continued after the death of his father and we find him at the age of 25 travelling in search of knowledge to great centres of learning like Damascus and Halab (Aleppo).

Rumi lived for some time in the hostel of Helariyyah College. There were eminent teachers on the staff of this College, one of whom was Kamal al-Din ibn 'Adim Halabi, who wrote a history of Halab, a fragment of which has been published in Europe. Rumi's education covered the whole curriculum: the Qur'anic commentary, Hadith, jurisprudence, and Arabic language and literature. His *Mathnawi* bears ample evidence of this vast learning. It is on account of this intellectual and academic training that his mysticism is not merely emotional. At every step we find him intellectualizing his supra-rational spiritual experiences. He spent seven years in the colleges of Damascus and we find him still engaged in academic pursuits even at the age of 40. The Holy Prophet Mohammad had started his mission at that age. In Plato's *Republic* Socrates proposed a similarly long process of education for those who would be philosophic rulers of his ideal republic.

Although it is stated in the *Manaqib al-'Arifin* that at the time of the death of Rumi's father his teacher

and tutor Burhan al-Din certified his student's thorough attainment in prevalent sciences and then launched him on a long course of mystical practices which continued for nine years, yet we do not find any fruits of these spiritual experiences in the life of Rumi before his encounter with the mystical and mysterious Shams of Tabriz. Rumi now engaged himself in teaching theology and giving sermons as the learned religious teachers of his time and usually did. His verdict or *fatwa* was sought and quoted about religious questions on which he was held to be an authority. He avoided music as the rigid puritanical orthodoxy of his time did.

There is no doubt that his meeting with Shams was a turning point in his life. As to what happened when Shams and Rumi met for the first time, there exist a number of legends that are inconsistent. According to one version, Rumi, surrounded by books and students, was engaged in teaching when Shams suddenly dropped in and asked him, "What are these books about?" Taking him to be a man without any learning Rumi replied that the questioner could not know what they contained. At this the heap of books burst into flames. Rumi in great consternation asked him the meaning of this miraculous phenomenon. At this Shams said, "This is what you cannot understand." Another version of this legend is that Shams threw the books in a cistern of water and when Rumi became enraged at this Shams brought them out without the water having touched them, they were as dry as before.

Shibili, the eminent modern writer of a book on Rumi, is evidently right in his judgment that these legends are not based on facts because Sipah Salar, who spent 40 years in intimate contact with Rumi, relates his meeting with Shams in a simple story unadorned by any legend. If anything unusual had happened, surely this friend and devotee would not have missed mentioning it. He says that Shams was the son of 'Ala' al-Din and was a descendant of Kaya Buzurg, an Imam of the Isma'ili sect before dissociating himself from it. Shams received his education in Tabriz and then became a disciple of Baba Kamal al-Din Jumdi, who introduced him to the mystic way of life.

He travelled from place to place living in caravanserais, weaving girdles and selling them for bread. He was staying in a serai of Quniyah when Rumi went to see him. The impression of this mystic on Rumi's mind was deep and lasting. Sipah Salar says that the two were closeted together for six months in Salah al-Din Zarkub's room, which none but Zarkub was allowed to enter. Now Rumi left off teaching and preaching and spent days and nights only in the company of Shams. It was rumoured that a magician had bewitched the great divine.

Rumi's sons and disciples turned against Shams whom they considered to be a charlatan and a sorcerer. Under these circumstances Shams left Quniyah suddenly, leaving no clue as to his whereabouts. After a long time Shams wrote to Rumi from Damascus. This letter kindled the flame in Rumi's mind again. In the meantime his disciples whose resentment had driven away Shams had repented of their conduct. Rumi's son Sultan Walad in his *Mathnawi* has mentioned this incident in detail because he was deputed by his father to go to Damascus accompanied by some other disciples to persuade Shams to return to Quniyah.

The epistle of Rumi written in verse is recorded in the *Mathnawi* of Sultan Walad. This letter shows how deeply Rumi had felt the pangs of separation from his spiritual guide and in what great esteem he held him. Shams accompanied this delegation and returned to Quniyah where he was received with great honour by Rumi and his disciples. It appears that Shams now meant to stay on, having allayed the suspicions of Rumi's disciples by marrying a maid of Rumi's house whose name is Kimiya. A residential tent was pitched for the wedded couple in front of the family residence of Rumi. Something happened again which turned Rumi's son 'Ala' al-Din Chalpi against Shams and others joined him with the result that Shams disappeared now for good.

Rumi's reliable biographer, Sipah Salar, says only this much, Shams left Quniyah again in indignation and although Rumi sent people to search for him in various places, no one could find him. But other biographers of Rumi are in full accord about the conviction that Shams was assassinated by some of Rumi's disciples, and the author of *Nafahat al-Uns* mentions the name of Rumi's son, 'Ala' al-Din, as his murderer. The assassination or disappearance of Shams took place in about 645/1247.

It is difficult to assess the mind and character of a man who appeared from nowhere and disappeared without leaving a trace after having influenced so deeply one of the greatest religious geniuses of all times. Could a man of Rumi's mental calibre be the subject of an abiding delusion created by a master hypnotist? The world has valued Rumi as a man of deep spiritual apprehension, a man whose religious life was rooted in a personal experience which could stand the test of reason. We find him acknowledge his debt to Shams in a thousand soul-stirring lyrics. Shams found Rumi an academic theologian and conventional preacher and converted him into an ecstatic mystic in deep personal contact with the ineffable verities of life. The prosaic Rumi over-night was turned into an ecstatic lyricist, who now found poetry and music much better than philosophy and theology as vehicles for the expression of truth.

Rumi identified himself so completely with Shams that the voluminous collection of mystical lyrics is called *Diwan-i Shams-i Tabriz*. In hundreds of lyrics the inspiration received from this mysterious spiritual guide is acknowledged with vibrating gratitude. The realm of mystical experience is a doubly sealed mystery to be uninitiated, but he has to accept the testimony of Rumi about it, however personal and subjective it may be, when he says with unshakable conviction that in Zarkub's shop, where the guide and the disciple were closeted together in mysterious intimacy, he found a spiritual treasure of indescribable value and ineffable beauty, both of form and meaning.

We can say only this much, Shams must have been a man of extra-ordinary psychical power capable of influencing the master mind of his age, whose *magnum opus* of intellectualized and versified religious experience created a monument of mystical poetry in which eternal love and cosmic reason seem to have achieved perfect accord.

Rumi had no intention of either founding a new sect or initiating a new movement; his devotees and disciples, however, did form a distinctive group after his death, but they developed and perpetuated only some external observances and rituals, and degenerated into a community of whirling dervishes. A felt-

cap without a seam – the leaders also wrapping a turban round it and wearing voluminous trousers of many folds – became the standard livery of this group which was incapable of comprehending either the depth of Rumi's thought or the spirit of his religious experience. Rumi was bitterly averse to imitation and blind conformity in religious life became a victim, by irony of accompanied by spontaneously gushing forth lyrics was an involuntary expression of a deeply stirred soul.

The imitators of externals adopted it as a regular practice of inducing religious emotion, unconsciously believing, like William James, that the voluntary adoption of the physical expression of an emotion tends to create the emotion itself. The ecstasy-seeking group sits in a circle, while one of them stands up to dance with one hand on the breast and the other arm spread out. In the dance there is no forward or backward movement but that of whirling around with increasing tempo. When accompanied by music, only flutes and drums are used. This a trying process of under-going a discipline of service to others before a candidate for membership could qualify for it. It starts not with the service of men but the service of animals for 40 days, obviously with the idea that if a man can serve animals dutifully with love and consideration he would serve his fellow beings still better. After this he sweeps the floors of the lodgings of poor devotees. It is followed by other terms of service for 40 days each of drawing water and carrying fuel and other general domestic chores. This is considered to be a cure for man's love of power and privilege and class and caste. At the end he is given a bath to symbolize riddance of lower passions. He takes a vow of total abstinence from all forbidden acts and is allowed to wear the garb of the sect.

B. Beliefs and Philosophy

Rumi as a philosopher of religion stands shoulders above all those Muslim thinkers who are called *hukama'* in the history of Muslim thought. He compiled no systematic treatise either on philosophy or theology and made no sustained attempt to build a system of either speculative or mystical metaphysics. One cannot put him in the category of philosophers like al-Farabi, ibn Sina (Avicenna), ibn Rushd (Averroes), and even al-Ghazالي. He did not hitch his wagon to these stars with the exception of al-Ghazالي, who attempted a monumental synthesis of orthodox Muslim theology and mysticism attempting to bridge the gulf between the two. He is the heir to the ethical monotheism of the Israelite prophets which culminated in the dispensation of Islam, but by the time this heritage reached him it had already been supplemented by Hellenistic thought. But he deepens and broadens all that he inherits. He belongs to no school or sect. He picks up what he considers to be true and discards whatever he thinks to be false, however time-honoured and orthodox the view or dogma may be.

A patient study of his *Mathnawi* reveals him not as a mediocre eclectic but a man with a definite view of the nature of existence. He has a deep-rooted feeling about the basic unity of reality and appearance. For a man like him every thesis and anti-thesis is transcended by a higher synthesis wherein contradictions are resolved in the ever-advancing movement of life. He talks of mere dialecticians with disdain but does not shun dialectics to sustain a thesis. You may consider him a free-lance both in

philosophy and religion, but his freedom is informed with a basic attitude that never wavers and perpetually returns to itself after numerous digressions and deviations.
While dealing with a genius like Rumi one is always conscious of a feeling of injustice towards him. The best that he has uttered vibrates with life, while an intellectual analysis in relation to life itself is, in the words of Goethe, like grey autumn leaves as compared with the sapful green tree which has dropped them. But this drawback is inherent in all intellectual analysis and theories and one has to regretfully remain contented with it. We will make an attempt to give a brief summary of his beliefs, outlook and metaphysics under a few headings.

C. The Nature of Existence and Evolution

The ground of all existence is spiritual. It is not easy to define the meaning of the term "spiritual," especially in the world-view of Rumi. For him, the ground of being is akin to what we feel in ourselves as spirit or ego. Infinite number of egos emerging out of the Cosmic Ego constitutes the totality of existence. In this view even matter is spiritual. The thinker nearest to Rumi in this respect is the German philosopher Leibniz, who centuries after Rumi conceived of existence as infinity of egos at different levels of consciousness. As in the metaphysics of Leibniz, Rumi believed God to be a universal cosmic Monad. There is nothing like lifeless matter; matter is also alive though at a lower gradation of being. "Earth and water, fire and air are alive in the view of God, though they appear to be dead to us."

In all speculative philosophy, the starting point, the point of departure, is an indemonstrable postulate. So is the case in the thought of Rumi. Assuming existence to be spiritual in the process of creation, he starts with a belief in devolution. There is no satisfactory explanation of why the infinite, self-existent, self-sufficient Spirit should start dropping egos to the lowest level of sentience and consciousness.

Judaism, Christianity, and Islam have inculcated a belief in creation *ex nihilo* by a voluntary act of the Creator at a particular moment of time. In Rumi's view there is no creation in time because time itself is created and is a category of phenomenal consciousness which views events in serial time, and mystic consciousness diving into the spiritual ground of being apprehends reality as non-spatial and non-temporal. We see here the Neo-Platonic influence replacing the orthodox Islamic concept of creation in time. Instead of creation in time, we have eternal emergence of egos. Rumi has repeated in many places his view of the eternity of spirits. "I existed when there were neither names nor the things that are named.

We see him moving only one step with Plotinus in conceding that there is emanation instead of creation in time, and then he suddenly parts company with him. Starting with initial unexplainable devolution he becomes a creative evolutionist. All beings have emerged from God by a kind of over-flow of the divine spirit, but every being or ego is impelled irresistibly by an urge to return to its origin. This urge which Rumi calls love becomes the evolutionary principle of all existence. Existence, viewed phenomenally, is graded, the egos in one grade being superior or inferior in self realization. The essence of all egos or

monads is spiritual which may be called divine because they have all emerged from the self-same divine principle.

The doctrine of the fall of Adam is re-interpreted in Rumi's metaphysics. The original state from which the ego fell was not the traditional paradise of gardens and streams but the unitary ground of divinity. The Fall is concerned not only with man or the disobedience of Adam and Eve, but is a universal cosmic phenomenon. One might say metaphorically that monads in the realm of matter and vegetable and animal kingdoms are all fallen angels striving to return to their original divine ground. The principle that everything has a natural tendency to return to its origin holds good in all spheres and applies to every existent.

Previous to Rumi we find among Greek thinkers guesses about the biological evolution of birds and beasts and man having been gradually differentiated and developed from fish due to environmental changes and the needs of adaptation, but this speculation was never developed any further either by materialistic thinkers like Democritus or idealists and realists like Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle.

We find a doctrine of graded existence and a theory of development in Aristotle's concepts of form and matter and entelechies. Inorganic matter is organized into different species of plants because every plant realizes the idea of its species. Every realized form serves as matter for the embodiment of a still higher entelechy until we reach God who is pure idea or self-thinking though unconcerned with the particularities of phenomenal existence and unrelated to creatures contaminated with matter. Matter for Aristotle is a negative end-concept without a shadow of reality because all reality belongs to ideas and matter as such is bereft of any Idea. Aristotle is not a monadologist like Rumi and Leibniz and for him the human ego also has a transitory phenomenal existence; what is real in it belongs to universal reason and whatever is personal or individual has no abiding value or reality.

After Aristotle the doctrine of Emanation and Return is found in Platonis. In his view also there is a gradation in existence which is a result of more or less distance from the original ineffable One who is devoid of all qualities like the *Nirguna Brahman*, can rise again to their original ground by discarding material and biological urges. This leads logically to a negativistic, quietistic, and ascetic view of life of which we find no trace in Rumi because of the Islamic ethics of integration and the eternal value of the individual. For Aristotle, the scheme of graded existence was eternally fixed and there was no idea of the evolution of species. In Plotinus, too, there are more of eternally graded devolutionary states of existence than an eternal urge to develop into higher and higher states which is so clearly depicted in the metaphysics of Rumi. Rumi touches Plotinus and Aristotle only tangentially and then develops a thesis of his own, not found before him in any speculative or religious metaphysics except that of the Ikhwan al-Safa and ibn Miskawaih.

In the whole history of philosophy he is one of the outstanding evolutionary thinkers. He is not a mechanical or biological evolutionist like Darwin and Spencer. Bergson's creative evolution comes nearest to Rumi. For Bergson, too, life is creative and evolutionary; however, he believes this creative

evolutionary process to be without any goal. But how could one say that life evolves unless there is an implicit idea of a goal towards which it moves? For Rumi God is the ground as well as the goal of all existence, and life everywhere is a goal seeking activity.

Bergson developed no concept of the self, nor is evolution for him a process of self-realization. Rumi tells us why life is creative and evolutionary and defines for us the nature of the creative urge. It was only in the last decade of his life that Bergson in his book *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* identified the *elan vital* with love and moved from philosophy to religion by accepting the prophets and the saints as individuals endowed with intuition and saturated with love which is the creative urge of evolutionary life.

Rumi has presented his view in a language which conforms partially even with the view of materialistic and biological evolutionists. Like them he says that life has evolved from matter, but for him matter was from the outset essentially and potentially spiritual. This removes the insoluble problem of lifeless and goalless matter evolving out of itself a germ of life which even in the lowest and initial is adaptive and goal-seeking.

The Odyssey and voyage of the ego's self-discovery and its gradual unfolding are given in Books Three and Four of the *Mathnawi* with great definiteness. "For several epochs I was flying about in space like atoms of dust without a will, after which I entered the inorganic realm of matter. Crossing over to the vegetable kingdom I lost all memory of my struggle on the material plane. From there, I stepped into the animal kingdom, forgetting all my life as a plant, feeling only an instinctive and unconscious urge towards the growth of plants and flowers, particularly during the springtime as suckling babies feel towards the mother that gave them birth.

Rising in the scale of animality I became a man pulled up by the creative urge of the Creator whom one knows. I continued advancing from realm to realm developing my reason and strengthening the organism. There was ground forever getting above the previous types of reason. Even my present rationality is not a culmination of mental evolution. This too has to be transcended, because it is still contaminated with self-seeking, egoistic biological urges. A thousand other types of reason and consciousness shall emerge during the further course of my ascent; a wonder of wonders!"

The same course is traced in Book Three of the *Mathnawi* hinting at higher stages until the ego reaches back the divinity from which it had emanated, a state which cannot be grasped by our present rationality nor could imagination visualize it. No category of reason or phenomenal existence applies to this state; it is ultra-existential. We must note here that it is not an impersonal existence which goes on moving from phase to phase but selves or egos from the very start which are perpetually engaged in self-realization. Orthodox Islam, like Christianity, believes in the creation of the universe in time.

The souls are believed to be created with the birth of the individuals though after that they are destined to be immortal remaining eternally either in heaven or hell. But, according to Rumi, the category of time

does not apply to the realm of the spirit, so the question of the temporal creation of egos is irrelevant. For Rumi as for al-Ghazl, time and space are categories of phenomenal consciousness only. He says about serial time, “You think in terms of the past and the future, when you get rid of this mode of consciousness, the problem will be solved.”

There is also a hint in the verses that follow that our concept of time is inter-linked with space, an idea which has been mathematically and scientifically developed in modern times by Einstein. Rumi says that in the realm of divine light, which is non-spatial, serial time, divisible into past, present, and future, does not exist. Past and future are relative to the individual self. About space there are numerous verses in the *Mathnawai* and Rumi repeatedly points to his conviction, which may either be the result of spiritual experience or an epistemological thesis, that in the realm of the spirit the category of space does not hold and has no relevance. The Qur’anic verse *wa la gharbiyyah*, supports this view, and Rumi’s intellect and experience must have been strengthened by this scriptural corroboration.

As the human spirit, too, is basically divine, as corroborated by the Qur’an, in which it is said that God breathed His own spirit into Adam, man also, diving into his own real self, can realize the non-spatial nature not only of his own reality but also of all existence viewed as noumena and not as phenomena. He exhorts man to realize this basic fact both about himself and the universe. “You live in space but your reality is non-spatial; space is a phenomenal creation of that which in itself is not space.” Rumi develops this thesis still further. He says that space is the basis of division and multiplicity, in which the basic unity of the cosmic spirit is infinitely pulverized and atomized.

Human egos are also basically one. It is only material frames in which the selves at the biological level create the illusion of diversity. Here, too, Rumi gets support from the Qur’anic teaching that there is a fundamental unity in the multiplicity of human egos. ***“It is He who created you of one spirit.”***[1]

Rumi uses similes to make his meaning clear. He says that sunlight entering houses through many windows is split up the spatial barriers but remains essentially the same. In another place he says that lamps lightening a hall may be many but the light that emanates from them and envelops all of them negates the illusion of separateness. It is a common trait of Rumi that he first uses logical and philosophical arguments and then invariably tries to enlighten the mind of the reader by similes and analogies, but at the end finding the intellect incurably bound by spatial visualization and fettered by the logic of identity and contradiction, refers invariably to ultra-rational spiritual experience which realizes reality as unity and conceives diversity as mere phenomenal appearance.

Talking of a group of divinized souls, he says that they feel themselves as the waves of the self-same sea whose diversity is created by wind. He relates a spiritual experience in which the spirit transcends our spatially inter-linked serial time and enters a dimension of Being wherein the mutually exclusive diversity of psychological processes is negated and a man’s causal thinking, with the problem that it creates and attempts to solve, exists no more. As it is a spaceless reality that manifests itself into extended and divisible spaces, creating the illusion of separated things and events, so it is a timeless

spirit that creates the categories of serial time with the illusory division of past, present, and future. It is possible for the human spirit to enter this non-dimensional dimension of consciousness and reality. Such an experience does not give one knowledge in the ordinary sense; it is a consciousness of wonder.

D. Love

As we have remarked already, two lines of intellectual and moral and spiritual development running their course independently for more than a millennium had converged in Hellenized Christianity, of which the first unmistakable evidence of the Gospel of John which identified Jesus with Logos. But after this amalgamation the distinctive features of the message of Jesus were not lost and remained recognizably different. Jesus identified God with love, while Hellenism had made reason the ground of reality. Islam, too, was an heir to Israelite prophetic outlook and grappled with the Hellenistic thought incorporating some of its elements and repudiating others which were antagonistic to the fundamentals of its ideology.

Islam attempted a synthesis of reason, love, and law, and an integration of the higher and the lower aspects, not sacrificing the lower and annihilating it altogether but transmuting the lower into the higher. It means surrender to the will of God which is not a passive attitude of submission but a continued volitional effort to attune oneself to eternal realities of which the focus is God. Whatever Islam took over as its heritage, it transformed it in the process of synthesis and assimilation, until the product became qualitatively different. In the opening chapter of the Qur'an we find God neither as the self-thinking thought of Aristotle nor the top point of the Platonic pyramid of ideas but a conscious and eternally creative will.

The basic attributes of God given in this surah are: (1) *Rabb al-'alamin* (the Nourisher of all realms and beings), (2) *Rahman* and *Rahim* (Creative Love and Forgiving Love), and (3) *Malik Yaum al-Din* (the Master of the Day of Judgment). We see here that love is prior to law and justice and hence is more basic to the nature of God, who is the Ultimate Reality. The Western critics of Islam are wont to take original Islam as concerned more with unconditional obedience to the revealed will of God than with an attitude of love towards Him. They forget that this obedience is to be rendered to a being who is essentially a lover; as *Rahman*, He creates out of love, as *Rabb* He sustains out of love, and as *Rahim* He forgives out of love.

It is a misrepresentation of Islam to assert that the concept of love is foreign to it and was adopted from Christianity and philosophies of Sufis and mystical and metaphysicians. The fact is that what mystics and thinkers like Rumi did was to elaborate the meaning of love, not only making it basic to religious and ethical life but giving it a cosmic significance as a creative, ameliorative, and evolutionary urge in all creatures and all strata of existence.

It is stated in the Qur'an that God had enjoined love (*rahmah*) on Himself[2] and that it encompasses everything.[3] In another verse the extent of paradise is given as the extent of the heavens and the earth, which means entire existence. The Prophet was asked by a non-Muslim where hell would be located if

paradise covered all existence. He said, “Where is the night when the day dawns?” meaning thereby that when the love of God becomes manifest it shall be revealed as covering the entire existence.

The cosmic significance of love could be derived from the Qur’anic teaching but it required acquaintance with other ideologies to help Muslim thought in its elaboration. So far as theories and speculations are concerned, we can discover distinctively pre-Islamic concepts in Rumi. Here a passage may be quoted from Khalifah Abdul Hakim’s book, *The Metaphysics of Rumi*, “So far as the theories of love are concerned a part of his arguments and views can be directly traced back to Plato who has had a decisive influence on all mysticism, both Islamic and Christian, by his conception of a super-sensuous Reality, as well as Eros (love) as a cosmical power. Rumi’s Love as an experience was not a product of any theory, as something intimately personal; it cannot be a subject of criticism.

But the conceptual apparatus that he employs to philosophize about love requires to be understood in its historical connections. The contents of (Plato’s two Dialogues) *Phaedrus* and *Symposium*...were not unknown to the thinkers of Islam. Ibn Sina’s *Fragment on Love*[4] is mostly a reproduction of the dialogue (Plato’s) *Symposium*...Love as the movement towards beauty which being identical with Goodness and Truth represents Perfection and the Highest Idea, and Love, as the inherent desire of the individual for immortality;...given by Avicenna is a simple repetition of the Platonic theory of Love. The processes of Assimilation, Growth, (and) Reproduction are so many manifestations of Love. All things are moving towards Eternal beauty and the worth of a thing is proportionate to its realization (or assimilation) of the beauty.”[5]

Newton explained the movement of heavenly bodies by physical gravitational pull and Kant promulgated the nebular hypothesis to explain the origin of heavenly bodies out of incandescent vapour. Hegel explained the ever-progressing dynamism of Nature and Mind as the dialectical unfolding in time of the Eternal Absolute. Darwin presented a biological view of the creation of higher species by the blind urges of the struggle for existence and life’s adaptation with the environment. Rumi’s evolutionary concept comprehends all these partial and fragmentary theories, taking them up in a grand synthesis.

Similarly, Rumi has an intuition of the gravitational pull of atoms and masses of matter but, instead of explaining it by mechanical dynamics; he resorts to love as the fundamental urge which creates attraction and affinities. “All atoms in the cosmos are attracted to one another like lovers; everyone is drawn towards its mate by the magnetic pull of love. Heavenly bodies draw the earth towards them in a welcoming embrace. It is on account of this cosmic pull of that earth remains suspended in space like a lamp, the forces from all directions pulling it by equilibrated attraction not allowing it to fly away or drop down in space, as if the stellar dome of heaven were a magnetic dome inside which a piece of iron is suspended without visible cord”

According to Rumi, the same force that creates heavenly bodies out of nebulae resulting in stars and planets and systems, proceeds further and generates life because love by its essence is creative. As atoms by their affinities conglomerate in the molecules so in a further evolutionary urge they emerge as

life cells which first appear in vegetation and then advance towards animality. Hegel said that creation proceeds through a synthesis of the opposites, but Rumi says that these apparent opposites were already akin by the affinity of love. Love originates in God and moves towards God who is essentially a creator; therefore, love as it advances from phase to phase in the upward movement of creation brings into being new forms of existence at every step.

We have already stated that Rumi is a monadologist and when he talks of atoms and their mutual attractions he is really taking of egos that in the process of realizing their divinely-rotted self-consciousness. It is this urge for self-realization that makes the egos act as they do. As their source is God, so their goal is also God, and the process of moving towards this goal creates new perfections at every stage. Everywhere there is life and life is essentially a goal-seeking activity. The lower merges into the higher; it is not a process of progressive annihilation but assimilation.

Rumi says that the heavenly movements are not blindly mechanical but are waves in an infinite ocean of love. If cosmic love were not there, all existence would get frozen and shrink into nothingness. The inorganic would refuse to merge and emerge into vegetation would not be lifted up into animal life nor would life ascend towards the mind and spirit. The egos like infinite swarms of locusts are flying towards the harvest of life. Without love, nothing would move.

The religion of a mystic philosopher like Rumi is a universal religion which could be enclosed within any orthodox or dogmatic boundaries. His religion is not the creed of any one particular religious community but being the religion of the universe is a universal religion. It is the religion of glowing stars, of flowing streams and of growing trees. Whose belief, intuition, and practice accord with his outlook, he has attained the truth. Religion, if it is genuine is not a blind faith about the understandable unknown; it is an ever-present reality perceived and lived. It is the alchemy of life which though the magic of love transforms the lower into the higher.

We see ourselves that bread is transubstantiated into life and mind. Could any narrow scientific intellect explain this miraculous transmutation? In the Aristotelian logic of identity everything remains what it is, and in mechanistic materialism there is no way of explaining the goal-seeking tendency of life from non-purposive aimless atoms. Life has an infinite assimilative power; there is nothing that could remain eternally foreign to it. As fire burns even a dross and converts it into a pure flame, so every happening in life is capable of being converted into light and life.

The universe, according to Rumi, is a realm of love. In comparison with love, law and reason are secondary phenomena. It is love that creates to fulfil itself and reason steps in later to look at it retrospectively, discovering laws and uniformities to seek the threads of unity in the diversities of manifested life. Language was not created by any pre-conceived grammar, nor do the flowers blossom by any conscious planning or according to the laws of botany or aesthetics. Rational thinking follows creation but does not precede it. Rationalization, being a secondary phenomenon, is not by itself a creative force.

As Hegel has said, philosophy always comes too late only to contemplate retrospectively what the dynamism of history has already created and completed. Cosmic love transcends all creeds and all philosophies and so the religion of love could never be completely identified with any orthodoxy, dogmatism, or speculative theory. Rumi says that there is no contradiction between universal love and universal reason, but when the human intellect narrows itself, it begins to take a part for a whole, making the mistake of identifying a fragmentary phenomenon with the whole of reality.

Human intellect, divorced from universal reason, remains at the biological and utilitarian level, and language which is the outward garb of the intellect possesses no vocabulary for the description of the intuition of cosmic love. Human consciousness remains generally at the biological level and its perceptions, affections, and conations are governed directly or indirectly by biological needs. This biological instrument Rumi calls *khirad* or particular reason (*'aql–i juzwi*) to distinguish it from universal reason, which exultingly calls itself scientific reason, capable of explaining all reality and solving the riddle of the universe, proves to be utterly useless when faced with the intuition of life and love, and, instead of gracefully accepting its inadequacy, begins foolishly to deny the reality that it cannot comprehend.

The deep impress of Rumi which has continued to develop through the centuries in modern times produced a disciple of the intellectual calibre and poetic genius of Iqbal. The reasons for this influence may be briefly summed up as follows. Here was a man who, like the great prophets and saints, did not accept religious faith at second hand; for him it was a personal experience more convincing than either logical argument or sense–perception. But religious experience, if it rests in its subjectivity, cannot be communicated; it cannot induce conviction in others who do not have it.

Rumi deplores the inadequacy of human speech to convey it and also points to the limitations of sense–experience as well as inductive or deductive reasoning of what he calls the particular intellect which deals with reality piecemeal. But side by side with his ultra–sensuous and ultra–rational mystic experience of the all–enveloping spirit in which every ego lives and moves and has its being, he presents himself to us as an acute logician and a skilled metaphysician. When you add his lyrical fervour and poetic genius to his remarkable capacities, he begins to tower above all those who are either mere mystics or mere philosophers or mere poets.

One finds in him anticipations of Kant who tried to prove phenomenality or subjectivity of time, space, and causality; anticipations of Bergson in his criticism of the intellect and in his conception of *elan vital* creative evolution, and anticipations of Nietzche in his conviction that present humanity must be superseded in a further advance towards new dimensions of being. He is an idealist and spiritualist of the highest order. He is fundamentally an evolutionary thinker who conceived of existence not in static but dynamic terms.

The unconscious urge to rise to higher levels is implicit in all existence; the inorganic is always ready for being assimilated by the organic. In every entity there is an upward urge from within and a pull from

above. The inertia of matter on which Newton based his physics and astronomy is declared to be an illusion, the reality of which is infinite motion or restlessness of what Democritus and the 13th/19th century physicists call atoms but Rumi calls egos. Rumi re-establishes the reality of the world and the dignity of all life, particularly of human life which has become self-conscious and conscious of its divine origin and goal. All movement is from God unto God.

Rumi performs the admirable task of ridding mysticism of quietism and irrationalism. He establishes with all the force of his genius the reality of free-will which is vouchsafed to man to identify it freely with the cosmic will. He has brought out the essence of universal religion as creative love. He preaches the infinite potentialities of life because all egos have their origin in the Infinite Self and are restless and nostalgic in order to realize their infinity. Many creeds and philosophers had declared life to be an illusion, but Rumi declares life at all grades to be Eternal Reality; it is not life but death which is an illusion. The purpose of life is more life, higher and better.

Nietzsche criticizes bitterly all creeds that say "No" to life and says that there are only two kinds of creeds: those that say "Yes" to life and those that say ""No" to it. Rumi's is a life embracing creed. Although one of the greatest mystics of all time, he was not a body-torturing and self-annihilating mystic. In a verse he talks of great souls as great hunters of life trying to capture and assimilate the spirituality of angels, saints, and prophets, finally aiming at capturing the cosmic spirit itself for perpetual and eternal enrichment of the self, actualizing its infinite potentialities. He wants you not to gather your garments to prevent them from getting wet but to plunge a life's challenge, is the way of life that he preaches and practises. Only for a sleeping soul life is an empty dream; creeds of illusion are the products of lovers of sleep and worshippers of the night.

About the infinity of life and its restlessness he says, "Human egos have experienced the shaping of universe after universe, could you say which of them mirrors the essence of yourself? Is it not that the seven heavens are below the empyrean but our flight is beyond the empyrean? Neither the heavens nor the empyrean could be our goal; we have to fly towards the rose-garden of union with the divine."

For Rumi life is an alchemy perpetually engaged in transformation and transubstantiation. You see before your eyes earth, water, light, and air being transformed into plant life, plant life turning into animal life by assimilation, and animal life, ascending to mind; why couldn't mind be transformed into a divinized spirit? "They say, copper turns into gold by alchemy, but the copper of our life converts itself not only into gold but becomes an alchemy itself with the quality of spiritualizing whatever it touches."

The space at our disposal compels us to finish this brief survey of Rumi's outlook on life with two of his lyrics: in one he gives the characteristics of the "Man of God' and in the other depicts a mystic's search for God through the emblems of various creeds, ending in finding God within himself. "The 'Man of God' is intoxicated without wine and full without meat; he is struck with wonder and cares not about food and sleep. He is a king in a dervish's cloak; he is a treasure found in a ruin. The constituents of a man of God are not the four elements – earth, air, water, and fire. He is a boundless ocean of the spirit

containing countless pearls.

The heaven within him contains numerous suns and moons. He gains the truth by knowledge is beyond right and wrong. The heaven within him contains numerous suns ad moons. He gains the truth by knowledge from God and from books. He stands above creeds and heresies, and he is beyond right and wrong. He has ridden away from Non-Being in glory and majesty. He is hidden, Oh Candle of Faith! Such a 'Man of God' do you seek and find."

Rumi is talking here of the ideal man or the ideal of humanity. He is hidden in the nature of every man. The purpose of life is to reach this perfection. In another verse he has repeated the story of Diogenes moving about in the market-place of Athens with a lamp in his hand in broad daylight seeking Man in a crowd of men who, according to him, were only counterfeiting humanity. When he is told that no such being could be found, he replies, "I am craving to find him who is not found."

Religion has been aptly defined by Hoffding as Faith in the conservation of values. According to Rumi's mystical metaphysics, the spirit is the origin and locus of all intrinsic and abiding values. The Real which is manifested in the human spirit is eternal and immortal. He exhorts human beings not to lament the transitoriness of phenomenal life because that which is real can never perish. The streams of phenomenal life continue to flow and pass away, lament not their vanishing because inexhaustible eternal source remains undiminished and shall continue to issue in many more streams.

We must note that here we have no blank qualities, no transcendent infinity of a static Absolute, but a perpetually gushing fountain of eternal life, from which all egos quaff as much as they can. Mortality belongs to appearances alone, not life but death is an illusion. Every ego is destined to be immortal by participation in life eternal. The purpose of life is self-perpetuation and self-enrichment not only though the reproduction of the species but by the upward and forward urge of every ego. Life moves by a series of negations and assertions, self-realization cannot proceed without self-abnegation.

Every stage reached by an ego has to be negated and transcended so that "on their dead selves' stepping stones men may rise to higher things." Rumi says that from the very outset life has placed a ladder before you so that you may rise step by step. After this he reiterates his fundamental hypothesis that life has advanced from the inorganic to the organic, traversing the vegetable and the animal kingdom, reaching the stage of reason, knowledge and faith, until man, with his body which was only a part of the earth, evolves a mind and spirit and becomes a whole. But even after having become conscious of infinity, the voyage of discovery through the infinite continues. For a long time it was a journey towards God, but now it will be a journey in God's infinity, from earth to heaven, from humanity to angel-hood until the finite embraces the Infinite: man the Son of God becomes one with the Father. It is the bodies that become old and decrepit, life remains eternally youthful.

The Qur'an says about the creation of man's body was made of clay, but the material frame having been perfected, God breathed from His own spirit into him. Rumi in his discourses collected in *Fihi ma fihi* has

quoted a tradition of the Prophet wherein it is said that Adam's clay was kneaded in 40 days. The Qur'an says that God's day is an epoch of a hundred thousand years. This mode of expression is not meant to convey an exact mathematical figure but is an idiomatic or rhetorical expression for an immensely long period. Accordingly, God's 40 days might mean hundreds of millions of years.

Rumi concludes from this that man's bodily organism too did not come into existence by the creative fiat of God in a moment but is a product of a long process of evolution. It was after the perfecting of the physical organism that the spirit of the Lord became manifest in man awakening the eternal essence of the human ego. With the emergence of this consciousness the human ego realizes that it is not a product of this evolution but, in its essence, is prior to the phenomenal course of the universe. After this realization, the universe with its diversity of objects is viewed not as a cause but as an effect, because the ego pours existence into its own moulds with the categories of time, space and causation.

Rumi says that the body is not the cause of the mind but is created by the mind as its instrument for working on the material or phenomenal plane. What we consider to be the qualities of an independently existing matter exist only in relation to a perceiving mind. In a lyric, Rumi describes his search for God after having realized the nature of his own ego. He moves from creed to creed and dogma to dogma. Not finding Him in temples, institutions, and symbols, he returns unto himself and discovers Him there in the sanctuary of his own heart. He is not satisfied with any creed until God is directly experienced by him. Here is one of the finest mystical lyrics of Rumi:

"I existed at a time when there were neither the names nor the objects of which they were the names; the names and the objects named came into existence in relation to us at a time when egos were not yet individualized and there was not yet any question of 'I' and 'We.' I searched for God among the Christians and on the Cross but therein found Him not. I went into the ancient temples of idolatry, no trace of Him was there. I entered the mountain cave of Hira (where Arch-angel Gabriel appeared to the Prophet) and then went as far as Qandhar but God found I not, neither in low nor in high places. With a set purpose I fared to the summit of Mount Caucasus and found there only *'anqa's* habitation. Then I directed my search to the Ka'bah, the resort of old and young, God was not there even. Turning to philosophy I inquired about Him from ibn Sina but found Him not within his range. I fared then to the scene of the Prophet's experience of a great divine manifestation only a 'two bow-lengths' distance from him' but God was not there even in that exalted court. Finally, I looked into my heart and there I saw Him, He was nowhere else."

This is the experience and language of the great mystics of all spiritual religions who were not satisfied with institutional religion, and who based their spiritual life on personal experiences and convictions not derived from theologies and philosophies. These experiences are the common heritage of all great souls and the common ground on which great religions meet, disregarding intellectual formulation of dogmas and diversities of modes of worship which have made religion a dividing instead of a unitive and harmonizing force.

Rumi is one of those rare saints and mystics whose intellectual fibre and creative moral and social effort is not weakened by subjective emotional experiences unrelated to the realities of everyday life. In him spirituality, rationality, and universal morality have found a healthy synthesis. God, universe, and humanity are embraced in a single all-encompassing vision, the vision of creative love. Tennyson ends his "In Memoriam" with a stanza which sums up Rumi's vision and creed:

"That God, which ever lives and loves,
One God, one law, one element,
And one far off divine event,
To which the whole creation moves."

His appeal to the philosophers of religion, epistemologists, and metaphysicians is as great as his appeal to the mystics of all religions. Neither modern philosophy nor modern science has left him behind. For about a century now the entire philosophical and scientific though has been dominated by the concept of evolution, and it is the evolutionary concept that has been mainly responsible for sabotaging ancient theologies and views of creation, resulting in almost universal scepticism and agnosticism. Theology everywhere has been making an attempt to save the abiding realities and values of religion by accepting universal evolution as an indubitable fact and recasting old beliefs and dogmas. Rumi performed this task six centuries ago in a manner that can offer guidance to all who want to reconcile religion with philosophy and science.

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4. This fragment on love forms part of his collected works preserved in the British Museum Library and has been edited by N. A. F. Mehren (leiden, 1894).
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Chapter 43: Mahmud Shabistari, Al-Jili, and

Jami

A. Mahmud Shabistari

Mahmud Shabistari, so called after the name of Shabistar, a village near Tabiz in Adharbaijan, was born about the middle of the seventh/13th century and died about 720/1320. Little is known of his life. His *Gulshan–i Raz* (The Garden of Mystery) is a poetical exposition of the doctrine of the Unity of Being. It was written in 710/1311 in response to certain questions about mystical philosophy asked by one Amir Husaini from Khurasan.

The exposition of the doctrine of the Unity of Being in the book adds nothing to what had earlier been said by ibn ‘Arabi. Mahmud, however, is much clearer and much more precise than his spiritual teacher. Being, by its very definition, he says, is existent, and non–Being, non–existent. There is nothing in existence except the one. The contingent and necessary were never separate; they existed from eternity as one. If you look at one side of One, it is one, and if you see the other side, it becomes many – the only difference being that the aspect of unity is real, while that of plurality is illusory. Reality is one but it names are many, and it is this plurality which becomes the cause of multiplicity.[1]

Essence as such is beyond our knowledge or comprehension. But according to Shabistari, this inability on our part to know God’s essence arises because of His nearness to us. Essence as absolute light is as invisible to the eye as non–Being which is absolute darkness. Nobody can look at the sun directly. But it can be seen as reflected in water. Relative non–being is like water. It serves as a mirror of the Absolute Light in which is reflected the illumination of *Haqq* (truth). This relative non–being is the latent reality (*‘ain al–thabitah*) of ibn ‘Arabi’s system, which reflects the divine light in accordance with its natural propensities. The divine light as pure light was a hidden treasure, but when it was reflected in the mirror, the treasure became manifest. But, in this process, the essence that was One became many.[2]

Shabistari then describes the process of descent of the one after the manner of ibn ‘Arabi. The first manifestation of the essence is the universal reason (*‘aql al–kulli*), the stage of unity (*ahadiyyah*); the second is the universal soul (*nafs al–kulli*). Then comes the Throne (*‘arsh*), the heavenly Chair (*kursi*), seven heavenly spheres, and four elements, the three kingdoms of minerals, vegetables, and animals. The last in the series is man who is the acme of creation. Though temporally last in the series, man is logically first, as tree is potentially prior to the seed. The entire world was created for him while he was created for himself, as the embodiment of God’s highest manifestation. But he possesses certain baser elements which, however, are essential for his moral progress. A mirror, to be able to reflect things, must have one side totally blackened. If it were a crystal, it would cease to serve as a mirror.

As man is the final cause of creation, everything is made to obey his command. All things are manifestations of the different names of God, but, being the reflection of the Named, man comprises

within himself all the names; therefore, all the creation is within him. He is the most marvellous creation of the Lord and owes everything to Him, his power, knowledge, and will are all God's.

Reason is perfectly useless, according to Shabistari. It's a long, winding, and arduous path. A philosopher is like a cross-eyed man who sees duality everywhere. He starts with the objects of the world conceived as real. On this basis he argues the existence of the Necessary, as distinct from and other than the contingent. Arguing on the basis of a continuous series of causes and effects, Shabistari asserts that the Necessary Being is the Primal Cause of the process of creation. The whole process of reasoning, according to him, is wrong. There is no possibility of the knowledge of God through the category of contingency as the latter does not possess any similarity to the former. "It amounts to discovering the burning sun with the help of the dim light of a tiny candle."

The best method, therefore, is to give up logical reason and enter the valley of gnosis.[3] Knowledge gained though discursive reason leads one to sleep, while gnosis awakens one from slumber. Like Abraham, one must go beyond the divinity of the stars, the sun, and the moon which, according to him, represent sense-perception, imagination, and reason, respectively.[4]

In the sixth question of *Gulshan-i Raz* the Sheikh explicitly rejects the usefulness of reason in the mystic search for truth. He holds that there is "a way" beyond reason by which man is able to know the secret of reality. This intuitive power of man is hidden within him as fire is implicit in the stone. When this fire blazes forth, the entire world becomes bright and illumined.

Discussing the value of knowledge in the tenth question he says that by knowledge he does not mean the device by which people gain worldly power and prestige, for that is contrary to the spirit of a true mystic. Knowledge is useful only when it leads one to the right action, action that springs from the heart. Shabistari also suggests a study of both the sources of knowledge mentioned in the Qur'an – the external world (*afaq*) and the internal world of self-consciousness (*anfus*). But in practice the mystics' study of the internal world has always led them to emphasize the illusory character of the external world.

The account of moral qualities given by Shabistari is a mere reproduction of Platonic and Aristotelian theories. Wisdom (*hikmah*), moral purity (*'iflah*), bravery (*shaja'ah*), and justice (*'adalah*) are the main moral qualities. He discusses briefly the Aristotelian principle of the mean. Paradise is the result of following this middle path, while adopting either of the extremes would lead to hell. When moral purification is attained, man is vouchsafed divine light (*tajalli*) which illumines his soul and raises him to the highest level. Saints and prophets are the persons who fall in the category of the illumined souls.

This manifestation (*tajalli*) of God is not only in things that are good but also in things which in common usage, we call evil. As God is the only being and the only cause of everything, so all things without distinction manifest His light. The logical position of pantheism is that good and evil are all alike and, as manifestations of God, stand on an equal footing. But when we come to the ordinary common-sense view, we distinguish between them and attribute good to God and evil to Satan.[5]

Like all other pantheists, Shabistari is completely deterministic. He holds that the so-called sense of freedom possessed by man is due to his consciousness of selfhood as an entity distinct from God. Man is by nature non-existent and, therefore, it is meaningless to attribute freedom to him. Believers in freedom of choice are Zoroastrians who make a distinction between the god of good and the god of evil. to attribute power, will, and action to man is wrong and in this matter, according to him, both the Mu'tazilites and the Ash'arites have gone astray – the former in saying that man is free in his choice and the latter in making man responsible for his deeds due to the power of "acquisition" attributed to him.

According to Shabistari, man is not created for exercising moral responsibility, bur for some other purpose. He does not explain what that other purpose is. His commentator, Lahiji, however, adds that it is to serve as a polished mirror for manifestation of God's essence, attributes and names. Can we ascribe any freedom to the mirror in reflecting objects? For every one of us, actions were pre-determined. God's actions are inscrutable. "Can you explain," he asks, "why one man is born Mohammad and another Abu Jahl?" Man's dignity lies in being under compulsion and not in having a share in free-will.

But, then, why is man held responsible for his deeds? Is it not injustice? The Sheikh thinks that it is not injustice but an argument in favour of God's absolute power and arbitrariness. Again, the object of making man responsible for deeds over which he has no control is to compel him to renounce this world forever, as he is elementally incapable of fulfilling the obligation of following the right path and obeying God's Law, i.e. *Shari'ah*.[6]

What are the steps by which an individual reaches the stage of perfection? He is born, according to him, as the acme of creation, the purest of the pure, and the highest of the high. But due to illumination which he receives through his intuitive powers or his rational capacity man realizes his weakness and then sets on a journey backward. It is travelling from contingency to necessity from plurality to unity, from evil to good.

There are three stages in this journey. The first is called absorption. Here, the light of God shines through his actions so that the mystic regards the actions of everything as illusory. Nothing besides God possesses any causal power. At the second stage the divine light shines through God's attributes and so the Sufi regards the attributes of everything else as merged in God. The last stage comes when the mystic receives illumination from the very essence and sees the real state of affairs. For him noting is existent except He and the being of all things is derived solely from Him. When he reaches this stage, he becomes perfect and attains a state of union with his Lord "so much so that neither angels nor prophets can equal him. The whole circle of existence is covered and man reaches the point from where he started."[7]

The religious Law (*Shari'ah*), the mystic Path (*Tariqah*), and Truth (*Haqiqah*) – all go to form the perfect man. *Shari'ah*, according to the Sheikh, is like the protecting shell of the almond. It is useful to a certain stage. When the stage of perfection is reached, the shell becomes useless and is better thrown away.

Nevertheless, a perfect Sufi needs religion – not for himself but for others.

Shabistari follows the general trend of mystic writers in describing the nature of saint ship (*wilayah*) and prophethood (*nubuwaah*). Saint ship is a more general category than prophethood. Saints so called and prophets are all saints in the first instance. In a mystic saint ship is hidden, while in a prophet it is manifest. A saint is a follower of the prophet in Law and in this he attains the highest position and becomes equal to the prophet in realizing union with the Lord. With the death of the Holy Prophet the first cycle of saint ship, a cycle in which prophethood and saint ship were both manifest in the world, came to an end.

After the Final Prophet, saint ship continued and the new cycle began to take its shape. One day the seal of saints will appear, who shall be the acme of saint ship and, with his appearance, the cycle of the two worlds will come to an end. He will be the whole, of which all the previous saints were parts. Like the "Seal of the Prophets," he shall be a blessing to the whole world. He will succeed in bringing peace and security to man; justice and equity will reign.[8] The word "seal," according to ibn 'Arabi, does not signify a mystic with who saint ship will come to an end, but with Shabistari, the seal of saints, like the "Seal of Prophets," would terminate saint ship forever. The last of the saints is the "seal" with which the world will come to an end.

This world of matter, however, being the locus of God's manifestation (*tajalli*) cannot come to an end at all. There shall be no time when the manifestation of *Haqq* can be said to have ceased. The present world and the world to come will meet and there is no dividing line between the two. The next world is something ever in the making. What we usually call this world and the next are mere names for what Shabistari, following ibn 'Arabi, calls the ever-new process of creation, an unending cycle of annihilation and recreation.

The life to come, man would be without body but it would be something subtle and transparent. Our deeds and mental dispositions of the present life would take concrete shape and become materialized in some tangible form. Good disposition will take the shape of light (paradise) and bad the shape of fire (hell).[9]

After the death, the individuality of man shall vanish at last and many shall be dissolved into One.[10] Man shall be vouchsafed the beatific vision, but it will not be something external, it will be a manifestation within him.[11]

B. Al-Jili

'Abd al-Karim b. Ibrahim al-Jili was born in 767/1365 and died at about 832/1428. Except for the few references in his book, almost nothing is known about his life. He was the disciple of Sheikh Sharaf al-Din al-Jabarti and lived in Zabid (Yemen). He also visited India during his travels. He claims that he received mystic illumination which led him to write his well-known book, *al-Insan al-Kamil fi Ma'rifat al-*

Awakhir w-al-Awa'il. Its object is to expound and express the truth.

He holds that Absolute being is one and that all multiplicity is illusory. "Absolute Being is the essence (*'ain*) of what we call the phenomenal world (*khalq*) and God (*Haqq*). The Absolute Being manifests itself in two different realities, *khalq* and *Haqq*.[12]

Essence, Attributes, and Names

Absolute Essence is that to which names and attributes are ascribed. It is a Self (*nafs*) which exists by itself. It deserves every name which Its perfection demands. No description in words can fully convey Its essence. A thing can be understood by another thing which is related to it positively or negatively, but there is nothing in the universe which is so related to the Absolute. It is Pure Being which is equal to non-Being – a sum of contradictions. "It is two contradictories gathered in a unity and this sum of contradictions is not impossible."[13] It has two attributes: eternity and everlastingness, two qualities: God (*Haqq*) and the world (*khalq*), two descriptions eternity (*qidam*) and createdness (*huduth*), two names: *Rabb* and *'abd* (Lord and slave).

It has two faces: outward (visible), i.e. the present world and inward (invisible), i.e. the world to come. It has two predicates: necessity and possibility, two points of view: according to the first, It is non-existent for Itself and existent for others, while, according to the first, It is non-existent for Itself and existent for others, while, according to the second, It is existent for Itself and non-existent for others. Two modes (*ma'refah*): according to one, It is positive (*wujub*) in one plane and negative in the other, while, according to the other, the position is reversed. With regard to Its Self (*nafs*), It is simple, with regard to Its form, It is compound, with regard to Its essence, It is unique, with regard to Its emanation, It is light, and with regard to its indivisibility, It is darkness, and still It is beyond what we have said about It."[14]

It is clear that according to al-Jili reality is one[15] and belongs to divine Substance (*jauhar*) which has two different aspects: God and the world. Multiplicity is only subjective and relative. "You can say what you like. You are at liberty to say the circle [of reality] is God and its inside is the world or that the circle is the world and its inside is God. It is God as well as the world."[16] "You should know that knowledge of that lofty essence is that you should realize through mystic experience that you are He and He is you. This is neither union (*ittihad*) nor incarnation (*hulul*), for the slave is slave and the Lord is Lord: the slave does not become Lord, or the Lord a slave."[17]

A true mystic or the perfect man is able to realize in his super-sensuous experience that multiplicity is only a subjective way of look at things; otherwise reality that underlies it is one.[18] What we call the world is nothing but the manifestation of God. In another place, he says, "Just as God was present in eternity in the Dark Mist (*'Ama'*) which is also called Reality or realities, Hidden Treasures and White (Pure) Chrysolite, so is He present now in all the things of the phenomenal world without incarnation (*hulul*) and mixture (*imtizaj*). He is manifested in the parts and atoms of the phenomenal world without becoming many."[19]

Like ibn ‘Arabi, he deals with the problem of transcendence and immanence as differentiating attributes of the essence which correspond to the twin characteristics of God and the world. Immanence (*tashbih*) is the form of divine beauty which is manifested in all things to the phenomenal world without any distinction.[20] The Christians are right when they say that Jesus, Mary, and the Holy Ghost are all manifestations of God, but they are wrong when they limit this manifestation to three persons only. As a matter of fact, God is immanent in the whole world.[21] Any belief about reality that ignores any of these two characteristics, transcendence and immanence, is defective and wrong as is the case with Christianity for instance.

Transcendence (*tanzih*), when applied to God, implies that, in spite of His manifestation in all things, He is above and beyond all of them. But this sort of transcendence, according to al-Jili, is related to immanence and, therefore, does not fully represent the true essence which is characterized by what he calls essential which none claim to understand. He is, therefore, above even the transcendence which is asserted of Him in correlation with His Immanence.[22]

Name (*ism*) is that which specifies the named in the understanding, pictures it in the mind, brings it in imagination, arranges it in thought, preserves it in memory, and presents to the intellect. A man who does not know the named gets its knowledge through the name. The name and the named are related to each other as outside to inside (*zahir* to *batin*) but in fact both are identical. There are some names the named of which do not exist in actual reality, as, for instance, *‘anqa’* which exists only in name. *‘Anqa’* and Allah stand at opposite poles, while the object of *‘anqa’* is non-Being, the object of Allah is Absolute Being. We can reach knowledge of God through divine names and attributes or through the name of Allah which comprises in itself all names and attributes. Names are of two kinds: (1) of the essence, e.g. one (*ahad*), single (*wahid*), unique (*fard*), etc., and (2) of the attributes, e.g. knowledge, power, mercy, etc.[23]

An attribute of a thing is that which leads one to the knowledge of its state. This distinction between attributes and essence is operative only in the sphere of the phenomenal world. “Everything in the phenomenal world which is qualified by an attribute demands that the attribute should be other than the thing, because it is subject to division and multiplicity. At the same time it demands that the attribute should be identical with it. We say that man is a rational man. It means that animality is a separate entity and so is rationality a thing different from man. But it also means that rationality and animality are both identical with man, because he is composed of both and is nothing beyond them. With regard to division, the attributes of a creature are different from its essence, while with regard to arrangement (*tarkib*) they are identical with it. But in God, this otherness disappears, for division and multiplicity does not apply to Him. His attributes are his essence and the two are identical.”[24]

Thus, according to al-Jili, the material world is not a non-reality, a *maya*, but a reality which expresses the outward form of the Real. Plurality and division in the external world are the manifestations of the divine essence as attributes which are in the last analysis identical with it. If we do not accept this view

of identity, the universe would not, according to him, lead to the essence.

In the 57th chapter of *Insan–i Kamil*, al–Jili says explicitly that thought or idea is the material of the universe. “Thought is the life of the spirit of the universe...Existence is nothing but a thought. Thought is the origin and the source of being (*wujud*) and is the essence in which God is completely manifested. Do you not see your belief about God as having names and attributes which pertain to Him? Where is the locus of the belief (i.e. the universe) in which God has manifested Himself for you? It is nothing but thought.”[25] Later on, he asserts that Being (*wujud*), as a matter of fact, is nothing but “a thought within a thought within a thought.”[26] Thus by identifying attributes and essence, he is able to give reality to the physical world of nature which to the mystic becomes a source of the direct knowledge of God.

Among the important divine attributes he mentions divinity (*ilahiyyah*), mercifulness (*rahmaniyyah*), and lordship (*rububiyyah*). Divinity is the sum of all the realities (i.e. all individualities) of Being and their maintenance in their respective positions (*maratib*) within the whole. It is the rank of God as Necessary Being. “You should know that Being and non–Being are two opposites, and the sphere of divinity comprises both. It is a sum of two pairs of contradictories: eternal and created (*hadith*), God and the world, Being and non–Being. At this stage God appears in the form of the world and the world in the form of God.”[27]

Divinity is the highest manifestation of the essence and is invisible, while its effects in the form of nature are visible everywhere. Essence is visible to the eye but its locus is not fixed or visible; we see it manifested but cannot describe its quality. Take the example of man. He is characterized by some attributes, all of which never come within the compass of our comprehension, though we see man all right. It means that essence is visible while its attributes are not. Of the latter we see nothing but effects. For instance, we see the marching forward on the part of a generous man. “Marching forward, and “giving alms” are not bravery and generosity respectively, but only the effects of these attributes.[28]

Mercifulness (*rahmaniyyah*) is the manifestation of the essence in the realities of names and attributes. It refers only to the creative and not to the creaturely attributes, while *ilahiyyah* refers to both. In this respect, mercifulness appears to be higher in scale than divinity, as sweetness of sugar does with regard to the sugar cane. If you prefer sweetness to the sugar cane, mercifulness is better than divinity, but if looking at the generality and comprehensive character of the sugar cane, you prefer it to sweetness, then divinity will be prior in rank. The name that manifests itself in this rank is that of *Rahman* (the Merciful) which includes both the attributes of the essence as oneness (*ahadiyyah*), uniqueness (*wahdiyyah*), eternity (*samadiyyah*), etc. and attributes of His Self which are seven, viz. life, knowledge, power, will, speech, hearing, and sight.[29]

The first mercy of God was the creation of the universe from His own Self.[30] His manifestation permeated all existents and His perfection appeared in every atom and particle. In spite of manifestation in the many, He does not become many but remains One as His nature demands. The nature of His permeation is that He created the world out of His Self which is not divisible.

God is the substance (*hayula*) of the universe.[31] In order to clarify his position, al-Jili gives the example of water and ice. God is like water which is the reality of ice and the world is like ice which is nothing but water (i.e. God) in a congealed form. The use of the term "ice" is only metaphorical and secondary, and not real. For the world and God are identical. "The world is nothing but ice, and ice, according to our opinion, is nothing but water. Or belief is that ice and water are identical."[32]

God permeates the whole of existence through His name *Rahman* and this permeation is neither incarnation (*hulul*) nor contact, for both these conceptions imply duality; as a matter of fact, He is consubstantial with existents (*'ain al-maujudat*).

Lordship (*rububiyyah*) is the name of the rank which demands those names that require the being of the existents and comprehends such names as the knower (*'alim*), the hearer (*sami'*), the seer (*basir*), the self-subsisting (*qayyum*), and the willing (*murid*). Each name under this category demands its logical correlate. The knower implies the object known and willing implies the objects towards which the will is directed.[33]

There are four kinds of attributes: beauty (*jamal*), perfection (*kamal*), majesty (*jalal*), and essence (*dhat*).

Every divine name and attribute has its effect which reflects one of the three: beauty, majesty, or perfection. All existents absolutely reflect all the names and attributes of beauty and some of the names and attributes of absolute beauty, while hell is the manifestation of absolute majesty. The perfect man alone is the complete manifestation of all these divine names and attributes.

Al-Jili then deals with the ten main attributes: life, knowledge, will, power, speech, hearing, sight, beauty, majesty, perfection, even though they are so innumerable that none can comprehend them in their entirety.[34]

1. Life

Complete life is the existence of a thing for itself, while incomplete or relative life is its existence for another. God exists for Himself, is living (*hay*) and, therefore, His life is complete and not subject to death. All creatures live for God and, therefore, their life is relative and hence subject to decay and death. Life of God as manifested in created beings (*khalq*) is one and complete and yet the creatures receive it in different degrees. In some, this life appears in tis complete form as, for instance, in the perfect man and the exalted angels and those things which are not composed of material elements, as the Exalted Pen, the Preserved Tablet, etc. In others, this life appears in its real form but is incomplete, as, for instance, in animal, man, lower angel, and *jinn*, because though each of them lives for his own self and knows that he exists and possesses different attributes, yet his existence is not real, for he is far removed from the sources of life. In others, as in animals, life does not appear in its real form. There are others for whom life has lost its real significance and, therefore, they live for others and for themselves as, for instance, plants, minerals, etc.

Everything existent is alive, for existence by itself implies life, through different things manifest it in various degrees; some enjoy complete life while others have imperfect life. But if we look at the matter from the transcendental point of view, life of everything is complete, though there seems to be a quantitative difference due to the inherent capacity of the thing itself. Life as such is a fountain, a unity, a substance, existent in everything by its own perfection and is not subject to diminution or division.

The essence of a thing is its life, that is, life of God, whereby everything subsists. The life of things with regard to themselves is created (*hadith*) but in relation to God it is eternal (*qadim*), for the life of a thing is in reality His life. "You should know that forms, shapes, actions, words, minerals, and plants to which we attribute 'existence' possess like man complete life by themselves and for themselves. But because most people do not know this fact, we include them in a category lower than that in which they should be placed. As a matter of fact, everything possesses being for itself and complete life with which it speaks, hears, sees, understands, and has power and will of its own and does what it wishes to do. This fact has been learned by me from direct revelation in mystic experience."[35] In other words, everything, material as well as non-material, is, according to al-Jili, self-determined, and possesses a unique individuality of its own.

2. Knowledge

Of all the attributes, knowledge is nearer to life as life is nearer to essence. Every living thing (or everything, for, according to him, everything has life) possesses knowledge in one form or another. The first form of knowledge is instinctive or what he calls inspirational (*'ilm-i ilhami*), possessed even by animals. The other is clear, necessary, or inferential knowledge possessed by man, angels, and *jinn*. Life and knowledge are correlated and each demands the other.

Al-Jili holds that knowledge by which God knows Himself and knowledge by which He knows the objects of the universe are one and the same and there can be no division or difference in the two. According to ibn 'Arabi, God's knowledge of the objects is dependent on what they (objects) give of themselves to Him. Commenting on the Qur'anic verse (3:178), "Verily God is not unjust to His servants," ibn 'Arabi says, "No, I dealt with them only according as I knew them, and I knew them only by what they 'gave' me of themselves of what they themselves really are."[36]

Similarly, discussing the problem of creation, ibn 'Arabi says that when God says "Be" to a thing, it is not God's will that brings a thing into existence because God wills nothing and commands nothing the existence of which is not made necessary by the very nature and laws of things themselves.[37] Thus, according to him, God's will and knowledge are both dependent on the nature of the objects. Al-Jili rejects this view as wrong. God's knowledge of objects, according to him, is totally independent of the objects themselves.

It is true, he says, and that God's decree (*hukm*) with regard to a thing is determined by what its essence demands it to be, but it is wrong to infer from this that God's knowledge of objects is thereby determined

by the nature of the objects themselves. As a matter of fact, the objects demanded of Him that very thing which He knew by His universal, essential, and fundamental knowledge before they were brought into existence. God's knowledge of objects is determined not by the necessity or demand of those objects but by its own inner demand.[38]

3. Will

God's knowledge manifests itself according to the demands of His essence and it is will which gives existence to His objects of knowledge as His Knowledge demands. Our created will is identical with God's will, but when attributed to us it becomes temporal, while attributed to God it is eternal, just as Being when attribute to us is created (*makhluq*) and when attributed to God is eternal.

Here again he disagrees with ibn 'Arabi, according to whom God is nothing but the name of immutable laws which operate in the universe. "Ibn 'Arabi rules out not only the individual freedom of man, but that of God's will, as well. God does not will in the sense that he chooses, but in the sense that He decrees what He knows will take place. That the thing or action which God has decreed should take place depends entirely on its own necessary laws."[39]

But, according to al-Jili, just as God is free and undetermined in His knowledge, so His will is absolutely undetermined and uncaused. God's will operates in every form and shape without any cause or condition; it is absolutely God's free act. He says that, according to ibn 'Arabi, it is wrong to call God free (*mukhtar*), for He does not operate in the universe by His free-will, His actions are determined by the necessity and nature of the objects. But, according to al-Jili himself, God operates in the universe through His free-will and is not determined by any necessity external to Him.[40]

4. Power

It is an attribute of the essence which brings objects of knowledge into the world of actuality. Power is the creation or bringing into existence of objects from the state of non-Being.

Here, again, he controverts the position of ibn 'Arabi according to whom there is no creation at all. The objects of the physical world existed from eternity as objects of God's knowledge. What we usually call creation is nothing but manifestation of these already existing objects of knowledge on a different plane. There is no question of temporal priority or posteriority nor is there any creation *ex nihilo* at all.[41] Al-Jili does not accept this position in *toto*.
He says that it is true that creation means the coming into actual existence of things which are previously the objects of God's consciousness.[42] But ibn 'Arabi, according to him, forgot to note the fact that God's existence was prior to the existence of latent realities, things as objects of His consciousness (*a'yan al-thabitah*), and at this stage the things were non-existent and there was in existence nothing but Allah to whom alone we can attribute eternity (*qidam*). It follows that He created the objects of His consciousness from non-existence (*'adam*).

Allah is essence is independent and His being is first only as a matter of rank (*rutbah*); creatures are dependent on Him and, therefore, their being is posterior in the same sense. The creatures are non-being with reference to the First Being. There is no lapse of time between the non-existence of things and their becoming objects of God's consciousness.[43] The question of priority is only logical and not temporal.

The same line of argument is presented in discussing the nature of eternity (*azal*) and everlastingness (*abad*). Eternity is of two kinds. One is the eternity of a created thing. It refers to the time when it had no being. Eternity of one creature is different from the eternity of others. For instance, eternity of inorganic matter is different from that of organic substances, for it is prior to the latter. We can, therefore, speak of eternity with reference to the organic substances when the inorganic substances were in existence and had not yet developed and evolved into organic form; it does not, however, imply any temporal priority.

The other is absolute eternity which belongs only to God who is above Being and non-Being. God's eternity has no relation whatsoever with that of the creatures because He is (logically) prior to them. We cannot say, as ibn 'Arabi, for instance, holds, that in the state of absolute eternity the world existed, if not objectivity, as the object of God's knowledge, for if we accept this position, we would be bound to regard the verse (76:1) in support of his thesis, "Has there not been over a man a long period of time when he has nothing – to be spoken of?"

Al-Jili holds that time (*dahr*) in this context means Allah and a portion of time (*hin*) is one of His manifestations when man had no being, either as an intelligible (*'ilmi*, i.e. an object of God's consciousness in the form of latent reality) or an actual reality (*'aini*). The part of the verse "nothing – to be spoken of" signifies that he did not form the content of God's mind.[44]

Similarly, when we apply everlastingness to God, it is logical and not temporal. "Eternity and everlastingness are only logical determinations and not temporal events in reference to God." "These two, i.e., eternity and everlastingness with their temporal implications, have been employed only to clarify the real existence of God (in relation to the world), otherwise (as a matter of fact) there is neither temporal eternity nor everlastingness. Time has no reference or significance in relation to God."[45]

Difference between eternity and everlastingness is that eternity refers to the logical priority of God, while everlastingness means that He was never non-existent nor in need of an efficient causality for His Being. We apply to Him the term "everlastingness" only for understanding His eternity, otherwise ascription of temporal priority and posteriority to Him as related to the world is out of the question. Temporality (*huduth*) implies that things, although they have been in the knowledge of God since eternity, in respect of their existence are created things.[46]

5. Speech (Kalam)

Speech is a reflection of the Being of God, it is an over-flowing or emanation (*faid*) from the essence of

God. It is an intelligible epiphany. It manifests itself in two directions. The first is of two kinds. (a) The kind of speech (*kalam*) issues forth from God's position of power (*'izzah*) which must be obeyed by all. The Qur'anic verse 41:11, refers to this fact.[47] (b) The second kind of speech issues forth from the position of Lordship in the language of the people such as the revealed books. In this case, the question of obedience and disobedience arises. Some obey while others disobey the injunctions contained in them.

The second significance (direction) of speech is metaphysical and is the basis of the doctrine of Logos. The Word of God is the reality of the existents and every existent is a Word of God. Al-Jili refers to the Qur'anic verse, "If the sea were ink for the Words of my Lord, the sea would surely be consumed before the Words of my Lord are exhausted" (18:109). Thus, Nature is the materialization of the Word of God and exists in its physical form. It is the objective and material of the contents of God's consciousness, the physical shape that the objects of His knowledge, called *a'yan al-thabitah*, assume.[48]

6. Hearing is Divine Epiphany

It is an attribute of His essence which His perfection demands. He hears the words of His own consciousness as well as those of His manifestations (*shu'un*). The second hearing (of the manifestations) is the demand of His names and attributes which are to be manifested in the physical world. It is revelation of Himself to Himself in the state of self-consciousness.[49]

7. Sight

The attribute of sight with reference to seeing the object of knowledge is nothing but God as He is in His essence, and the same is the case with His attribute of knowledge. With regard to the epiphany of knowledge which is the originator of the universe, it is the revelation of the attribute of knowledge from Himself to Himself, while the epiphany of *'ain*, which is the objective physical world, is the manifestation of the attributes of seeing, and both are identical with His essence. Seeing and knowing are two different attributes and yet, with reference to His essence, they are one: His seeing is His knowing. When the things were on the plane of the unseen, they were the objects of His knowledge, when they appeared on the plane of existence; they became the objects of His hearing.[50]

8. Beauty

It is of two kinds. The first is real and is reflected in the "beautiful names" in which God sees Himself. The second is sensory and reflected in the physical created world. He is the absolute beauty, and reveals Himself in its different manifestations.

9. Majesty is Beauty in its Intense Form

Beauty signifies His exalted attributes, while majesty is His essence as manifested in His names and attributes.

10. Perfection is the name of Divine Essence which is perfectly unknowable

All attributes of God are identical with His essence and not added to it and so perfection is His by His very nature.[51]

Self-revelations of the One

The ultimate Reality, according to al-Jili, is One which manifests itself in the multiplicity of forms without thereby becoming many. The state of the One before It revealed Itself is called, after ibn 'Arabi, blindness (*al-'Am'*). The term was adopted from a prophetic tradition. The Holy Prophet was once asked about the place of God before creation. He answered that God was in *'Ama'*. On the basis of this simple answer, ibn 'Arabi and al-Jili have built a super-structure of their pantheistic systems.

The essence is Absolute Being in which all relations, modes, and directions disappear. As such it cannot be called a necessary or eternal being for this implies determination of one sort or another. It is even above the characterization of absoluteness.[52] Al-Jili calls this essence *'Ama'* and describes it as essence in its inwardness. It is like a flint which hides fire in its innermost recesses. Though sometimes fire is revealed, yet it remains hidden within it. It is the Reality of realities which is above the distinction of God (*Haqq*) and the world (*khalq*), beyond the determinations of names and attributes.[53]

It is the one epiphany which has no relation whatsoever with "other.' In spite of this, it comprises within itself all (later) manifestations or revelations which are present in it only potentially like stars in the light of the sun. In this epiphany of essence, God knows nothing but Himself, while in other epiphanies He knows Himself as well as others.[54]

This state of blindness is related to the Absolute Oneness (*ahadiyyah*), in both of which names and attributes are annihilated and nothing is manifested, with the difference that in the former the inward aspect is emphasized, while in the latter its outward aspect takes its form. *'Ama'*, with regard to inwardness and occultation or hiddenness, is the essence, while Absolute oneness with regard to God's manifestation to Himself in His mind (*nafs*) in which all relations are negated.[55]

Absolute Oneness denotes that the Pure Being is about to start on the process of descent, coming down towards manifestation.[56] This is the first stage of the descent or self-revelation of the essence from the darkness of *'Ama'* to the light of manifestations. At this stage, unity is complete and all multiplicity is negated, although it resides in it; it is divested of all attributes, names, relations, and modes, and yet they all lie hidden in its innermost being. Its apparent unity is identical with its hidden plurality. It is like a wall when seen from a distance.

Although it is composed of different constituents like bricks, mortar, etc., and is, thus, a plurality, yet it shows itself to an observer as a unity which has a peculiar existence of its own and is not merely a conglomeration of different parts. It is the first self-revelation of the One and is above the distinctions of God and the world. No one can claim to receive illumination from the One at this stage, for it is beyond

all multiplicity; what we experience is really unity in its second stage, *Rabb* or Allah.[57]

The unity (*ahadiyyah*) of God at a particular stage of manifestation spreads out into a pair of opposites which later on are reunited at the stage of uniqueness or simple oneness (*wahdiyyah*). The intervening stage between *ahadiyyah* and *wahdiyyah* is represented by He-ness (*huwiyyah*) and I-ness (*aniyyah*).[58]

Ibn 'Arabi employs the term *huwiyyah* (He-ness) as equivalent to divine essence.[59] But for al-Jili this He-ness is a stage removed from the essence. It is derived from the pronoun *huwa* (he) which refers to the "absent one" (*aha'ib*) and, therefore, refers to the essence of God from which names and attributes are absent, that is, to His unity which negates the many. It is the inward aspect of the unity which informs us about its inwardness (*batin*) and absence (*ahaibubiyyah*). It is the inmost consciousness of Allah.[60]

Aniyyah (I-ness) is the outward aspect of unity in which One blossoms froth into multiplicity. *Zahir* (outward) and *batin* (inward) are not two different aspects of the One but only Its different views; as a matter of fact, the outward and the inward are identical. He-ness and I-ness, outwardness and inwardness refer to the reality which is signified by the name Allah because *ilahiyyah* is a sum of contradictories.[61]

The stage of self-revelation called simple Oneness (*wahdiyyah*) is the manifestation of the essence in which all different attributes are gathered together. Here everything is One and many, many is One and One many.

At this stage, essence is manifested as attribute and attribute as essence. Every attribute is identical with the other, as generosity is with revengefulness, for both are identical with (and *'ain* of) Allah. In *ahadiyyah*, there is no manifestation of names and attributes and the Real is the pure essence. In *wahdiyyah*, names and attributes as well as their traces and effects are fully manifested, but they are not separate from the essence; here every attribute is identical with (the *'ain* of) the other. In *ilahiyyah* names and attributes are manifested but are distinguished one from the other and are even contradictory to one another.[62]

Ascent of the Soul

The different grades of the self-revelations of the One are only a logical description of how, according to al-Jili, the Real, i.e., God, manifests Himself in nature and man. It is man in whom He becomes self-conscious and who realizes the ultimate truth that there is no multiplicity or division, for reality is one. But, as al-Jili says, this realization does not dawn on him all of a sudden. It is not possible for man to realize and comprehend all the divine realities at the time of birth. He ascends to the truth only by gradual stages.[63] Al-Jili enumerates four different stages which man has to traverse before he is able to achieve unity with the source and origin of life, the One.

1. Illumination of Action

At this stage man feels that God permeates all objects of the world; it is He who moves them and is ultimately responsible for their rest. The power of performing action is attributed by al–Jili to God only and man is looked upon as devoid of all power or will. He enumerates several degrees and grades of this stage. There are some who first see the divine will and then look to the action and, thus, they are made to realize the conflict between God's will and religious injunctions. There are some who follow His will, although thereby they violate His order (*amr*). With regard to the first, i.e. will, they are obedient, while, with regard to the second, they are classed among the disobedient. Al–Jili leaves the problem unsettled by asking the question, "Is it better for man, in order to win God's favour, to put on the dress of disobedience for the sake of fulfilling God's will or to put on the dress of obedience and defy thereby His will, though, as a matter of fact, only that happens which is according to the will of God?"[64]

2. Illumination of Names

When a mystic receives illumination from any one of the divine names, his being is completely submerged under the light of the name. Both are greatly identified that when anyone calls God by that name the response comes from the mystic. The result is that he comes to realize his unity with the Real. "Anyone who calls Laila (my beloved) by her name receives answer from me; when anyone calls me, then Laila answers on my behalf. We are one soul though in two different bodies or us two are like a person who in essence is one but has two names. As a matter of fact, we are not two persons that have become one, bur are one; the lover is the beloved.

Al–Jili enumerates several grades and degrees of this illumination, all of which are based on his mystical experiences. Other people may arrive at a different set of stages on the basis of their mystical experience. The first is the illumination of the name Eternal (*Qadim*). Here God reveals to man his position as he existed before the creation of the world in the consciousness of God (i.e. as *'ain al–thabitah*). His physical existence vanishes.

As the knowledge of God is eternal, so are the objects of His knowledge. This being so, the man who receives illumination from the name Eternal *ipso facto* loses his temporality and becomes as eternal as his latent reality (*'ain al–thabitah*). He who receives the epiphany of the name *al–Haqq* (the Truth) realizes the hidden truth contained in the Qur'anic verse (15:85), "We created the heavens, the earth, and whatever is in them with truth." For him the phenomenal world ceases to exist and only the essence, devoid of all attributes and relations, remains. There are others who receive epiphany of the name *al–Ahad* (the One). God reveals to them the true nature of the phenomenal world and they realize in their mystic revelation that this world is a reflection (*buruz*) of His essence and is related to Him as waves to the sea. In this state the mystic sees the One in the many; rather, the many disappear altogether and only the One remains as the Real.

Al–Jili sums up his position in these words, "I lost my (separate) being (*wujud*). On my behalf He

represented me; rather, He was I and I, He. Being was one and there was no conflict or difference. I was annihilated and achieved abiding life (*baqa'*) with Him and in Him, and all the veils of difference and dualities were removed. I raised my self (*nafs*), the veil was lifted and I awoke as if I had not fallen asleep. With the eyes of reality I found myself as *Haqq*. Then His attributes became my attributes and myself (*dhat*) His essence. As a matter of fact, my name is His name and the name of his essence is my name.

There are some who receive light (*tajalli*) from the name *al-Rahman* (the Merciful). At this stage, the mystic receives illumination gradually and turn by turn from all the divine names and is illumined according to the capacity of the light inherent in his nature. Then the name *Rabb* (Nourisher) and all other names that are related to it like *'Alim* (Knower), *Qadir* (Powerful), etc. descend on him. This process goes on until he is illumined by all the names. Last of all comes the epiphany of the Name *Qayyum* (Self-Subsisting). This is the final stage after which the mystic passes on to the next higher stage of the illumination of divine attributes.[65]

3. Illumination of Attributes

At this stage, the self (*nafs*) and existence (*wujud*) of the mystic are annihilated. When the light of slavehood (*'abdiyyah*) and the spirit of creatureliness in him pass away, God substitutes in his body, in place of the thing that has been snatched away, a spiritual substance of His own essence without incarnation. This spiritual substance, called the Holy Spirit (*Ruh al-Quds*), becomes an inalienable part of his self. God's epiphany to man in this state means His epiphany to His own Self, we call man slave, though, in reality, and there is no distinction between Lord and slave. When slave disappears, his logical correlate, Lord, must also disappear. The creatures are like waves which, though many, are parts of the sea. If the sea is in motion, it is all waves; when it is calm, there are neither waves nor number (i.e. multiplicity)."

He enumerates several grades of this illumination which different people attain according to their inborn capacities and the magnitude of their knowledge of the power of their will. When a person is illumined by the divine attribute of life, he feels that he is the sole source of life as manifested in all the creatures in different proportions. Al-Jili says that when he was at this stage he felt that he was life itself, one and indivisible.

When a mystic is illumined by the attribute of knowledge or sight, he knows the reality of everything that was, is and will be and sees everything, even the unknown of the unknown (*ghaib al-ghaib*). When he is illumined by the attribute of hearing, he hears the speech of every creature: minerals, plants, animals and angels.

Some receive the light of the attribute of speech (*kalam*). In this condition, the recipient looks upon all existents as God's Word. Sometimes he hears the Words of God without a veil of names, without any direction, without the help of any bodily organ. This hearing of God's words cannot be described in usual

physical terms, for the ear does not play any part in it. In this state man attains a very high position. He is addressed by God as His lover and beloved. "You are My mouth among My people. You are My inmost secret and the best reflection of My life. You are My name, My person (*dhat*), My attribute. You are the epitome and the (final) object of existence and creation (*huduth*). If there had been no Lord (*Rubb*), there would have been no slave. You manifested Me as I manifested you. You brought me into existence, as I created you. If you had not been existent, I would not have been existent. My lover, I am the (hidden) meaning of you and you are the (apparent) manifestation of Me."

A man who reaches this stage receives God's Word according to his capacity. When carried to the Highest Tree (*sidrat al-muntaba*) he is addressed by God. Then he sees light in the heart and is convinced by its very brilliance that its source is God. He is told, "My friend, your I-ness (*aniyyah*) is my He-ness (*huwiyyah*). 'You' is identical with 'I.' Your simplicity is My compositeness and your compositeness is My simplicity. You are a point (centre) round which the circle of existence revolves, and in that circle you are the worshipper as well as the worshipped; you are the light, the manifestation, the beauty."

Some are illumined by the divine attribute of will. At this stage the illumined person sees that everything in the world is subject to his will. Some are illumined by the attribute of power. At this stage, which al-Jili claims to have reached, he heard the ringing of bells, his whole physical body seem to have been torn asunder and his existence changed into non-being. He experienced here darkness upon darkness until by the grace of God he was relieved of all this and came upon light. At this stage, the illumine one gets extra-ordinary spiritual powers, a thing comes into existence at his bidding. The last stage is the illumination of the attribute of divinity (*ilahiyyah*), where two contradictory positions seem to be reconciled and incorporated into the world as true and yet he looks upon all of them (including Islam) as false, for, according to him all Muslims, believers, gnostics and the righteous ones are on the wrong path and he does not accept the opinion of any but the perfect Sufi (*muhaqqiq*) as true.66

4. Illumination of the Essence

When God reveals Himself to man through this epiphany, man dies to himself and, in place of that, receives from God a divine substance (*latifah ilahiyyah*) which is either attributive (*sifati*) or essential (*dhati*). When this substance is essential, i.e. when man is illumined by divine essence, he truly becomes a perfect man.67

Doctrine of Logos and the Perfect Man

According to al-Jili there are three metaphysical categories: (1) Absolute Being which is completely unknowable. It is the essence above all kinds of determinations, relations, and modes.68 (2) The reality viewed as *Haqq*, the aspect of He-ness or Divinity. (3) The reality viewed as *khalq*, the aspect of I-ness, or humanity. Ultimate Reality is One, but it appears in two different aspects of God and man (*Haqq* and *khalq*).69 Sometimes he expresses this doctrine in a form which most Western writers (like Nicholson)

construe to be the acceptance of the Christian doctrine of Trinity. Al-Jili says, "Essence has two aspect: 'You' and 'I'...'You" refers to your He-ness (*huwiyyah*); 'I' refers to my reality...'I,' as 'I'-ness, is God and 'You' in its creaturely aspect is man. You make look at yourself as 'I or as 'You'; in reality, there is nothing here except the Universal Reality."[70]

Later on, al-Jili says, "In itself the essence is one. If you say it is one, it is true. And if you say, it is two, and then it is, as a matter of fact, two. If you say, 'No, it is three,' you have spoken the truth." Explaining it further, he says, "Look at His oneness (*ahadiyyah*) which is His essence and here He is one (*wahid*) and unique. If you look at Him with regard to the two aspects of Creator and creature, Lord and slave (*Rabb* and *'abd*), He is two. And if you look at His real nature and at that wherein two contraries are gathered together, you will be amazed. You will not be able to call His loftiness lowly and His lowliness lofty. You will have to fix a third name to illustrate His nature which is characterized by the two attributes. This third thing is that whose name is Ahmad with reference to the celestial sphere and Mohammad with reference to the terrestrial sphere.[71] This is the doctrine of Logos or the perfect man which he discusses in detail in the 60th chapter of his book.

The perfect man, according to him, is the Pole (*Qutb*) on which the sphere of existence revolves from first to last. He has been one and unchangeable since being came into existence. He is dressed in different ways and in each guise he has a different name. His real name is Mohammad. In every age he has a name which is most suitable for that time. Referring to his personal experience he says that he had a chance of seeing him (i.e. Mohammad as a perfect man) in the form of his Sheikh, Sharf al-Din al-Jabrati, at Zabid in 796/1393, though he did not know at the time that he was Mohammad. The Holy Prophet, as a matter of fact, in his capacity as the perfect man, has the power of assuming different forms.

When the mystic observes him in the form which he possessed in his earthly life, he calls it the form of Mohammad. But when he (the mystic) sees him in some other form, though he knows that it is in reality, Mohammad applies to nothing except the reality of Mohammad (*haqiqat al-Mohammadiyyah*). Al-Jili is, however, very careful to point out that this is not the doctrine of metempsychosis. Mohammad has the power, according to him, to manifest himself in different forms and he has been appearing in the form of the perfect man in every age. Such men are outwardly his (i.e. Mohammad's) vicegerents, while inwardly he constitutes their essence.[72] At another place, al-Jili calls Mohammad as "the heaven and the earth and the length and the breadth."[73]

The basic reality of Mohammad is present in all people in proportion to their inherent capacities. Saints and prophets all partake of it in different degrees, while Mohammad alone possesses it in its fullness and, therefore, according to al-Jili, nobody except he can be called a truly perfect man.[74] Different names and attributes are manifested individually and separately in different saints and prophets, but in the perfect man they are manifested in their totality.

The perfect man is the whole of reality in miniature; he is the microcosm who combines in himself the

inward and the outward aspects of reality. He is the copy of God as a tradition of the Prophet says, "Allah created Adam in His own image." God is living, knowing, mighty, willing, hearing, seeing, and speaking and so is the perfect man. Then there is the perfect man's he-ness (*huwiyyah*) as against God's He-ness (*huwiyyah*), I-ness (*aniyyah*) against I-ness, essence against essence, who against whole, universal against universal, particular against particular.[75]

The microcosmic character of the perfect man is further explained by al-Jili as follows, "The perfect man in his essence represents all the realities of existence. In his spirituality he corresponds to the spiritual realities and in his corporeality to the physical realities. His heart corresponds to the Throne of God (*al-'arsh*),[76] his *aniyyah* to the Heavenly Chair (*kursi*),[77] his mind to the Exalted Pen (*al-qalam al-a'la*),[78] his soul to the Guarded Tablet (*al-lauh al-mahfuz*),[79] his nature to physical elements, his potentialities to *hayula*, etc., etc. In short, every faculty of the perfect man corresponds to different manifestations in the physical world."[80]

According to al-Jili, there are three stages (*barzakh*) of development for the perfect man. In the first stage called beginning (*bada'ah*) the perfect man becomes endowed with divine names and attributes. In the intermediary stage (*tawassut*) he is able to grasp both divine and human realities. When he is able to acquire all that is possible to do at this stage, he gets knowledge of all hidden things and becomes aware of the secrets of the unseen world. In the third and final stage (*khitam*) he acquires creative power and is given full authority to manifest this power in the world of nature. "At this stage, there are only two things: he, the perfect man himself and God the Great."[81]

He is called "the guide" (*al-mehdi*) and the seal (*al-khatam*). He is the vicegerent to whom God refers in the story of Adam. All things are drawn towards him in obeying his order as an iron is attracted by the magnet. The entire world is subdued to his power and greatness, and he does what he wishes to do. Nothing remains hidden from or unknown to him. The saint (i.e. the perfect man) possesses the divine substance as simple essence (like God Himself) and is not limited by any rank (*martabah*) of Creator and creature,[82] and as such he is able to bestow on things what their nature demands without any lot or hindrance.[83]

Saint ship and Prophethood

Al-Jili quotes Sheikh 'Abd al-Qadir on the authority of ibn 'Arabi, "Oh prophets, you have been called prophets but we have received something which you did not get." Another mystic says, "We have dived in the river (saint ship) while the prophets are staying at its banks." Al-Jili remarks that there is truth in these statements, but a prophet as prophet is superior to a saint *qua* saint.[84]

Al-Jili regards prophethood as a developed stage of saint ship. The seventh stage of the spiritual development is nearness (*qurb*) which he calls great saint ship (*wilayat al-kubra*). It has four aspects. The first is friendship (*khullah*), the position attained by Abraham. The second is love (*hub*), where Mohammad was given the rank of a lover of God (*habib Allah*). The third is finality (*khatam*), the rank of

Mohammad (*maqam–i Mohammadi*) where the banner of Ahmad was hoisted for him. The last and fourth is the rank of slave hood (*'abdiyyah*) where God called him by the name of slave (*'abd*).85 In this rank he was made a prophet and sent with a message to the people.

Other people who succeed in attaining this rank are only entitled to be called slaves and they are the vicegerents of Mohammad on all planes (*hadarah*) of existence. There are some saints who have undergone spiritual discipline and attained perfection, but their objective is not the reform of the people. Such saints are prophets, but their prophethood follows from that of Mohammad. They are his brothers about whom there is reference in the following tradition, "I have a great regard for those of my brethren who will come after my death." These people are prophet–saints. The prophethood of these saints, according to al–Jili, is institutional (*tashr'i*) but that of nearness, propagation (of the message of the Holy Prophet), and enforcement of the divine Law. These prophet–saints receive their prophetic knowledge directly i.e. from the same source from which the prophets derive their knowledge.86

Al–Jili draws a distinction between saint ship (*walayah*), prophecy of saint ship (*nubuwwat al–wilayah*), and prophecy of institution (*nubuwwat al–tashri'*). Saint ship is a rank in which God reveals to a mystic His names and attributes through knowledge, state, and power and, thus, becomes his protector and friend (*mutawalli*). In the prophecy of saint ship, the perfect servant (*al–'abd al–kamil*) is commanded by God to turn his attention to the people so that he may reform them in the light of the divine Law towards a better moral and spiritual life. He who performed this task before Mohammad was an apostle (*rasul*) and he who undertook this work after him is his vicegerent, but in his missionary work he has no independent status; he is the follower of Mohammad, like such saints as Bayazid, Junaid, 'Abd al–Qadir Jilani, ibn 'Arabi, etc. He who enjoys an independent status and does not follow any other prophet belongs to the rank of prophecy of institution, but this has come to an end after the death of Mohammad.

Thus, saint ship represents a peculiar relation between the Lord and the servant, prophecy of saint ship is an aspect of the saint which is common between the Creator and the creature; prophecy of institution is an independent and permanent assignment, an apostleship is an aspect which refers to the relation between the (Lord's) servant and the creatures.

A prophet is a saint as well as a prophet, but the aspect of his saint ship is superior to the aspect of his prophecy, though every prophet–saint is superior to a saint.87 According to al–Jili, Mohammad is the final prophet because he did not leave any wisdom, guidance, knowledge, and secret unexplained. Whatever was necessary for the people to know and learn had been communicated by him. No Sufi saint can know or experience anything which was not experienced by him and, therefore, he cannot but follow him. "After Mohammad institutional prophethood came to an end."88

Psychology – Qalb

The term "heart" (*qalb*) is very often used by the mystics as the repository of the innermost secrets of divine knowledge. It is definitely not the physical organ of the human body but a symbolical term for the

rational or spiritual aspect of man. Following ibn ‘Arabi, al–Jili identifies it with the spirit of God which, according to the Qur’an, was breathed into Adam (15:29).

The heart (*qalb*) is the eternal light which was revealed in the essence (*‘ain*) of existents (i.e. in Mohammad or the perfect man), so that God may see man through it. It is the centre of God’s consciousness and the circumference of the circles of all existents. It symbolizes that which is described in the Qur’an as the light (24:35). It reflects all the divine names and attributes and yet at times it directs its attention to some particular name and then becomes a complete reflection of it.

The true nature of the heart is divine and pure.[89] But due to animal passions sometimes it loses this purity which, however, can be recovered after a period of physical and spiritual training, the duration of which varies according to the degree of influence of the animal passions. Al–Jili holds that certain men of eminence subjected themselves to a rigorous mystic discipline as a result of which they received divine illumination as a right and not as a favour. In his support he quotes a verse of Sheikh ‘Abd al–Qadir Jilani who says, “I continued grazing in the fields of *rida’* (submission to God’s will) and attained a rank which was the result not of God’s favour (but of my own efforts).”

Qalb is like a mirror to the realities of Being or it may be called the reflection of the universe. God says, “The sky and the earth do not contain Me, it is only the heart of My believing servant which can contain Me.” This statement, according to al–Jili, proves that the heart is primary and the universe is only secondary.

God’s comprehension by the heart is of three kinds: (a) by knowledge. Heart alone is able to comprehend and know God as He is. Other things can and do know God either in one or other of His aspects, but heart alone can know him in all–comprehensiveness. (b) By observation (*mushahadah*). Through this seeing (*kashf*) the heart observes the beauties of the face of Allah and enjoys the taste of His names and attributes. (c) By vicegerency. At this stage, man becomes a complete embodiment of divine names and attributes so much so that he feels his essence to be identical with divine essence. He then becomes God’s vicegerent.

Reason

There are three kinds of reason: the first intelligence (*‘aql al–awwal*), universal reason (*‘aql al–kulli*) and ordinary reason (*‘aql al–ma‘ash*). The first intelligence is the locus of the form of divine knowledge in existence and as such it is identical with the Exalted pen. It contains explicitly and analytically what is contained implicitly and synthetically in divine consciousness. It is the light of divine knowledge which became the first manifestation of the essence in the phenomenal world.[90]

Universal reason is the luminous percipient in which those forms of knowledge are made manifest which is deposited in the first intelligence. Al–Jili rejects the view of those who regard universal reason as the sum of reasons of all rational beings, for reason are a unit and a substance.

Ordinary reason is a light which is judged and measured by the laws of reflection. Its sphere of activity is confined only to one of the several aspects of the universal reason; it has no access to the first intelligence which is beyond logical inferences and is the sphere where sacred revelation takes place. Ordinary reason has only one scale, i.e., of nature, while knowledge gained through ordinary reason is of limited scope, fallible, and is mostly of the nature of conjecture. He relates the three reasons as follows: the first intelligence is like the sun, universal reason is like water which reflects the rays of the sun, while the ordinary reason is like the reflection of water which falls on a wall.[91]

Judgment (Wahm)

The *wahm* of Mohammad was created by God from His perfect light and, therefore, it was manifested in the phenomenal world in a perfect form. *Wahm* is the strongest faculty possessed by man because it over-powers reason, reflection, and imagination. It has, thus, the greatest capacity of (intellectual) apprehension and preservation. It has power and influence over all existence. It is through it that an intellectual person is able to acknowledge God and worship Him. It is the light of certitude and anyone who is able to attain supremacy over it becomes the master of the two universes, terrestrial and spiritual. But he who is over-powered by it becomes subject to darkness and bewilderment.[92]

Himmah is concentration of mind upon an object. It corresponds to what is usually called will or power of will. It is a very powerful faculty which, according to al-Jili, is always busy in the contemplation of God. If anybody decides to attain a particular objective and concentrates his will upon its attainment, he is sure to succeed in his aim. There are two necessary conditions for success, (a) determination in thought about the possibilities of the success or otherwise of the objective and then a conviction about the result, and (b) concentration of all effort on its achievement. If anybody fails to manifest this type of activity, he has no chance of success. In the beginning one encounters great difficulties and hindrances but, once they are overcome, man is on the verge of conquest of his self as well as of the physical universe.

Al-Jili makes a distinction between will (*himmah*) and attention (*hamm*). The object of the former is God and the spiritual world, while that of the latter is the physical world and pursuits related to it. But for a mystic it is not proper to stay at the stage of attention for long, because after some time it becomes a hindrance to future progress.[93]

Reflection (Fikr)

It is a key to the Unseen. According to al-Jili, there are two methods of approaching the Unseen: (a) pertaining to God, which is attained through divine names and attributes, (b) pertaining to the world which depends on realizing the true nature of man, all of whose aspects are ranged against the aspects of the Merciful. One of these aspects is reflection by which we can peep into the mysteries of the Unseen. When a man is able to attain perfection in the exercise of reflection, he sees spiritual objects in a physical garb.

This ascent (*'uruj*) is of two kinds: (1) One kind of ascent is achieved by traversing the path chalked out by the Merciful. The man who adopts it is on the straight path and attains creative powers. (b) The second kind of ascent is the "red magic" which is involved in thought and imagination and in which truth and falsehood are mixed together. It is the path of speculative thought which lands man in the morass of uncertainty and doubt.94

But it does not imply that the exercise of reflection should be condemned outright. Al-Jili admits that reflection has the potentiality of leading men astray from the right path, but he also suggests certain principles by following which it is possible for men to benefit from the light of reflection and save themselves from its pitfalls and darkness. The first principle, according to him, is reason (*'aql*), which is in perpetual quest, as well as the acquired experience the veracity of which has been testified by men in their mystic life. The second is *naql*, i.e. knowledge gained through a study of the Qur'an and Tradition, by which a man comes to believe in the reality of the Unseen. But if a man refuses to follow these principles and gives himself over to purely discursive reason, he is sure to be led astray.95

The Self (Nafs)

According to al-Jili, as the title of chapter 59 illustrates, self is the origin of Lucifer (*Iblis*) and other evil powers. But it does not imply that the origin of the self itself is evil, for, as al-Jili says, its origin is the spirit itself of Mohammad. "The self of Mohammad was created by God out of His own Self and the self of Adam was made a copy of the self of Mohammad." Later on, he says, "Allah created the self of Mohammad from His own essence and as his essence is the unity of two contraries, two contraries emanated from Him."

Satan was cursed for his act of disobedience but this curse, according to al-Jili, consisted in removing him from divine presence. The period of this separation is limited to the Day of Judgment after which he will be reunited with the divine presence. Thus, according to al-Jili, self is spiritual in origin and does not represent any evil power which is antagonistic to the forces of good. "The self is the inmost secret of the Lord and (a part of) His essence on account of which it has delights. It was created out of the light of attributes of Lordship and, therefore, possesses lordly qualities." Al-Jili, therefore, identifies self with the soul which was breathed into Adam and enumerates the following five stages of the development of the soul on the path of spiritual progress:

1. The animal soul is an aspect of the soul which governs the body.

2. The evil-prompting soul (*nafs al-ammarah*) is that aspect by which the soul is engrossed in fulfilling the demands of passions and, thus, becomes indifferent to divine commandments and prohibitions.

3. The inspired soul is that aspect by which human soul is directed and guided by God to do good action.

4. The self-reproaching soul is that aspect by which man is engaged in subduing his inclinations and

passions and in turning his attention to God.

5. The tranquil soul is that aspect because of which all evil inclinations are totally removed and man feels satisfied with God.

But beyond these five stages, there is a final stage where body is completely under the control of the soul and partakes of the knowledge of the Unseen and is able to fly over the earth, etc. At this stage man is characterized by God's attributes and becomes identical with His essence.[96]

Religion

A theory of life which is based on pantheism ends in a conception of religion which is universal. As the unity of Godhead is manifested in the multiplicity of divine names and attributes, so the basic urge of man to worship God takes various forms all of which are equally valid and right. He argues his case on the basis of certain verses of the Qur'an and traditions. He holds that all existent things are created for the purpose of divine worship. Everything by its state and activity, nay bit is very nature and attributes, actually does worship God and, therefore, all existents are servants or worshippers of God.

The forms of worship, however, due to differences in the nature of names and attributes, are different. Though humanity was originally and by nature one, yet due to differences resulting from the manifestations of diverse names, people adopted various pathways towards God – pathways which appeared right to the people and which God had decreed for them; for none follows a path except that which he wish them to follow and all paths are undoubtedly paths leading to Him as the following verse of the Qur'an indicates***, "There is no living creature but He has it in His control."*** (***11:56***).

Death is the extinguishing of the vital heat, while life is the soul's concentration on the body. The life of the body is maintained only so long as the soul continues to look at it. After death, the soul assumes a bodily form appropriate to it in accordance with the place it occupies. Some mystics wrongly deny resurrection of the body. Al-Jili believes on the basis of his personal experience and observation that bodies along with souls shall be resurrected.[97]

The stage intermediate between death and resurrection (*barzakh*) is an incomplete and non-permanent stage of life after death. It is a world of fantasy. There the people will meet with the forms appropriate to their actions. If a man had been doing good actions, he would experience different forms and shapes of these actions which would carry him progressively to better states. Similarly, an evil-doer would experience torments which will gradually increase in their intensity.

Al-Jili enumerates eight different levels of paradise the last of which, called the lauded station (*maqam al-mahmud*), and is meant for none but Mohammad. It is the paradise of the essence. Similarly, he describes seven different grades or levels of hell.

But after giving a graphic description of hell and heaven, al-Jili denies their existence as separate

localities. As the epiphanies of the Lord, they are on an equal level; the inmates of hell will receive tidings of punishment as the people of paradise will receive tidings of reward.[98] Hell is nothing but the natural darkness which is fire.[99] In the 59th chapter he discusses in detail the nature of Iblis and his manifestations and yet he asserts that Iblis is not an individual; it is only the personification of the evil aspect of man's nature.[100]

He tries to explain away the usual significance and nature of fire in hell. God will create in the people thrown into hell the power to bear punishment and, thus, this punishment will change into pleasure.[101] But even then this so-called punishment in hell will not last forever.

Al-Jili thinks that the beatific vision is the manifestation of God's *tajalli* and His nearness is not confined to the people of paradise or the so-called next world. Every individual, here in this life and in life after death, whether he is placed in hell or in paradise, continually receives God's *tajalli*; as a matter of fact, his existence is all due to it.[102]

According to al-Jili, God's will is absolutely free from external restraints; His actions are not determined by causes and conditions.[103] Man, on the other hand, according to him, is completely determined in his action.[104] He says that revealed books demand obedience, while people as a matter of fact act as they are determined by their nature. Freedom of choice (*ikhtyar*) is attributed to them only formally so that God's way to man may be justified.[105]

God's decree, according to al-Jili, is of two kinds. One is unchangeable and in conformity with the demands of the divine attributes and as such is not subject to change. The other kind of decree is that which takes place according to the law of nature as demanded by the inherent capacity of the existents. Decrees of the latter type sometimes do not come to pass due to the contingent character of the things of the world.

Al-Jili subscribes to the doctrine that Being as Being is good and evil is only relative and apparent. With regard to the Real, there is no distinction between good and evil, for everything without any distinction is the manifestation of the divine beauty and is as such good. Evil or defect in the phenomenal world is only due to certain relations. Fire is evil for a person who is burned but is good for the insect that lives in it and gets nourishment from it. In short, there is nothing in this world which is absolutely evil.[106]

Al-Jili holds that what is called sin or disobedience is, in one respect, obedience between God's will and His command as enunciated by ibn 'Arabi. Sometimes an action takes place in full conformity with God's will, though His command may be against its occurrence. In such a situation man is disobedient with regard to His command but obedient with regard to His will. This point of view affects al-Jili's treatment of Satan's role. God rebuked him for his disobedience but he neither repented nor bewailed nor tried to seek forgiveness, for only that comes to pass which is according to God's will.

Al-Jili enumerates seven stages in spiritual progress. The first is what he calls Islam which covers five principles: declaration of God's unity and Mohammad's prophethood, prayer, fasting, poor-tax and

pilgrimage.

The second stage is faith (*iman*). It is the first manifestation of the world of the Unseen and implies heart's acceptance of the truth thus revealed. It is something different from reason. Faith is not belief in a fact arrived at through discursive reasoning but acceptance without rational argumentation. Light of faith is superior to the light of reason. *Kalam* (scholastic theology) was invented to defend religion against disbelievers and innovators (*ahl al–bid'ah*). It never helps in producing faith in a person.

The third stage is called piety (*salah*) which results in good actions. But the motive is desire for divine rewards and safety from punishment. A person at this stage leads a life of obedience to the laws of the *Shari'ah* for the sake of his self.

The fourth stage is called *ihsan* where one observes the effects of divine names and attributes. Such a person does good actions not for the sake of his own self nor for rewards, but for his love for God.

The fifth stage is martyrdom (*shadadah*) which is of two kinds. The lower grade represents the death of a person in an epidemic or on a journey or in the battle–field for a righteous cause. The higher grade of martyrdom is to see the Real in every existent.

The sixth stage is called *siddiqiyyah* which is signified by the mystic saying, "He who knows his self knows the Lord." This stage has three different planes. The first is faith through knowledge or reason (*'ilm al–yakin*). The second is faith through personal experience and mystic *kashf* (*'ain al–yaqin*). The third is true and perfect faith (*haqq al–yaqun*). The mystic who has attained this stage of *siddiqiyyah* passes through all these planes of faith. In the first, he sees the Unseen and is able to observe with the light of faith those secret realities which are not open to the common people. Here he attains *fana'* and then reaches the stage of *baqa'* where he receives the *tajalli* of all divine names one after the other. He perceives the essence through names. This is the final plane of *'ilm al–yaqin*.

In the next plane, i.e. of *'ain al–yaqin*, he receives illumination from the divine attributes one by one until he feels himself one with the Real in Its aspect of attributes. He progresses gradually until names and attributes lose their significance for him. He attains gnosis of the essence and through it he is able to understand the operation of names and attributes. He now knows the essence through the essence. Thus, he reaches the third and the highest plane, i.e. *haqq al–yaqin*, which is the first step in the seventh stage of nearness (*qurb*).

Here man is able to manifest in his person different attributes of the Real, though this manifestation cannot be total and absolute. A person who is able to bring a dead man to life, for instance is manifesting a particular attribute of God, though in a limited form. He stands in nearness to God. The first step in this stage is the station of friendship where he is able to create through the word "Be" (*kun*) after the manner of God. In the words of a tradition, "God becomes the ears by which he hears, the eyes by which he sees, the tongue by which he speaks, the hands by which he holds, the feet by which he walks." The second step in this stage is the station of love where the lover and the beloved become one

and where the one represents the other. The last step in this stage is the station of *khitam* where the individual is characterized by the essence (*haqiqah*) of the Real. This station is beyond the reach of ordinary mortals.

C. Jami

'Abd al-Rahman Jami (817 – 898/1414 – 1492), a famous poet and great scholar, was the follower of ibn 'Arabi. His book, *Lawa'ih* (Flashes), is an exposition of the doctrine of the unity of Being. In the preface he states that this doctrine is the result of mystic experience of several eminent saints, but his role is that of a mere interpreter, for he has not undergone or experienced any mystic trances. He has only put in words what others had experienced at first hand.[107]

His statement of the theory follows the logical definition of the word "existence." Existence (or Being) is sometimes used as a universal concept which in logic is called "secondary concept" (*ma'qul-i thaniyyah*) and has no objective reality corresponding to it but which attaches itself to the quiddity (*mahiyyah*) of a thing mentally. Taking Being in this sense, several critics have raised an objection against ibn 'Arabi's state that God is the Absolute Being. According to them, abstract existence having no objective reality cannot be said to be the source of external reality. Jami, therefore, tries to defend ibn 'Arabi by saying that Being or existence has another sense.

When pantheists use the word "Being" (*wujud*), they refer to reality which exists by itself, and on which depends the existence of other beings. As a matter of fact, none exists except He and all objective existents are His modes.[108] But the truth of this statement, according to Jami, is verifiable not so much through reason as through mystic experience and intuition. The Absolute Being is called God who is the source of all that exists and yet is above all multiplicity. He transcends all manifestations and is unknowable.

Essence, pure and simple, is completely without any determinations and is above the distinctions of names, attributes, and relations. It is only when this essence descends towards manifestation that attributes such as knowledge, light, and existence makes their appearance. The essence is above all determinations but it is only when God is viewed by our human finite intellect that He is said to possess attributes.

Following ibn 'Arabi he rejects the Ash'arite theory of divine attributes according to which attributes subsist in and are co-eternal with God, and yet are neither identical with or different from Him. In "Flash" (*La'ihah*) 15, Jami explains that attributes are distinct from the essence in thought but are identical with it in fact and reality. God is knower due to the attribute of knowledge, powerful due to the attribute of power, active due to the attribute of willing, etc. There is no doubt that as these attributes are different from one another with regard to their content, they are similarly distinct from the essence. But in reality, they are all identical with the essence in the sense that in Him there is no plurality of existence.

The Ultimate Reality, i.e. God, is the ground of everything that exists. He is one so that multiplicity cannot affect Him. But when He reveals Himself in multiplicity of forms and modes, He appears to be many. These distinctions of one and many, however, are only subjective. God and the world are two aspects of the same reality. "The universe is the outward (expression) of God and God is the inner (reality) of the universe. Before manifestation the world God and God after manifestation is identical with the world." As a matter of fact, reality is one, and the dual aspects of God and the world are only our ways of looking at it.[109]

The nature of things in the universe in relation to the Absolute is like modes which Jami, following 'Arabi, calls *shu'un*; they have no existence or reality in themselves and are mere adjectives of the One Being.[110] These modes are included in the Absolute as qualities in here in a substance or as a consequent follows from its ground – as half, third, and fourth, and other fractions are related to the integer; these fractions are potentially included in the integer one and become explicit only when repeated.[111]

It is clear that the theological sense is not the actualization of the hidden potentialities of the Creator, but the production of individuals and things which, through deriving their existence from this source, yet enjoy self-determination and independence to some extent. According to Jami, Creator and creatures are two aspects of the same reality.

This subjective determination, according to Jami, has two stages. In the first stage called *martabah-i 'ilmi*, these existents appear in divine knowledge in the form of archetypal ideas (*a'yan-i thabitah*). In the second stage called rank of the physical world (*martabah-i 'ain*), they acquire the attributes and properties of external existence. "In short, there is nothing in the external world except one reality which appears to be many on account of being clothed in diverse modes and attributes."[112]

As essence, the Real is beyond all knowledge; neither revelation nor reason can help anyone to comprehend it. No mystic saint can ever claim to experience Him as such. "His highest characteristic is the lack of all characterization and the end of all knowledge about Him is bewilderment."[113] The first stage of the descent is *ahadiyyah* which is a bare unity devoid of all modes and relations. When it is conditioned by these modes, it is called *al-wahdiyyah* where the Real characterized by manifestation, etc. It is at this stage that he assumes the attributes of being the Creator and Sustainer and is characterized by life, knowledge, and will. It is at this stage also that the existents first appear in the consciousness of God as the objects of His knowledge, but they do not involve multiplicity in the One.

At a later stage these objects of God's knowledge are clothed in existence and they assume multiplicity. They all exhibit in varying degrees some of the divine names and attributes.[114] But in spite of all these manifestations and splitting of the One into multiplicity, the unity remains unimpaired. It causes no change in the essence or in its attributes. "Although the light of the sun illuminates at once the clean and the unclean, yet it does not affect the purity of its light."[115]

Though the one essence is interfused in all existents, it presence in them does not mean that everything is equal in this respect. There are differences of degree due to the power of receptivity of each thing. No doubt God and the world are two aspects of the Real, yet God is God and the world is the world. "Every grade of Being is determined according to its rank. If you ignore this distinction, you become an infidel."[116]

In ethics Jami follows the usual pantheistic tradition and advocates full-fledged determinism. As God is the essence of all things and is the inward aspect of the world, all actions that are usually ascribed to man should, as a matter of fact, be attributed to the Real. But if man is so determined, then how to account for the evil? Jami here again follows ibn 'Arabi. It is true, he says, that all actions of men are God's, yet it is not proper for us to attribute evil to God, for Being *qua* Being is absolute. According to him, therefore, evil has no positive content; it is privative content; it is privative, lacking something which should have been there. Take, for instance, the case of cold. There is nothing evil in it as such, but with reference to the fruits which it does not allow to ripen, it becomes evil.[117]

The ultimate goal of man should be not only *fana'*, passing away of consciousness, but *fana'-i*, passing away of the consciousness of having attained the state of *fana'*. At this stage, an individual loses not only awareness of self but also awareness of this "non-awareness of self." Then, according to Jami, faith, religion, belief, or *kashf* (mystic knowledge and experience) all become meaningless.[118]

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1. Gulsham-i Raz, Question 12.
2. Ibid., Q. 2.
3. Ibid., Q. 1.
4. Ibid., Q. 2.
5. Ibid., Q. 10.
6. Ibid., Q. 9.
7. Ibid., Q. 4.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid., Q. 11.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. 'Abd al-Karim al-Jili, al-Insan al-Kamil, Urdu translation by Fadal Miran, Sufi Printing and Publishing Company, Pindi Bahauddin, p. 4. All references to al-Insan al-Kamil are to this Urdu translation.
13. Ibid., p. 30.

14. Ibid., pp. 30 – 32.

15.

Ibid., p. 27. He says that Being is of two kinds. One is Pure Being and that is the divine essence, the other is related to non–Being and that is the phenomenal world.

16. Ibid., p. 39.

17. Ibid., p. 44.

18. The Qur'an (28:88) is usually translated as "Everything is liable to destruction except His Face." But al–Juli interprets the word wajhahu pantheistically and translates it as "its (i.e. thing's) essence," thereby implying that one reality subsists in all multiplicity; ibid., p. 36.

19. Ibid., chapter 62, para. 1.

20. Ibid., chapter 2, pp. 69 – 70.

21. He quotes several Qur'anic verses (25:58, 49:53, etc) to prove this point; ibid., p. 156. See also p. 145.

22. Ibid., pp. 67 – 68.

23. Ibid., pp. 33ff.

24. Ibid., pp. 120 – 21.

25. Ibid., pp 214 – 15.

26. Ibid., pp. 216 – 17.

27. Ibid., p. 48 – 49.

28. Ibid., p. 47 – 52.

29. Ibid., p. 58.

30. He refers to the Qur'an verse (45:13) in which the words jami' 'an minhu are interpreted by him to mean as "all (created) from His own self."

31. He refers to the Qur'anic verse (46:3) for the phrase bi al–Haqq which is interpreted by him to mean that everything was created out of Haqq, i.e. Haqq served as matter for the world.

32. Al–Insan al–Kamil, p. 60.

33. Ibid., p. 61.

34. Ibid., p. 116.

35. Ibid., p. 96.

36. Fusus al–Hikam (Urdu translation, Lucknow, 1927), p. 172. See Affifi, The Mystical Philosophy of Muhyid Din–Ibnul 'Arabi, Cambridge, 1939, p. 152.

37. Fusus, pp. 155, 272; Affifi, op. cit., 31.

38. Al–Insun al–Kamil, pp. 96 – 100.

39. Affifi, op. cit., p. 156.

40. Al–Insan al–Kamil, pp. 101 – 04.

41. Ibid.,p. 105.

42. Ibid., pp. 105 – 06.

43. Ibid., pp. 127 – 33.

44. Ibid.,pp. 129 – 30.

45. In a certain sense, he argues, a'yan al–thabitah can be called eternal. God is eternal and His knowledge must also be eternal. As objects of God's knowledge, a'yan al–thabitah must of necessity be eternal. And yet, he adds, in their essence, they are hadith. Because huduth is an actual existential fact (amr al–'aini) and qidam only a logical determination (amr al–hukmi), al–Jili prefers to call a'yan hadith rather than qadim. Al–Insan al–Kamil, p. 132

46. The verse is as follows: "He said to (the heavens) and to the earth, 'Come both, willingly or unwillingly.' They both said, 'We come willingly.'"

47. Al–Insan al–Kamil, pp. 107 – 09

48. Al–Insan al–Kamil, pp. 109 – 11.

49. Ibid., p. 92.

50. Ibid.

51. Ibid., p. 64.
52. Ibid., pp. 65 – 66.
53. Ibid., p. 64 – 66.
54. Ibid., p. 92.
55. Ibid. pp. 54 – 55.
56. See Affifi, op. cit., p. 24, footnote 1. Also p. 114 where He-ness is identified with 'Ama'.
57. Al-Insan al-Kamil, p.122.
58. Ibid. p. 124
59. Ibid., pp. 56 – 57.
60. Ibid., p. 140.
61. Ibid., pp. 71 – 74.
62. Ibid., pp. 75 – 78.
63. Ibid., pp. 79 – 90.
64. Ibid., p. 93.
65. Ibid. p. 92.
66. Ibid., p. 4.
67. Ibid.. p. 8.
68. Ibid., p. 17,
69. Ibid.. pp. 260 – 61.
70. The terms "length" and breadth" were first used by Jallaj for lahut (divinity) and nasut (humanity) and later employed by ibn 'Arabi and al-Jili to denote the two aspects of the essence.
71. Al-Insan al-Kamil, pp. 253 – 54.
72. Ibid., p. 262.
73. 'Arsh, according to ibn 'Arabi and al-Jili,signifies universal body. "It is the theatre of majesty, the locus of tajalli and a characteristic of essence and is known as the place of that essence – a place which is devoid of all (spatial) reference." Ibid., pp. 171 – 72.
74. Kursi, the Footstool under the divine Throne, "signifies the tajalli of all (divine attributes of action. The divine activity in manifesting the realities of the universe looks first of all to kursi. At this stage the effects of contradictory attributes are manifested in detail and the Word of god (divine amr) comes into existences." Ibid., p.
75. Ibid., p. 262
76. 'Arsh, according to ibn 'Arabi and al-Jili, signifies universal body. "It is the theatre of majesty the locus of tajalli and a characteristic of essence, and is known as the place of that essence – a place which is devoid of all (spatial reference. Ibid., pp. 171 – 72.
77. Kursi, the Footstool under the divine Throne, "signifies the tajalli of all (difine) attributes of action. The divine activity in manifesting the realities of the universe looks first of all to kursi. At this stage the effects of contradictory attributes are manifested in detail and the Word of God (divine amr) comes into existence." Ibid., p. 173.
78. "The Exalted pen means the first individualization of the creatures analytically. First, the khalq is individualized in the divine consciousness generally and without differentiation, at the stage of 'arsh, its being is synthetic and logical; at the (third) stage of kursi, khalq is manifested analytically. At the (fourth) stage of the Pen, its existence is differentiated. In the first three stages, this manifestation (of khalq) was in the Unseen (i.e. in God), while in the fourth stage, its manifestation is made objective." Ibid., p. 174. See also p. 200, "The source of knowledge of the first intelligence and of the Exalted Pen is the same light. When it is referred to creatures, it is called the first intelligence, and when it is related to Haqq, its name is the Exalted pen.
79. Al-lauh al-mahfuz, according to al-Jili, stands for the universal soul. Ibid., p. 176.
80. Ibid., pp. 261 – 62.
81. Ibid., pp. 263 – 64. Cf. ibn 'Arabi: "Only two beings rightly call themselves God: God Himself who in His books and the perfect man like Bayazid." See Affifi, op. cit., p. 78.
82. Al-Insan al-Kamil, p. 93.

83. Ibid., p. 153. Al-Jili distinguishes between saint ship and prophethood as follows: “When Adam was sent down to the earth, he was made a prophet, for prophethood means legislation (tashr‘) and imposing obligation (taklif) which pertain to this earth. While in paradise Adam was a saint, nfor it is the place of miracles and observation and this is saint ship.” Ibid.. p. 308.

84. Reference is to the Qur’anic verse (17:1), “Glory be to Him who carried His servant (‘abdihi) by night from the Holy Mosque to the Remote Mosque.

85. Al-Insan al-Kamil, pp. 319 – 20.

86. Ibid., pp. 320 – 21.

87. Ibid., p. 144. The qualifying word “institutional” implies that prophet of the other is still possible and, thus, on p. 320 he explicitly says that nubuwwat al-wilayah will continue.

88. “Names and attributes form the nature of the heart.” Ibid., p. 193. he argues from the Qur’anic verse (95:4), “We indeed created man in the fairest mould.”

89. “From the first intelligence which is referred to as the Principle of Mohammad, God created Gabriel. Thus, Mohammad in this sense becomes the father of Gabriel and the source and ground of the whole universe. The First Intelligence is called al-Ruh al-Amin (the Truthful Spirit) because it is the storehouse of divine knowledge and its protector.” Ibid., p. 200.

90. Ibid., pp. 197 – 200.

91. Ibid., pp. 200 – 06.

92. Ibid., pp. 206 – 10.

93. Al-Jili relates that he himself was submerged in this path of speculative philosophy and this was due only the spiritual influence of his teacher, al-Jabarti, who was staying with a group of mystics in Zabid in 779/1377 at the house of one Shihab al-Din Ahmad. Ibid., pp. 212 – 13.

94. Ibid., pp. 210 – 14.

95. Ibid., pp. 292 – 93.

96. Ibid., pp. 272 – 73.

97. Ibid., p.239.

98. Ibid., 224

99. Ibid., p. 243.

100. Ibid., p. 239

101. Ibid., 134

102. Ibid., Chaps. 17, 18.

103. Ibid., p. 34. He argues, like other Muslim pantheists, from the Qur’anic verse (97:96), “Allah had created you and what you make,” interpreting ta’malun as “what you do.”

104. Ibid., p. 108.

105. Ibid., p. 114.

106. Lawa’ih, Nawal Kishore Press, Lucknow (India, 1936, p. 4

107. He subscribes to ibn ‘Arabi’s doctrine that the universe is nothing but accidents, all pertaining to a single substance, i.e., the Ultimate Being. He tries to give rational arguments in its support. See Lawa’ih 18 and 26.

108. Lawi’ih 13, 14.

109. La’ihah 25.

110. See La’ihah26 where Jami tries to explain certain statements of ibn ‘Arabi as discussed in Fass al-Shu‘aibiyyah.

111. La’ihah 19.

112. La’ihah 18.

113. La’ihah 24.

114. La’ihah 17. See also La’ihah 24,where the idea of One’s descent is further elaborated.

115. La’ihah 20.

116. La’ihah 23.

117. La’ihah 30.

118. La’ihah 8 and 9.

Chapter 44: Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi

A. Life and Studies

Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi, better known as Mujaddid Alf Thani, was the son of Sheikh ‘Abd al-Ahad Makhdum, who was a devout Muslim always anxious to derive spiritual enlightenment from saints. Sheikh ‘Abd al-Ahad Makhdum met Sheikh Allah Dad at Ruhtas and Sayyid ‘Ali Qawam at Juanput. He learned a great deal from both and then returned to Sirhind and lived there until his death in 1007/1598. A great master of all the branches of contemporary knowledge, he taught the prevalent textbooks on philosophy and religion to his students extensively. He was also an acknowledged authority on jurisprudence.

Besides, he taught mysticism to those who were eager to learn it, using *‘Awarif al-Ma‘arif* and *Fusus al-Hikam* as his texts. He was an ardent reader of ibn ‘Arabi and was an authority on his teachings. He acknowledged ibn ‘Arabi’s superiority in philosophy and spiritual insight, but he never followed him if he found him deviating from the Sunnah. He was such an ardent and close follower of the Holy Prophet and his teachings that he never left a *sunnah* (tradition) unpracticed. He loved the devotees of Khuwaja Baha’ al-Din Naqshband of Bukhara called the Naqshbands,[1] and his son inherited this love and devotion to them from him.

Sheikh Ahmad was born in 971/1563 at Sirhind. His name was Ahmad and his surname was Badr al-Din. From his father’s side, he descended from the Caliph ‘Umar. In his early childhood he was sent to a school where in a short time he learned the Holy Qur’an by heart. Then for a long time he was taught by his father. Later he went to Sialkot and there covered some more courses under the guidance of Kamal Kashmiri. He also studied some works on Hadith from Ya‘qub Kashmiri, a great scholar of the time. By the young age of 17 he had mastered a great deal of Islamic sciences and had begun teaching them to others.

He visited Agra where he met some great men of learning including Abu al-Faidi. After some time he accompanied his father to Sirhind. On his way home, he was married to the daughter of a noble named Sheikh Sultan of Thanesar. On his return to Sirhind he stayed with his father and through his help established spiritual relationship with the Qadriyyah and Chishtiyyah schools of mysticism. Through the training received from his father, he learned the fundamentals of Sufism. In his studies too he had been greatly influenced by his father. He could not go on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in his father’s life-time, although he yearned to do so. He was anxious to serve his father during his life and could not leave him alone.

After his father’s death in 1007/1598 he started on this long cherished pilgrimage. On his arrival at Delhi, he heard of the reputation of Khuwaja Baqi Billah as a saint from a friend, Maulana Hassan. He went to

him promptly and was well received. The Khuwaja inquired of him about his intended pilgrimage and then wished him to stay with him for a week or so. He was greatly impressed by the spiritual attainments of the Khuwaja that he made up his mind to become his disciple. The Khuwaja was very fastidious in taking anyone as his disciple but he immediately accepted the Mujaddid as his follower and focused his entire attention upon him. The Mujaddid's heart became the seat of the praise of Allah and he made rapid progress in spiritual knowledge. Under the Khuwaja's guidance he was able to complete his Naqshbandi training in a few months. He was warmly congratulated and was invested with a gown as a symbol of the completion of his training. He went back to Sirhind and began to teach people. After the Khuwaja's death he used to go to Delhi at the *'urs*[2] of the late chief.

B. The Shari'ah

An important period of his life is that between 1028/1618 and 1032/1622. One year of this period was spent in the prison of Gwalior and the other three with the Emperor Jahangir and his army. His increasing popularity aroused the jealousy of his rivals who poisoned the ears of the Emperor and reported him to be dangerous both to the Emperor and the State. The Emperor had faith only in the ascetics and hermits. He could not tolerate a widely popular Sufi in his land. Perhaps Asaf Jah and some other nobles had a hand in this intrigue against the Mujaddid. The matter was worsened still by his refusal to bow before the Emperor on the ground that it was against the tenets of Islam, with the result that he was imprisoned at Gwalior. He was released a year later, but he had to stay for a further period of three years with the army as a *detenu*. Two years before his death he was allowed to go to his home at Sirhind. There he died on the morning of the 28th Safar 1034/10th December 1624.

Some hold that the Sheikh's release was due to the fact that the Emperor had at last become his disciple and had repented of his action of the previous year, but others hold that the above view was not borne by facts.

It was the crying need of the time that there should appear a man who might have the boldness to oppose the worship of the Emperor by refusing to bow before him, and, thus revive the true spirit of Islam and the extirpate heresy. He fearlessly faced the displeasure of an absolute monarch and chose to go into imprisonment rather than renounce his own beliefs and principles. He stood firm as a rock against the tide of the Mughul heresy introduced by the Emperor's father, Akbar the Great. He is called the Mujaddid because he started the movement of purifying Islam and restored its traditional orthodoxy. His courageous stand against anti-Islam practices resulted in a religious renaissance in India.

The method adopted by him to achieve his purpose was equally bold. He trained groups of disciples and sent them to all the Muslim countries and to the various cities of India to propagate what he regarded as the spirit of Islam. He especially asked them to make people realize the importance of the Sunnah and prepare them to counteract the forces of heresy and to observe and to make others observe the tenets of Islam. His letters to the great men of the Muslim world was given wide publicity. In them he discussed

problems connected with Islam and its revival. He pressed the people to follow the Sunnah rigidly and to uproot heresy. He brought numerous noblemen and courtiers to his fold, and in this way tried to change the attitude of the Emperor and his Court.

The Mujaddid strictly adhered to religious practices and sanctioned by the Holy Prophet and was very hard upon those who coined excuses to violate them. He was an authority of *Fiqh* and Tradition. His knowledge was encyclopedic and he was endowed with critical insight in matters of religion. His views on mystical revelation and illumination, pantheism, pre-destinarianism, sectarianism, and Sufism are very important. Sheikh Ahmad's reforms can be easily divided into three categories: (1) call to the Muslims to follow the Sunnah and discard heresy (*bid'ah*), (2) purification of Islamic mysticism (Sufism) from the practices and thoughts which had crept into it through non-Muslim influences and (3) great emphasis on the Islamic Law.

1. Heresy and the Mujaddid's Opposition to It

Heresy implies an innovation. The *'ulama'* (theologians) had divided it into two categories, namely, the good innovation (*bid'at-i hasnah*) and the bad innovation (*bid'at-i sayyi'ah*). The Mujaddid says he can find no beauty, benefit or light in either. In many of his letters he is at pains to tell his correspondents that all heresy is reprehensible. He quotes many sayings of the Holy Prophet in denouncing it. He symbolizes every kind of heresy with dust, dirt, and pitch darkness and regards it as misleading. Those who practice heresy do so for lack of foresight and insight. The Holy Prophet said that heresy misleads people and uproots the Sunnah itself. When a heresy creeps into religion, it deprives the believers of traditional practice. He was of the opinion that Islam is complete in itself; heresy is a useless appendage of it.

Even if it appears right, it is in fact a blot on their fair face of Islam. Any approval of a heresy of disavowal of the completeness of Islam. In the course of time, the Sunnah would disappear, and heresy would prosper. Respect shown to an upholder of heresy is to deal a blow to Islam. Heresy is a cutting axe to religion and the Sunnah is a guiding star. To strengthen Islam heresy must be uprooted. "May it please the Lord," said he, "to show the *'ulama'* that no heresy is good."

2. Reforms in Sufism and the Nature of Sufistic Perfection

"If the contemporary Sufis are just, they should not follow their leaders but the Sunnah. They should never uphold heresy on the pre-text that their Sheikhs did so."[3] If a heresy appears in the guise of an inspiration, it is immediately accepted by the people as a long lost truth. For the long conversations and commentaries of the Sufis had been tending away from the religious law (*Shari'ah*) and a time came in the history of Sufism when the Sufis began to proclaim that Sufism and the religious Law were poles apart. They did not show the respect that the law deserves. They regarded it as formal and ineffective and, as a result, religion and its values suffered much at their hands, though very few knew the harm that was being done. This attitude of the Mujaddid elicited an unqualified praise from Iqbal for him.

Speaking of him he says, “He was the guardian of the Muslim faith in India whom God had given a timely warning.”

The Mujaddid said, “The Sheikhs who in their state of insensibility (*sukr*) praise infidelity and induce men to wear the Brahmanical thread[4] are to be excused because they are not themselves. Those who follow them consciously in these matters are not to be excused because they do so while they have their senses.”[5] The rectitude of speculative knowledge depends on its being in concord with theology, and the smallest departure from it is insensibility. According to him, someone asked Khuwaja Naqshband to define the Sufistic institution. He replied that the ultimate end of Sufism is achieved when the rational knowledge becomes revelational or inspired, and the abstract becomes concrete. He did not say that we should seek something over and above the revealed law. The non-essentials that a Sufi meets on his way to Sufistic perfection lose their importance when he reaches his destination. The Law alone is then seen as real. The Prophet received it through a messenger but the Sufis get it by direct inspiration from God.[6]

The Caliph ‘Umar was highly incensed when he was told that Sheikh ‘Abd al-Kabir Yamani was of the view that Allah has no omniscience. He did not attribute this remark to the Sheikh’s insensibility or unconsciousness. He rather though it to be an infidelity, even if it was committed by the Sheikh with a view to being denounced by the world,[7] as public denunciation was considered by some Sufis to be contributive to Sufistic perfection. “The true aim of Sufistic institution is to attain sound faith, which depends upon spiritual tranquility without which salvation is impossible. When this tranquility is reached, the heart becomes unconscious of everything but God.”[8]

3. Significance of the Shari‘ah

The divine law is connected with the soul and the spiritualization of the soul depends upon obedience shown to it alone. The Sufi learns this after his perfection.[9] While still on their way to Sufistic perfection, many Sufis flounder on this mysterious road. One should never lose sight of the divine Law whenever one’s beliefs and deeds are involved.[10] The Naqshbandi Sheikhs have sub-ordinated revelation to the divine Law (*Shari‘ah*) and with them intuition and inspiration are subject to the divine decrees. Ecstasy should not be given priority to the divine Law. The Naqshbandis are never influenced by the senseless and exaggerated discourses of the Sufis. They never uphold ibn ‘Arabi’s *fass*[11] against the explicit verses of the Qur’an (*nass*).[12]

The light of God which is revealed on occasional flashes to others is to them constantly illuminating. Everything but His name is erased from their hearts, and even if they try for ages they can think of nothing but Him.[13] The touchstone of the Sufistic revelations and intuitions should be the commentaries of the Sunnite theologians, for even the adherents to heresies and all those who go astray regard the Holy Qur’an and the Sunnah together as the fountainhead of their beliefs. They misinterpret them only because of their perverted mentalities.[14] The Sufistic discourse which is congruous with the Sunnite interpretations is agreeable, while that which is otherwise is not. Upright Sufis never transgress the limits

set by the divine Law even in their ecstatic discourses, dealings, and philosophies. Whenever a Sufi in his ecstasy or transport opposes the Law, his revelation is a mirage. It should be interpreted and explained correctly.[15] Perfection comes through meek submission to God, which implies submission to His Law. This is the best of faiths in the eyes of the Lord.[16]

You can tell an imposter from a sincere believer by their respective attitude to the divine Law. A truly faithful Sufi never transgresses the Law in spite of his insensibility and ecstasy. Despite his claim, "I am the True One," Mansur Hallaj used to offer five hundred *rak'at*[17] every morning in submission to God even while he was chained in a prison cell. It is as difficult for an imposter to observe the tenets of the Law as to remove the Mount Caucasus from its place.[18]

According to the Mujaddid, the only duty performed by the theologians (*'ulama'*) is to issue decrees while it is the people of Allah (saints) who do the real work. An attempt at internal purification is to enable one to observe the divine tenets, one who is busy only in internal purification to the extent of neglecting the divine Law is an infidel and hence his revelations and intuitions are like those of an obstinate sinner. The way of uprightness is through divinity and the sign of the real internal purification is the sincere observation of and submission to the divine Law is an infidel and hence his revelations and intuitions are like those of an obstinate sinner.

The way of uprightness is through divinity and the sign of the real internal purification is the sincere observation of and submission to the divine Law. The restoration of the Sunnah and the obligatory prayers is the best of worships and will be rewarded in heaven.[19] The Naqshbandi devotees dislike the mystical revelation that contradicts the Law and denounce the senseless wrangling of the Sufis. They do not like dancing and listening to music. They do not like loud recital of God's name for He is supposed to be ever with them. With them guidance and discipline depend upon one's submission to and acknowledgement of the prophetic institution; it has nothing to do with external trappings such as the cap or the genealogy of the Sheikh as is the case with the other sects.[20]

C. Existential or Experiential Unity

C. Existential or Experiential Unity (*wahdat al-Wujud* or *wahdat al-Shuhud*)

In order to understand the rift somehow created between Islam and Sufism one must ponder over the philosophical aspect of pantheism. Pantheism was the real bane of Islam. The Mujaddid knew its fallacy and he was one of those who denounced it vehemently. He based his stand on the training he had received from his father and his Sheikh, Khuwaja Baqi Billah. The State of pantheism was revealed to him shortly after he had adopted the Naqshbandi way of approach to reality. He was anxious to understand the mysticism of ibn 'Arabi. The light of God and of His attributes dawned upon him and this, according to ibn 'Arabi is the ultimate end of Sufism.

For years he kept thinking that he had reached the state in which he had realized the ultimate, but all of

a sudden this state vanished. Then he came to realize that union with God is only experiential and not existential; God is not and cannot be one with anything. God is God and the world is world. All that the Sunni theologians said in this respect was true. As the Mujaddid had loved pantheism much in the earlier stage of his life, he was rather uneasy at this change. Yet, with the new revelation, the veil was lifted and the reality appeared to him in its true form. This world is merely a *mark* of the existence of its Creator, and it merely *reflects* the various attributes of the Lord. It does not *consist* of these attributes. A pseudo revelation, he thought, like erroneous deductions in religious matters, may not be denounced, but it must not be followed, lest others be misled.

With the followers of ibn ‘Arabi, pantheism is the final stage of Sufistic perfection, while in reality it is nothing but one of the states experienced by every devotee. After the devotees have passed this preliminary state, they walk on the right Path. Khwaja Naqshband says that all that is heard or seen or known is a veil. It must be negated with the word “none” (*la*). “I had accepted pantheism,” says the Mujaddid, “as it was revealed to me and not because I was directed to it by someone else. Now I denounce it because of the right revelation of my own which cannot be denied, although it is not compulsory for others to follow...”[21] The presence of the One means that the Sufi sees nothing except the One. The pantheist acknowledges the presence of the One in everything and thinks all besides it as nothing, yet the very same non–entity is regarded by him as the incarnation of the One.

Pantheism is not at all essential, because sure knowledge is possible without it, and sure knowledge does not entail the denial of the existence of others. The sight of the One is in no way a denial of the existence of the others. The prophets never preached pantheism, nor did they ever call the pluralists infidels. They invited people to the oneness of Being. No prophet ever preached that creation is an incarnation of the Creator. Their aim was to inculcate faith in the One Lord who is unique and has no like.[22]

D. Revelation and Intuition

Only the Qur’an and the Sunnah are to be trusted. The duty of the theologians is simply to interpret these fundamental sources and not to add anything to them. The mysticism of the Sufis and their revelations and inspirations are to be accepted only if they conform to them, otherwise they are to be rejected. The promise of God is to unveil Himself to His good people in the hereafter and not here. The revelations and “lights” of which the Sufis are so proud are nothing but their own mental projections and fantasies in order to console themselves.

The open sight of God is absolutely impossible to people in this world. “I am afraid the beginners would be discouraged if I were to point out the drawbacks of these revelations and ‘lights,’ but if I remain silent, the true and the false shall remain undistinguished. I insist that these ‘lights’ and revelations must be judged with reference to the revelation of God on the Mount of Sinai, when Prophet Moses prayed for the sight of Him. Who can bear the sight of Him?”[23]

“Abundance of miracles is not the sign of a devotee’s spiritual superiority. A person who has no miracle to his credit may possibly be superior to others in certain respects. Sheikh Shaihab al-Din Suhrawardi says, “Miracles are a boon from God to render the faith firm, but the man who has been gifted with a firm faith does not require them; it is enough for him that his heart praises and remembers Him.”

Miracles can be divided into two categories. Those of the first category comprise the transcendental knowledge of God and His attributes. These are beyond the sphere of rational inquiry and are revealed only to a few of His favourites. The second category is concerned with revelation about creation and information concerning this universe. Unlike the former, even imposters can have a share in the latter. The people having miracles of the first category have more chances to reach God than those having miracles of the second, but to the common man, the latter are more acceptable.”[24]

Ibn ‘Arabi is reported to have said that some pious devotees were ashamed of their miracles at their death-beds. Why should they have been so if the miracles were the only true touch stone of a pious devotee’s superiority? Numerous saints are unaware of their position and status but as they are not prophets they do not need the awareness of their position. Saintly men can invite people to the religion of their prophet without miracles. Their real miracle is to purify the souls of their disciples. The soul being immaterial, they have to turn their attention away from materialism. These people even without miracles are the sureties of peace and prosperity in tis world.

The distinction between a true and a false devotee is that the former adheres strictly to the Law, and the latter adheres to his own whims. The man whose company inspires you to be more attentive to God is a true devotee.[25] Not even a prophet is safe from the evil designs of the devil. If a devotee is tempted by Satan he should judge his inspiration by its accord to the tenets of the religion of his prophet. If anywhere the divine Law is silent and the Satan’s “inspiration” cannot be proved right or wrong, the “inspiration” should be regarded as questionable. The divine tenets are silent in matters which are superficial, and, therefore, may neither be accepted nor rejected.

Sometimes, without any attempt on the part of the Satan to mislead us, we have false inspirations as in dreams. These false inspirations ar the creations of our own fancy.[26]

E. The Religious Law

According to the Mujaddid, religious Law has three aspects: knowledge, actions, and fidelity. To acquire these aspects of the law it is necessary to win the pleasure of God which excels all blessings. Sufism and Gnosticism help in purifying one’s soul by completing the important aspect of infidelity. They have no end in view but this. Ecstasy, “intoxication,” and “illumination” are by-products of Sufism. They are not its ends. They are merely fantasies and projections in order to please the beginners. After passing these on his way, the Sufi has to surrender to the divine will, which is his real destination. One among thousands achieves pure fidelity. Blind men take the by-products for the principle articles and are, therefore, deprived of the truth. A Sufi has to experience these states before his acquisition of the

truth.[27]

The Mujaddid himself experienced these intermediate states for years, and ultimately achieved the goal of fidelity. Those who think the Law superficial and regard gnosis as the right Path are misled. They are content with the states, the means and ignore the end.[28] The straight Path is the path of the Holy Prophet whose guidance the best. Internal purification completes the external and is not contradictory to it. When we submit devoutly to God's beloved, the Holy Prophet, we become His beloved.[29]

Submission to the Prophet's tradition (Sunnah) is the real bliss, while opposition to it is the cause of all disasters. Hindu *sadhus* or ascetics undergo much privation but all in vain, for it is not in accordance with the true Law. The most that such ascetics can achieve is some material gain which is transitory. The devotees of the religion Law are like dealers in diamonds who work less but gain more.[30]

On the completion of a Sufi's life, real pleasure is derived from the performance of obligatory prayers, while in the beginning non-obligatory prayers are more pleasant.[31]

The states of ecstasy, gnosis, and "illumination" are good if they are subservient to the law; otherwise, they are misleading. If not weighed in the balance of the Law, they are worthless.[32]

The Sufistic conduct helps one to abide by the divine Law. It controls one's lower passions and undermines their influence. It is neither antagonistic nor equivalent to the religious Law. It is rather subservient to it.[33]

Some people are punctilious in the observance of the form of Law, but they ignore its intrinsic truth and worth and regard salvation as their only aim. Some people achieve the truth but assert that they have achieved it through their own effort and not through the help of the divine Law and not of the spirit of it. Either group is ignorant of its intrinsic virtues and is deprived of the divine guidance. True theologians alone are heirs to the prophets.[34]

Those who regard a saint (*wali*) superior to a prophet are senseless and are not fully aware of the attributes of prophethood which is superior to saint ship (*wilayah*) in all respects.[35]

The Mujaddid was a great religious enthusiast. The movement that he started in religion is still continued by his followers in various parts of the Muslim world. His heritage is indispensable for a modern reconstruction of religious thought in Islam. He was a Sufi but he did not think of Sufism as the sole aim of life. For him it was merely a means to an end, the end being complete and unconditional adherence and fidelity to the Qur'an and the Sunnah. For an essentially just estimate of his teachings one must consider him with reference to his times. His books are a valuable record of his practice and thought. He gave us a treatise on Sufistic perfection, but the best of him is found in three volumes of letters. The total number of letters in all these volumes is 535. With some exceptions, these are arranged in their chronological order. Five of his letters have been lost. They prove beyond doubt that the encyclopedic knowledge he had, and make a pleasant and enlightening reading.

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1. Devotees of Khuwaja Baha' al–Din Naqshband of Bukhara are called the Naqshbandis.
2. 'Urs, a gathering to celebrate the death anniversary of a holy man.
3. Maktubat–i Mujaddid, Book 2, Letter No. 23.
4. A thread worn by the Brahmans around the neck.
5. Maktubat–i Mujaddid, Bok 1, Letter No. 23.
6. Ibid., Letter No. 30.
7. Ibid., Letter No. 100.
8. Ibid., Letter No. 161
9. Ibid. Letter No. 172.
10. Ibid., Letter No. 220.
11. Fass, reference to Fusus al–Hikam by ibn 'Arabi.
12. Nass, an explicit verse of the Qur'an.
13. Maktubat–i Mujaddid, Book 1, Letter No. 243.
14. Ibid., Letter No. 286.
15. Ibid., letter No. 289.
16. Ibid., Book 2, letter No. 42.
17. A rak'at is the unit of a formal Islamic prayer and consists of praying in four different positions, standing, kneeling, sitting and falling down in adoration. Each prayer consists of several units.
18. Maktubat–i Mujaddid, Book 2, Letter No. 95.
19. Ibid., Letter No. 87.
20. Ibid., Book 1, Letter No. 221.
21. Ibid., Letter No. 31.
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24. Ibid., Letter No. 293.
25. Ibid., Book 2, Letter No. 92.
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27. Ibid., Letter No. 36.
28. Ibid., Letter No. 40.
29. Ibid., Letter No. 41.
30. Ibid., Letter No. 114.
31. Ibid., Letter no. 137.
32. Ibid., Letter No. 207.
33. Ibid., Letter No. 210.
34. Ibid., Book 2, Letter No. 18.
35. Ibid., Book 1, Letter No. 251.

Part 4: The “Philosophers”

Chapter 45: Jalal al-Din Dawwani

A. Life and Works

Mohammad bin As‘ad Jalal al-Din was born in 830/1427 at Dawwan in the district of Kazarun, of which his father was the Qadi. Having received early education from his father and then from Mahjwi al-Ari and Hassan bin Baqqal, he studied theology under Muhyi al-Din Ansari and Hammam al-Din at Shiraz, where he ultimately became professor at the *Madrasat al-Aitam*. In a short time he became famous for his knowledge and learning, attracting students from far and wide. It was in recognition of his literary and academic fame that he received admission into the Cour of Hassan Beg Khan Bahadur (Uzun Hassan), the then Turkish ruler of Mesopotamia and Persia. He ultimately rose to the eminent position of the Qadi of the Court, which position he retained under Sultan Mantiq Ya‘qub as well. He died in 907/1501 or 908/1502, and he was buried in his native village Dawwan.[1]

Tusi revived the tradition of philosophical disciplines during the Mongol period; Dawwani did the same during the Ottoman period. Whereas the former gave a fresh impetus to the study of ibn Sina by writing commentaries on some of his works and by defending him against his detractors, the latter on his *Hayakil-i Nur* and elaborating his illuminative philosophy (*hikmat-i ishruq*) in his own works. Both are revivalists, but they differ in their approach to the truth. The one is a true Avicennian, the other a faithful Suhrawardian. Brockelman has enumerated 70 of his extant works,[2] of which the important ones are listed below:

1. *Sharh ‘Aqa’id-i ‘Adudiyyah*, Istanbul, 1817.

2. *Sharh Tahdhib al-Mantiq wa al-Kalam*, 1264/1847.

3. *Al-Zaura*, cairo, 1326-1908.

4. *Risalah fi Ithbat al-Wajib al-Qadimah wa-al-Jadidah.*

5. *Risalah fi Tahqiq Nafs al-Amr.*

6. *Risalah fi Ithbat alpJoauhar al-Mufariq.*

7. *Risalah fi ‘Adalah.*

8. *Risalah fi-Hikmah.*

9. *Sharh al-Hayakil.*

10. *Anmudhaj al-'Ulum.*

11. *Al-Masa'il al-'Asr fi al-Kalam.*

12. *Akhlaq-i Jalali*, translated into English under the title of *The Practical Philosophy of the Mohammadan People*, by W.F. Thomson, London, 1839.

B. Ethics

Dawwani was commissioned by Sultan Hassan Geg to revise the ethical treatise of Tusi with the express aim of "correcting and completing" it from the illuminative (*ishraqi*) point of view. The structure of *Akhlaq-i Jalali* is basically the same as that of *Akhlaq-i Nasiri*, but in the execution of the work Dawwani has artistically ornamented it with the Qur'anic verses, precepts of the Prophet and his Companions and the moving utterances of the mystics. He not only abbreviated and simplified Tusi's treatise but also amplified and elaborated it at places in the light of the philosophy of illumination; besides he added much by way of literary adornment.

Following ibn Miskawaih, Tusi regards ultimate happiness (*sa'adat-i quswa*) as the *summum bunum* of life. His concept of ultimate happiness because of its reference to the heavenly (*qudsi*) element is intrinsically different from the Aristotelian concept of happiness. Dawwani goes a step further and identifies the moral with the religious ideal. It is with reference to God intended vicegerency that the Qur'an distinguishes right from wrong, evaluates knowledge and appreciates power; therefore, vicegerency of God (*khilafat-i ilahi*) and not ultimate happiness should be the inspiring ideal of the "noblest position of man in the universe as determined by God and not by man himself, which is that of the vicegerency of God.

What entitles man to this high office of responsibility? Dawwani finds the answer in a saying of the Caliph 'Ali. Man, according to this saying, occupies a middle position between the angels and the brutes. The former have intellect without desire and ire. They have no temptations, nor freedom of choice; being perfect by nature, they are above morality. The latter, on the other hand, have desire and ire without intellect, and thus, being incapable of controlling their irrational impulses, are below morality. Man has both.

He can, however, rise above the angels by sub-ordinating desire and ire to intellect, and can also sink below the brutes if desire and ire enslave his intellect. The brutes can be excused for want of intellect, but not man. The excellence of man's perfection is enhanced by his natural temptation and deliberate resistance to evil; the angels have been spared the painful processes of conflict, deliberation, and choice. Thus, man alone is a free, responsible and, therefore, moral being, and his right to the

vicegerency of God is established on this very ground.[3]

How is this vicegerency to be accomplished by man? Quoting the Qur'anic verse, "Whosoever gains wisdom, verily he gains great good." Dawwani holds that mature wisdom (*kikmat–i balighah*) is the royal road to this exalted position. By mature wisdom, being a happy blend of theory and practice is essentially different from the Socratic dictum: Knowledge is virtue. The Greeks were interested in ascertaining the speculative principles of morals; the practical aspect of ethics was quite alien to their temperament.

Mature wisdom can be acquired through intellectual insight as well as through mystic intuition. Both the philosopher and the mystic reach the same goal through different ways. What the former "knows," the latter "sees," there being complete harmony between the findings of the two.

Influenced by the Qur'anic doctrine of moderation[4] no less than the Aristotelian doctrine of the mean, Dawwani holds that the mean constitutes the good in all matters. But it is determined not by "reason" and "prudence," as held by Aristotle, but by the divine Law. Reason can at best determine the form of morality, the content whereof must come from the divine Code. Since the path of moderation is difficult to tread, Dawwani has identified it with the bridge over hell (*pul sirat*) – a bridge which is narrower than a hair and sharper than a sword.

Moral struggle pre–supposes that all dispositions (*khulq*), whether innate or acquired, are capable of modification and change. Constant instruction and discipline and punishment, as evidenced by experience, can change the wicked into the virtuous. By these means the evil is greatly reduced, if not completely eradicated. And since a person does not know beforehand that a particular evil disposition would resist all attempts to modify and change it, it is in consonance with the dictates of both reason and religion that he should exert his utmost for its modification.

To Plato, virtue was the moderation of human nature as a whole. Aristotle assigned to each virtue the place moderation would give it. Be he could go no further than this. The Greeks "systematized, generalized, and theorized," but the accumulation of positive knowledge based on patient, detailed, and prolonged observation was altogether "alien to their temperament." This weakness of the Greek genius was removed by a rather practical and penetrating mind of the Muslims,[5] who classified ethics as a "part of practical philosophy." With ibn Miskawaih, the first Muslim moralist, the emphasis shifted from broad generalizations to individual differentiation and specification of virtues. He not only determined seven, 11, 12 and 19 species[6] of wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice respectively – the four cardinal virtues of Plato – but also developed an attractive theory of the causes and cures of mental diseases, a process which culminated in al–Ghazالی with a shift from an intellectual to a mystic outlook.[7]

Ibn Miskawaih had worked out the details of Plato's theory of virtue, but with Tusi the problem was that of improving and completing the Aristotelian theory of vice. He emphasized for the first time that deviation from the equipoise is not only quantitative but also qualitative, and, thus, added perversion

(*rada'at*) as the third generic cause of vice[8] to the Aristotelian excess and deficiency of a state. Tusi also set the seal of completion on practical philosophy by including domestics and politics in his ethical treatise in order to meet the deficiencies of the ethical work of ibn Sina (*Kitab al-Taharat*) and of that of Farabi. Lastly, Tusi revolted against the ascetic ethics of al-Ghazzali. Asceticism, for him, is the negation of moral life, for man is by nature a social being as is indicated by the word for man in Arabic, *insan* (associating), and body is not an obstacle but an instrument of the soul for attaining the perfection it is capable of.[9]

Nevertheless, he recognizes asceticism as a necessary stage in the development of mystic consciousness, of which he has had no personal experience. Inspired by the illuminative philosophy of Shihab al-Din Maqtul, Dawwani finds complete harmony between philosophy and mysticism. What the mystic "sees," the philosopher "knows," and the latter "knows," the former "sees." He, therefore, gave a Qur'anic bias to the ethics of Tusi.

C. Politics

Following Tusi, Dawwani too has used *Siyasat-i Mudun* more in the sense of the science of civics than in the modern sense of politics. The origin, function, and classes of society and the need of a government headed by a just king are the same for Dawwani as for Tusi. Monarch is held to be the ideal form of government, in which king is the second arbitrator of justice, the first being the divine Law. After reproducing the general principles of distributive and corrective justice from *Akhlaq-i Nasiri*, Dawwani adds ten moral principles of his own, which ought to be observed by a king in order to ensure efficient administration of justice.

In the first place, the king should invariably consider himself to be the aggrieved party while deciding a case, so that he may not wish for the aggrieved what is abhorrent to him. Secondly, he should see that the cases are disposed of quickly, for justice delayed is justice denied. Thirdly, he should not indulge in sensual and physical pleasures which ultimately bring about the ruin of a State in their wake. Fourthly, royal decision should be based on clemency and condescension rather than on rashness and wrath. Fifthly, in pleasing people he should seek the pleasure he should seek the pleasure of God. Sixthly, he should not seek the pleasure of the people by displeasing God. Seventhly, he should render justice if decision is left to his discretion, but forgiveness is better than justice if mercy is begged of him. Eighthly, he should associate with the righteous and lend ears to their counsels. Ninthly, he should keep everyone to his rightful place and should not entrust high office to the low-born people. Lastly, he should not be content with personal abstention from injustice, but should conduct the affairs of the State that none under his authority is guilty of this offence.

D. Metaphysics

Like Tusi and others, Dawwani's cosmology consists of the gradual emanation of ten intellects, nine

spheres, four elements and three kingdoms of nature. The active intellect, the intellect of the sphere of the moon, bridges the gap between the heaven and the earth.

Quoting the Prophet's saying that intellect is the noblest of all the created things, Dawwani identifies the first intellect (*'aql–i awwal*) with the original essence of Mohammad. It conceives the idea of all things past, present, and future, just as a seed potentially contains roots, branches, leaves, and fruit. The spheres which are stationary in nature, but changeable in qualities, control the destiny of the material world. Fresh situations come into being through the revolutions of the spheres, and every moment the active intellect causes a new form into existence to reflect itself in the mirror of elemental matter. Passing through the mineral, vegetative and animal states, the first intellect finally appears in the form of acquired intellect (*aql–i mustafad*) in man, and, thus, the highest point having coalesced with the lowest, the circle of being is completed by the two arcs of ascent and descent.

The first intellect is like the seed which sprouted into twigs, branches, and fruit, reverts to its original form of unity possessing collective potentiality. This circular process takes the form of motion (*harkat–i wada'i*), in growing bodies of increasing or decreasing their magnitude, and in the rational soul that of the movement of thought. All these motions are, in fact, shadows of the divine motion proceeding from God's love for self–expression, which in mystic terminology is called the flashing of Self upon Self.[10]

Dawwani's metaphysical treatise, *al–Zaura* is a critical evaluation of *Kalam* and of the teachings of the spiritual leaders, the philosophers, and the mystics, from the illuminative (*ishraqi*) point of view. He fully appreciates the utility and importance of the first three disciplines but takes serious notice of the inconsistency with Islam of some of the issues raised by them. He believes that philosophy and mysticism both ultimately lead to the same goal, yet he cannot shut his eyes to the eminence and superiority of the latter over the former. Mysticism, in his view, is free from doubt and uncertainty because it is due to divine grace and is, therefore, nearer to prophethood.[11]

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Chapter 46: Ibn Khaldun

A

Ibn Khaldun wrote no major work in fields accepted in the Muslim philosophic tradition or which he considered to be the proper fields of philosophic investigation – logic, mathematics, physics, and metaphysics – politics, ethics, and economics.[1] Consequently, he was not regarded by his contemporaries, or by subsequent Muslim students of philosophy, as a philosopher (*failssuf*) in the sense in which al-Farabi, ibn Sina, and ibn Rushd were identified as such. Nevertheless, both his contemporaries and later Muslim students of history and society were aware that ibn Khaldun had made the most significant contribution to these specialized fields through his undertaking a scientific investigation of them.

It was, however, the enhanced interest in the study of history and society in modern times which led to the devotion of increased attention of ibn Khaldun's thought, to the recognition of his rank as a major Muslim thinker, and to the judgment that he was equal, if not superior, to the other well-known Muslim philosophers. This was in part the result of the higher prestige, and of the peculiar theoretical importance, which history and the sciences of society (as compared to the theoretical part of traditional philosophy) have come to enjoy in modern times.

But the more important reason for the singular interest in ibn Khaldun in modern times lies in the conclusions of his investigations in history and society. To the moderns, these conclusions appear to be more scientific than either the conclusions of the legal investigation of Muslim jurists or the politico-philosophic investigations of Muslim philosophers. Perhaps on the analogy of the revolt of modern science against traditional philosophy, and especially of modern political philosophy and social science against traditional political philosophy, it has been assumed that ibn Khaldun must have attempted a similar, or parallel, revolt against traditional Muslim philosophy in general, and against traditional Muslim political philosophy in particular.

Because of its important implications for the understanding of ibn Khaldun's thought, this crucial assumption deserves critical examination. The larger context of the present work seems to warrant an inquiry into the precise relationship between ibn Khaldun's new science and the Muslim philosophic

tradition. This relationship has been for the most part viewed in the perspective, and under the influence, of the modern philosophic and scientific tradition. In the present work, in contrast, the reader comes to ibn Khaldun through the preceding Greek and Muslim philosophic tradition, which ibn Khaldun knew and in relation to which he can be expected to have taken his bearing.

The reader, thus, must be shown, on the basis of ibn Khaldun's conception of philosophy and science, and of his conception of the relation between his new science and the established philosophic science, whether he was in fundamental agreement with that tradition (in which case it must be shown what the specific character of his contribution to that tradition was), a new, but a novel doctrine.

That this procedure is the sound historical procedure is usually admitted. But what has not been seen with sufficient clarity is that, in addition to providing the proper historical perspective for the understanding of ibn Khaldun's thought, it is of fundamental importance to elicit the basic principles or premises of his new science, and thus contribute to the understanding of its true character.

B

Ibn Khaldun's place in the history of Muslim philosophy, and his contribution to the Muslim philosophic tradition, must be determined primarily on the basis of the "Introduction" (*Muqaddimah*) and Book One of his "History" (*Kitab al-'Ibar*).2 That a work exploring the art of history, and largely devoted to an account of universal history,3 should concern itself with philosophy is justified by ibn Khaldun on the ground that history has a dual character: (a) an external (*zahir*) aspect which is essentially an account of, or information about, past events, and (b) an internal (*batin*) aspect. With respect to this latter aspect, history "is contemplation (theory: *nazar*) and verification (*tahqiq*), a precise causal explanation of things generated (*ka'inat*) and their origins (or principles: *mabadi*), and a profound science (*'ilm*) of the qualities and causes of events; therefore, it is a firm principle part (*asl*) of wisdom (*hikmah*), and deserves, and is well fitted, to be counted among its sciences."4

Whatever ibn Khaldun's position concerning the relation between wisdom and philosophy may have been (ibn Rushd, who was the last of the major Muslim Philosophers whom ibn Khaldun studied, considered that the two had become identical in his own time),5 he frequently uses the expressions "wise men" (*hukama'*) and "philosophers" (*Falasifah*) inter-changeably, and it is certain that he identifies the sciences of wisdom with the philosophic sciences.6 Furthermore, in his classification and exposition of the various sciences, he defines the basic characteristics of these sciences, enumerates them, and makes ample reference to the Greek and Muslim authors, who represent the specific philosophic tradition which he accepts as *the* tradition.

Ibn Khaldun's definition of the philosophic sciences is based on an emphatic and clear-cut distinction, if not total opposition, between the sciences which are natural to man as a rational being (therefore, he names them also "natural" [*tabi'iyya*]) and "rational" or "intellectual" [*'aqliyyah*] sciences)7and the legal, transmitted, or positive sciences based on the divine law, which are the special property of a particular

religious community. In contrast, the philosophic sciences are “those which a human being can understand by (virtue of) the nature of his thought and the subjects, the problems, the ways of demonstration, and the modes of teaching to which he is guided by perception, until his contemplation and investigation lead him to understand the true from the false in as far as he is a human being possessing thought.”[8]

The philosophic sciences are classified into four fundamental sciences or groups of sciences: logic, mathematics, physics, and metaphysics or the divine science.[9] This is followed by a concise history of these sciences (especially among the ancient Persians, the Greeks and the Muslims) which emphasizes (a) the relation between the rise and development of these sciences, and cultural development and prosperity, and their decline subsequent to cultural disintegration, and (b) the anti-philosophic attitude of the divine laws and religious communities, which led (especially in cases where sovereigns adopted this attitude, or religious orthodoxy was able to determine the type of learning pursued in the community) to deserting the philosophic sciences.[10]

The philosophic sciences reaching the Muslims were those of the Greeks.[11] Of the Greek philosophic schools ibn Khaldun mentions specifically those of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, and also the commentators of Aristotle, i.e. Alexander of Aphrodisias, Themistius, and others. Aristotle is singled out as “the most well-grounded of them in these sciences.”[12] Muslims recovered these sciences from the disuse to which they had fallen among the Byzantines, and after a period of searching for, acquiring, and translating the works preserved among the latter, Muslim scholars studied these Greek philosophic sciences, became skilled in their various branches, reached the highest level of proficiency in them, and surpassed some of their predecessors.

Although they differed with Aristotle on many issues, they generally recognized him as the foremost teacher (*Mu‘allim-i Awwal*). Of Muslim philosophers, ibn Khaldun mentions by name al-Farabi, ibn Sina, ibn Bajjah, and ibn Rushd. He indicates the decline of the philosophic sciences in Western Islam after the disintegration of cultural life in that region, and refers to reports concerning the then flourishing state of these sciences in Persia and eastward, and their revival and spread in Western Europe.[13]

Thus, there seems to be little doubt that when ibn Khaldun says that the study of the internal aspect of history is to be made one of the sciences of wisdom, he does not simply mean that it deserves a systematic, rational, and scientific study in general. What he means is much more specific and precise. The study of the internal aspect of history, if it is to be properly scientific, must be recognized as a significant part of, and is to be pursued as belonging to, one of the philosophic sciences or one of a group of the philosophic sciences (of the Socratic school)[14] epitomized in the works of Aristotle and also in those of the Muslim philosophers who belonged to that school and concentrated primarily on the exposition of the works of Aristotle.

C

To which of these sciences or groups of sciences does the investigation of the internal aspect of history belong? To answer this question, a fuller statement of the character and principles of this investigation is needed. Ibn Khaldun first formulates what this investigation is to comprise, and how it is to be conducted through a critique of Islamic historiography and the examination of the causes of the errors of historians in the "Introduction," in which he illustrates the distinction between the external and internal aspects of history and establishes that these errors are primarily due to the ignorance of the nature and causes of historical events, both in so far as these are permanent and homogeneous as well as in so far as they change and are heterogeneous

Then, in the first part of the introduction to Book One, the true character of history is said to be identical with "information about human association, which is the culture (*'umran*) of the world, and the states which occur to the nature of that culture...(and) all that is engendered in that culture by the nature of (these) states."[15] The primary cause of errors in transmitting historical information (and, consequently, in writing an untrue account of history), thus, becomes ignorance of the nature of the states of culture.

The states of culture and what is engendered in them is considered to form a part of all engendered things, whether essences or acts, each of which inevitably has a nature specific to its essence and to its accidental states. "What the historian needs for examining historical reports, and for distinguishing the true from the false, is knowledge "of the matters of engendered [existents] and the states in existents"[16] so as to be able to examine and determine the possibility or impossibility of the occurrence of the events themselves. Thus, the basic principles (i.e. the subject-matter, problems, method, and end) of a new investigation emerge, and are finally formulated as follows:

"The rule for distinguishing truth from falsehood in the [investigation of historical] information on the grounds of possibility and impossibility is for us to contemplate human association, which is culture, and to distinguish the states pertaining to its essence and required by its nature, what is accidental and need not be reckoned with, and what cannot possibly occur in it. If we do that, it would be for us a rule in distinguishing truth from falsehood in [historical] information, and veracity from lying, in a demonstrative manner admitting of no doubt. Then, if we hear about some states taking place in culture, we shall know scientifically what we should judge as acceptable and what we should judge as spurious. This will be for us a sound criterion by which historians will pursue the path of veracity and correctness in what they transmit. This is the purpose of this First Book of our work. It is, as it were, a science independent by itself. For it has a subject (namely, human culture and human association) and has [its own] problems (i.e. explaining the states that pertain to its essence one after the other)."[17]

We then have a seemingly independent science the subject of which is human association or culture, the problems of which are the essential states of culture, the method is that of strict demonstration, and the end is that it be used as a rule to distinguish the true and the veracious from the false and the spurious

in historical reports. To which philosophic science or group of sciences does this science belong, and in what way could it be characterized as a firm and principal part of philosophy?

That it does not belong to the logical or the mathematical sciences needs little argument. Logic is defined by ibn Khaldun as "the science which makes the mind immune to error in seizing upon unknown problems [or questions] through matters already realized and known. Its advantage is in distinguishing error from correctness in the essential and accidental concept and judgments, which he who contemplates aims at in order that he may understand the verification of truth in generated [things], negatively and positively."[18] Logic is an organon of thought and a propaedeutical science making rules used in the contemplation of all generated things, and in ascertaining the sound definitions of their essences and accidents. Since the subject and problems of the science of culture are said to belong to generated things, it will have to use the rules devised by the logical arts, but it is not itself concerned with the problems of how to achieve sound abstractions or how to distinguish them from those unsound.

It is only necessary to add here, first, that ibn Khaldun accepted, without reservation, Aristotelian logic as found in the logical writings of Aristotle (with the addition of Porphyry's *Isagoge*) and the commentaries of al-Farabi, ibn Sina, and ibn Rushd. Thus, logic for him deals with the mental forms abstracted from things and useful in the knowledge of the essences and the "truths" of things. Its central aim is demonstration or "the syllogism producing certainty," and "the identity of the definition and [the thing] defined," i.e., the subjects dealt with in the *Posterior Analytics* or "The Book of Demonstration."[19] Ibn Khaldun doubts the validity of the attempts of Muslim dialectical theologians (Mutakallimun) who concentrate on purely formal syllogism and forgo the fruits of the works of the ancients in the field of material logic.[20]

Secondly, ibn Khaldun repeatedly emphasizes that the science of culture must be a demonstrative science in the sense specified here, to the exclusion of dialectical, rhetorical, and poetic arguments which are based on commonly known and commonly accepted premises rather than on self-evident, necessary, and essential premises, or premises that are the conclusions of syllogisms based on such premises, as required by posterioristic logic.

As to the mathematical sciences, they are concerned with measurements or quantities, either theoretically, such as the study of pure numbers, or practically as applied arts. In the latter case, they are useful in the study of culture, since they acquaint us with the mathematical properties of things, such as the stars, which exercise an influence on culture, and form the bases of many of the crafts which are an important aspect of cultural life.[21] But although the science of culture makes use of the conclusions of the mathematical sciences and is concerned with quantity as one of the categories of all generated things, its subject is not quantity as such, but the nature and causes of a specific generated thing which is culture.

This leaves us with natural sciences and metaphysics, or the sciences of natural and divine existents. Since the study of generated things, their natures, their states, and all that is engendered in them,[22] is

the specific subject of natural science or natural philosophy, the new science of that specific generated thing which is culture seems to form a part of natural philosophy and to belong to it by virtue of its subject. This statement must now be amplified by giving answers to: (a) why does the new science of culture deserve to be a natural science and counted among the natural sciences, and (b) how does ibn Khaldun establish it as a firm and principal part of natural philosophy?[23]

D

Natural science is defined by ibn Khaldun as follows:

"Then [after logic], the contemplation among them [i.e. the philosophers] turns to: [a] the sensible, viz bodies of the elements, and those generated from them (viz minerals, plants and animals), celestial bodies, and natural motions, or the soul from which motions emerge, etc. This art is named "natural science," and it is the second of these (philosophic) sciences. Or [b] the contemplation turns to the matters that are beyond nature."[24]

This is explained further in the second and more elaborate definition supplied by ibn Khaldun in his own way:

"[Natural science] is the science which inquires about the body with respect to what adheres to it, viz. motion and rest. Thus, it contemplates the heavenly and elemental bodies, and what is begotten from them (man, animals, plants, and minerals), what is generated inside the earth (spring, earthquakes), in the atmosphere (clouds, vapours, thunder, lightning, and thunderbolts), etc, and the principle of motion in bodies, i.e. the soul in its various species in man, animals, and plants."[25]

Then he mentions the standard works on natural science. The physical parts of the Aristotelian corpus, which have been followed, explained, and commented on by Muslim authors, the most well-known and reliable of these being ibn Sina in the corresponding parts of three major works (*Shifa', Najat* and *Isharat*), and ibn Rushd in his summaries of, and commentaries on, Aristotle's works on physical sciences, with the difference that ibn Sina seems to disagree with Aristotle on many problems of natural science, while ibn Rushd remains in close agreement with him.[26]

These statements point to a conception of the character and scope of natural science, and the order of its parts, which is not ibn Khaldun's own, but one which was elaborated by ibn Sina and ibn Rushd on the basis of a tradition initiated in Muslim philosophy by al-Farabi, and which has a firm foundation in Aristotle's own writings on nature. Following the scheme suggested by Aristotle, e.g. in the opening chapter of *Meteorology*,[27] these philosophers included within natural science or natural philosophy the works beginning with the *Physics* and ending with the *De Anima* and the *Parva Naturalia*, and arranged their objects, order, and rank, as follows: (1) the general or first principles of all natural existents or of all that is constituted by nature, or "the first causes of nature and all natural motion" (*Physics*), (2) the simple or primary parts of the world, or "the stars ordered in the motion of the heavens" (*On the Heaven*

and the World), (3) the motion of the natural elements, or their generation and corruption, alteration and growth (*On Generation and Corruption*), and (4) the accidents and affections common to the elements (*Meteorology*).

Then follows the study of particular existents that are generated and corrupted: (5) the minerals which are the simplest and closest to the elements (*On Minerals*), (6) plants (*On Plants*), (7) animals (*The Parts of Animals*, etc.), and (8) the general principles of the soul and its parts (*On the Soul*), followed by the particular powers of the soul and the accidents existing in plants and animals by virtue of their possessing soul (*Parva Naturalia*).28

According to this scheme, the science of the soul, which is the form of animal and plant bodies, falls within the scope of the science of nature, and the science of the intellect, which is one of the faculties of the soul, falls to the connection of nature to soul, and of soul to intellect, and the study of these connections certainly did not mean, nor did it lead to, the reduction of one to the other. For the scheme was not merely a deductive one by which the more complex is deduced from the more simple or the particular from the general, but a methodological plan of investigation beginning with the general and simple and leading to the particular and complex, recognizing their substantial heterogeneity, and using observation, enumeration, and induction, to a greater extent than, and in conjunction with, syllogistic reasoning.

Furthermore, the study of soul and intellect leads the investigator to matters that are beyond nature, and that could no more be, strictly speaking, considered within the scope of a natural investigation, but in this case, these matters cannot claim the advantages enjoyed by natural investigation which are solidly based on human experience and perception. One could then perhaps speak with ibn Rushd of the possibility of delimiting the investigation of soul and intellect to what corresponds most to the manner of investigation conducted, and, thus, arrives at explanations similar in character to those given by natural science – taking this to be more fitting to the purpose of Aristotle.29

But to grant the difficulties raised by this scheme does not alter the fact that both for Aristotle and the Muslim philosophers mentioned above, the inclusion of the study of soul and intellect within the general science of nature is legitimate. Consequently, the study of man and of all that concerns man is considered an integral part of the study of nature or of natural science. This does not hold true only for his body in so far as it shares common properties with all natural bodies, for the properties of generation and corruption which he shares with all composite things, and for the faculties of his soul which he shares with plants and other animals, but also for his specific differentiae as a rational being: his sociability and his association with others and co-operation with them in the development of the arts, his appetites and desires, his purposeful, organized social activity, his practical and theoretical intellect, and his ability to comprehend things through visions, dreams, and prophecy, and to use what he comprehends in ordering his political life. All such matters are dealt with in the science of the soul.30

Human association or culture, as ibn Khaldun conceived it, is a natural property of man as a rational

being. He intended to investigate its modes or states, the various accidents that occur in it, and its generation and corruption; and to develop this investigation into a full-fledged inquiry or science. Since the basis of man's sociability, and its primary manifestations, can legitimately fall within the scope of natural science, the elaboration of this natural property of man, and the investigation of the various aspects of social organization to which it leads man, can also legitimately belong to natural science and be counted as one of the natural sciences.

Whether the new science will in fact prove well-fitted to be considered a natural science, will of course depend on whether it will remain loyal to the method of investigation followed in the natural sciences. Ibn Khaldun was aware of the fact that the subject he intended to investigate had been studied in contexts other than natural science, notably in the Muslim legal sciences and in the practical philosophic sciences. Thus, even if he had insisted on a science of human association or culture which had to be a part of philosophy or wisdom, he could have chosen to study it as a practical science.

The reason for not choosing this alternative will be discussed in a subsequent chapter.[31] It is sufficient in the present context to insist that what he sought was a natural science of human association. He examined the works of Plato and Aristotle, and of Muslim thinkers, and found[32] that they had not elaborated such a science before. Thus he set out to make good this deficiency in the natural sciences. But if he is to succeed in his effort, he must show unequivocally that the new science is indeed being firmly established on the foundation of natural philosophy.

E

The "History" was originally divided by ibn Khaldun into an "Introduction" (*Muqaddiman*) and three Books. The "Introduction" deals with the problem of history in general, Book One contains the new science of culture, Book Two contains the history of the Arabs and other peoples (except the Berbers) down to ibn Khaldun's own time, and Book Three contains the history of the Berbers in Western Islam.[33]

Muqaddimah is a technical term meaning "premise." It can be generally defined as that upon which what follows depends and which does not itself depend upon that which follows.[34] It can be a general discussion or explanation introducing a subject, a book, or a science, the emphasis here being upon what needs to precede these rather than that upon which they strictly depend. In this sense the "Introduction" precedes the three Books and is a useful discussion clarifying the problems that are to follow. But this "Introduction" together with Book One came also be known as the *Muqaddimahi*, as an introduction to the last two books, or the historical account proper. This is a usage which is closer to the technical definition of the word, since, as ibn Khaldun explains, the writing of a correct historical account depends upon a prior understanding the science of culture.

The proper technical definition of *muqaddimah*, however, which is the specific definition used by logicians in the study of syllogism, induction, and analogy, is "that upon which the soundness of the proof depends, without an intermediary" or "a proposition made a part of syllogism or an argument."[35]

Such a premise should be veracious and properly related to the question or problem. It is of two kinds: (a) definitive (such as being primary, based on observation or experience, or on multiple authoritative reports, or being the conclusion of a syllogism based on such premises and (b) based on opinion (generally known or accepted notions, etc.)[36]

These can be made the premises of a single syllogism or argument, or of a whole science. In this latter case, they are named the "premise(s) of the science" and are defined as those upon which the setting out upon the science depends, and upon which its problems depend.[37] Apart from the general usages mentioned above, ibn Khaldun uses *muqaddimah* in this specific "logical" sense,[38] and the first section of Book One, which treats "human culture in general," is made up of six such premises. Since the new science "depends" upon the character of these premises, we must examine them in detail.

1. Association is Necessary for Man

Ibn Khaldun presents this premise or proposition as being the same as what the wise men express when they say that "man is 'political' by nature, i.e., he cannot dispense with association, which in their technical usage is the *'polis'*, and this is the meaning of culture."[39] It is significant, however, that ibn Khaldun substitutes, here at the outset, "necessary" for "by nature" and his explanation of the first premise indicates that this substitution was deliberate on his part. For, the way he grounds the need for association in human nature is by explaining that, while the "animal nature" of human beings are the same as those of the rest of the animals (in that like them they cannot exist except through nourishment and self-defence), they are inferior to some animals in that the ability of a single human being cannot possibly be equal to meeting his needs for nourishment and self-defence.

Therefore, man associates with others and develops the arts and tools, and the social organizations, necessary for nourishing and defending himself, not because his specifically "human nature" is essentially superior to the rest of the animals, or because he needs these arts and tools and organization to satisfy his specifically human needs, but because his natural constitution is deficient for conducting a solitary life, and because without associating with others he remains helpless and unable even to exist.[40]

Thus, ibn Khaldun, while purporting simply to "explain" what the philosophers meant by "man is political by nature," in fact concentrates on those traits of man's animal nature which render association a necessary condition for the very life and continued existence of man. Nevertheless, he emphasizes that this premise and its explanation as he presents them are also based on the conclusions of the investigation of animal and human natures conducted by the philosophers and confirmed by the investigation of the organs of the human body conducted by Galen – more specifically, that the "demonstration" of this premise was presented by the philosophers[41] referring to the appropriate passages of *De Anima* and the commentaries of them.[42]

On the surface, ibn Khaldun's only object is to the attempt of the philosophers to "add" a rational proof of

prophecy to their demonstration of the political nature of man, while in fact he seems also to object to the widening of the scope of the proposition in such a manner as to state that association is necessary for man's well-being in addition to its being necessary to his existence. What he seems to indicate is that the study of human nature within the scope of natural science cannot demonstrate this proposition in this wider sense; therefore the science of culture must restrict itself to accepting the proposition in its narrower sense, susceptible to demonstration within natural science, only. In other words, according to him, the study of culture should be a sociological one without ethical extensions.

2. Distribution of Culture on Earth

This premise simply recounts what has already been explained by the wise men who have contemplated the states of the world relative to the shape of the earth, the generation of animals and of human species, and the inhabited parts of the earth; it is a summary of the geography of the seven zones and the information available concerning the conditions prevailing in each.[43] Here, ibn Khaldun restates the various conclusions demonstrated in such parts of natural philosophy as the investigation of the nature of elements of generation and corruption, of minerals, and of localities of animals,[44] and completes them through such information as has been supplied by observation and authenticated multiple reports found in the works of astronomers, and, in particular, in the works of Greek and Muslim geographers like Ptolemy, al-Mus'udi, and al-Idrisi.[45] It is also in these works that the word *'umran*, which ibn Khaldun used as a technical term indicating the subject of his new science, is most frequently encountered.

3. Temperate and Intemperate Zones and the Influence of the Atmosphere upon the Colour of Human Beings and many of their States

This premise is again based on the investigation of the nature of generated beings, and the nature of heat and cold and their influence upon the atmosphere and the animals generated in it, proving that the colour of human beings and many of their arts and modes of life are caused by atmospheric conditions.[46] The only specific authority he invokes here is ibn Sina's *rajaz* poem on medicine.[47] He refutes the errors of genealogists which he attributes to their inattention to the natural basis of such matters as colours and other characteristic traits.[48]

Throughout, the emphasis is upon the natural (in contrast to the specifically human or the divine) basis of culture as a whole, for in addition to relatively, elementary things (such as colour and other bodily traits, and the manner of preparing food and housing), ibn Khaldun indicates the dependence of even the highly complex aspects of culture (such as the sciences, political authority, and whether there are prophets, religions, and divine Laws) upon the nature of the elements and their effects upon the atmosphere.[49]

4. Influence of the Atmosphere upon the Habits of Character (akhlaq) of Human

Beings

Ibn Khaldun indicates that the valid causal explanation of this premise has been established in the proper place in philosophy where gladness and sadness are explained as the expansion and contraction of the animal spirit, and are related to the more general premise establishing the effect of heat in expanding the air.[50] This completely natural explanation, founded on the properties of the elements, is made the basis of mirth, excitability, levity, etc. In contrast, the opinion of al-Mas'udi (copying Galen and al-Kindi), which attributes these habits of characters to the weakness or power of the brain, is considered inconclusive and undemonstrated.[51]

5. Effects of the Abundance and Scarcity of Food upon the Bodies and Habits of Character of Human Beings

The causal explanation of this premise is based on the investigation of the quantity of food and the moisture it contains in the various localities of animals, their action in expanding and contracting, and in increasing and decreasing the moisture of the stomachs of all animals, including human beings, and the effect of this upon the coarseness or delicacy of bodies, and upon the habits of character of human beings, including their piety and religion.[52] This natural causal explanation is based on experience and confirmed by the students of agriculture.[53]

6. Classes of those who perceive the "Unseen" (ghaib) among Human Beings by Natural Disposition or by Exercise

6. Classes of those who perceive the "Unseen" (ghaib) among Human Beings by Natural Disposition or by Exercise[54]

This premise is introduced in a discussion on prophecy and dream-vision which deals with (1) practical guidance as the aim of prophecy, and (2) the signs of prophetic mission: (a) the psychological state at the time of revelation, (b) good character prior to embarking upon the prophetic mission, (c) the call to religion and worship, (d) noble and pedigree, and (e) marvels and miracles. The difference between the dialectical theologians and the philosophers concerning how marvels and miracles take place through the power of God or through the power of the prophet himself. The philosophers assert the latter on the basis that "the prophetic soul, among them, has essential properties from which these invasions (of nature) (*khawariq*) emanate through his (i.e. the prophet's) power and the obedience of the elements to him in this generation (of these invasions of nature)."[55]

As distinct from this introduction, ibn Khaldun presents his own statement (*qual*) in which he sets down "the interpretation of the true meaning (*haqiqah*) of prophecy as explained by men of verification (*muhaqqiqun*)," and mentions the real meaning of soothsaying, dream-vision, etc. The verified interpretation which ibn Khaldun adopts as the basis for his explanation of the true meaning of these phenomena proves to be a summary recapitulation of the entire subject of natural science, i.e., the

observable world (*'alam*) and the observable effects of unseen powers, sensible bodies, the elements, the spheres, the generable (minerals, plants, and animals ending in man), and the human soul and its powers.

These powers are again arranged in an ascending order: (1) the active powers, (2) the apprehensive powers which include (a) external senses, (b) internal senses, i.e. (i) common sense, (ii) imagination, (iii) estimation, (iv) memory, and (v) the power of thought which the philosophers call the rational calculative (*natiqah*) power.

"They all ascend to the power of thought (intellect) the instrument of which is the middle hollow of the brain. It is the power by which take place the movement of deliberation and the turn toward intellection, the soul is moved by it (i.e. this power) constantly through the longing instituted in it (i.e. the soul) towards that (intellection), to deliver (itself) from the abyss of potency and preparedness which belongs to human (nature) and to come out into act in its intellection (with which) it makes itself like the Heavenly Spiritual Host and comes at the lowest rank of the Spiritualities when it apprehends without bodily instruments. Thus, it moves constantly and turns toward that (intellection).

It may pass over altogether from human (nature) and its form of spirituality to the angelic (nature) of the upper region, not by (any) acquiring (of something from outside), but by the original and primary natural disposition toward it which God has placed in it."[56] On the basis of the structure and nature of the observable world, and the structure and nature of the human soul, and on the basis of the natural powers inherent in the latter, ibn Khaldun proceeds to classify and explain the various types of the activity of the soul in relation to the unseen world.

Thus, ibn Khaldun's own explanation of the foundation and the true meaning of these phenomena can be seen to be indeed based on the explanations of the natural world, and of the nature and powers of the human soul, as presented by "most" philosophers. Like them, he considers all such activities to be grounded throughout in the natural properties of the human soul which, in turn is closely related to the human body and the world of generation, of the elements, of sensible bodies, and of their motion and rest.[57] All other explanations are the "guesses and conjectures" of those who are not well grounded in these matters or who accept them from those who are not such, and are "not based on demonstration or verification."[58]

F

These, then, are the premises, and the only premises, of ibn Khaldun's new science of culture. Even a superficial examination of them reveals that they are all conclusions of inquiries undertaken by other sciences which are all *natural* sciences. The new science of culture, therefore, does not make a clear, a first, or a true beginning; it is not a pre-suppositionless science. It pre-supposes not only all the natural sciences that have provided it with premises, but also the validity of their principles, the soundness of their procedures and explanations, and the veracity of their judgments and conclusions.

The inquiry into the place of ibn Khaldun's new science of culture within the Muslim philosophic tradition thus indicates beyond reasonable doubt that (a) ibn Khaldun conceived of the new science as a philosophic science, and that by philosophy he understood the sciences originated by the Socratic school, and elaborated by Aristotle and his Muslim followers, (b) the new science falls within the general scope of traditional natural science or natural philosophy, and (c) more especially, all of its premises are drawn exclusively from the various natural sciences, and, thus, it is indeed firmly grounded in these sciences because it pre-supposes their conclusions, and builds itself on the firm foundation.

Ibn Khaldun's science of culture was conceived by him as a contribution to the established philosophic sciences within a limited field. The grounds for this science, or its basic premises, were already established by traditional natural science or natural philosophy. No philosopher before him had used these premises to develop a science of human association or culture based exclusively on them. The Greek and Muslim philosophers, with whose works on practical philosophy ibn Khaldun was acquainted, invariably found it necessary to proceed by utilizing other premises which could not claim the same solidity and demonstrable character as the premises provided by natural philosophy. Therefore, the understanding of the specific character of ibn Khaldun's contribution requires an examination of the relation between his new science of culture and traditional Greek and Muslim political philosophy. This will be attempted in Chapter 49 of this work.

Bibliography

The following list contains ibn Khaldun's surviving works (cf. above, n. 1). For a more detailed bibliography of editions, translations, and studies, cf, Walter J. Fischel, "Selected Bibliography" in F. Rosenthal's translation cited below, Vol. 3, pp. 485 – 512.

Kitab al-'Ibar (The History), ed. Nasr al-Hurini, 7 vols., Bulaq, 1284/1867; *Muqaddimat Ibn Khaldun* (Prolegomenes d'Ebn-Khaldoun), ed. E. M. Quatremere ("Notice et extraits des manuscrits de la Bibliotheque du Roi et autres bibliotheques, publies par l'Institut Imperial de France," t. 16 – 18, premieres parties; also "Tirage a part des..."), Paris, 1858. The three volumes correspond to the Bulaq ed., vol. 1; *The Muqaddiman: An Introduction ot History*, English tr. by Franz Rosenthal (Bollingen Series 43), 3 vols., Pantheon, New York, 1958; *Les prolegomenes d'Ibn Khaldoun*, French tr. by M. de Slane, 3 vols., Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, Paris, 1934 – 38; *al-Ta'rij bi ibn Khaldun wa Rihlatuhu Gharban wa Sharqan* (Auto-biography), ed. Mohammad ibn Tawit al-Tanju (*Athar ibn Khaldun*, vol. 1), Lajnah al-Talif, Cairo, 1370/1951; *Lubab al-Muhassal fi Usul al-Din* (Extracts from Fakhr al-Din al-Razi's *Muhassal*), ed. P. Luciano Rubio, Editori Marroqui, Tetuan, 1952; *Shafa' al-Sa'il li Tahsil al-Masa'il* (Answers to Questions on Mysticism), MS No. 24299B, Dar al-Kutub, Cairo, edition in preparation by Tanji.

1. The summaries of "many" of the works of ibn Rushd, which he wrote as a young man (reported by ibn al-Khatib, cf. al-Maqqari, Nafh al-Tib, ed. Mohammad Muhyi al-Din 'Abd al-Hamid [10 vols., Cairo, al-Maktabat al-Tijariyyah, 1367/1947, vol. 8, p. 286]), may prove of value in corroborating the philosophic notions found in the "History." Ibn Khaldun himself did

not evidently consider them of permanent value; they have not as yet been recovered and it is not known whether they have survived at all.

2. The Introduction and Book One are known together as the "Introduction" (Muqaddimah), cf. below p. 898. References in this chapter and in that on ibn Khaldun's Political Philosophy (cf. below, Book 4, part 6, Chap 49) are to the volumes, pages (and lines) of the Quatremere edition (Q) together with the corrections and/or additions supplied by the de Slane and F. Rosenthal in their respective French and English translations, both of which reproduce the pagination of the Quatremere edition on the margin. Cf. the Bibliography at the end of this chapter.

3. Cf. the account of the parts of the 'Ibar, below, p. 898.

4. Q 1, 2: 17 – 19.

5. Or that philosophic questions (i.e., the quest for wisdom) have become scientific logoi. Therefore ibn Rushd omits the well-known opinions and dialectical arguments found in Aristotle's works and does not enumerate the views current in his own time as Aristotle did, "because wisdom in his (Aristotle's) time had not become complete, and contained opinions of groups who were believed to be wise. But now that wisdom had become complete, and there being in our time no groups (merely) believed to be wise...the contemplation of these sciences must according to the mode in which mathematics is contemplated today. For this identical reason we must omit from them also the dialectical arguments." Ibn Rushd, Talkhis al-Sama' al-Tabi'i ("Paraphrase of the Physics"), MS. Cairo, Dar al-Kutub, Hikmah, No. 5, fol. 1 of Ahmad Fu'ad al-Ahwani, Talkhis Kitab al-Nafs (Paraphrase du "De Anima"), (Cairo, Imprimerie Misr, 1950), Introduction, p. 16; Kitab al-Sama' al Tabi'i, (Hyderabad, Dairatul-Maarif, 1365/1945) pp. 2 – 3.

6. Cf., eg. Q. 2, 385:5, 3, 87:3 – 4 (where both wisdom and philosophy are used together in naming these sciences), 210.

7. Q. 2, 385, 3, 86 – 87.

8. Q 2, 385:5 – 9.

9. There are three schemes according to which these sciences are enumerated. The four sciences or groups of sciences mentioned here appear in all of them. The order is that of the central scheme which divides the philosophic sciences into seven (mathematics, being sub-divided into arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music) (Q. 3, 88:12 - 19). This scheme seems to emphasize the order in which, according to ibn Khaldun himself, these sciences follow one another. Consider the characterization of logic as that which comes first (muqaddam) – (note also the use of muqaddimah as "principle" or premise") - and of mathematics as "coming after" logic (ba'dahu). In the first scheme (logic, natural science [or] metaphysics, and mathematics), the order seems to be in accordance with the contemplation of these sciences as pursued among them ('indahum), i.e. among the philosophers (Q. 3, 87 – 88). The third scheme (mathematics, logic) gives a summary exposition of these sciences "one by one" (Q. 3, 88:19 – 20, 93ff.).

10. Q. 3, 88 – 92.

11. Cf. Q. 1, 62 – 63.

12. Q. 3, 90:14.

13. Q. 3, 90 – 93.

14. For the distinction among the various Greek philosophic schools (which had equally distinct groups of followers in Muslim philosopny), and of their different attitudes to divine Laws, cf. al-Shahrastani, al-Milal w-al-Nihal, ed. Ahmad Fahmi Mohammad, three volumes, Cairo, Maktabat al-Hussein al –Tijariyyah, 1367 – 68/1647 – 48, vol. 2, pp. 104 – 07, 231ff.

15. Q. 1, 56:6 – 13.

16. Q. I, 57 – 58.

17. Q. 1, 61:7 – 19.

18. Q. 3, 87:5 – 9.

19. Q. 3, 108 – 12.

20. Q. 3, 112 – 16.

21. Cf. Q. 3, 87 – 88, 93 – 108.

22. Cf. above p. 893

23. See above, p. 890.

24. Q. 3, 87:9 – 15.

25. Q.3, 116:12 – 17.

26.

Q. 3, 116 – 17. This judgment is based on ibn Sina's own statements and the accusations levelled against him by ibn Rushd.

27. Meteorogica 1, i. 338a, 20 – 39a, 9.

28. Ibid., al-Farabi, Falsafah Aristutalis (The Philosophy of Aristotle), MS., Istanbul, Aya Sofia, No. 4833, fols. 34b ff; ibn Sina, "al-Nafs," Shifa', 2, 6. "Psychologie d'Ibn Sina (Avicenne) d'apres son oeuvre As-sifa,'" ed. Jan bakos, Prague, L'Academie Techecoslovaque des Sciences, 1956, pp. 7 – 8 (where he defends changing the order with respect to the soul and to treating it before plants and animals); al-Najat, 2nd printing, Cairo, 1357/1938, Part 2; 'Uyun al-Hikmah (Fontes Sapientiae), ed. Abdurrahman Badawi (Memorial Avicenne 5), Cairo, Institute Francais d'Archeologie Orientale, 1954, pp. 16 – 46; ibn Rushd, Kitab al-Athar al-'Ulwiyyah, Hyderabad, Dairatul-Maarif, 1365/1945, pp. 2 – 5; "al-Nafs," op. cit. pp 1 – 5.

29. "al-Nafs," op. cit., p. 3.

30. Cf. the references given in note 42.

31. Below, Chap. 49.

32. To his surprise, for he expected to find such a science elaborated by them; and only they could have elaborated it.

33. Q. 2, 16

34. Al-Tahanawi, Kashshaf Istilahat al-Funun (A Dictionary of Technical Terms), Eds. M. Wajih et al. Calcutta, Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1853 – 62, pp. 1215:21, 1217:2 – 6.

35. Ibid., p. 1216:4ff. (Cf. Q. 1, 308:7 – 8, 345:30).

36. Ibid. p. 1216:20 – 1217:2.

37. Ibid., 1217:5 ff.

38. Cf. Q. 1, 71 – 78.

39. Q. 1, 68:14 – 16.

40. Q. 1, 69 – 72.

41. Q. 1, 68:14 – 16, 11 – 12, 72:3 and 7.

42. Cf. Q. 2, 368 – 71, where the same argument is present in connection with the practical intellect, with a similar reference to the philosophers. Aristotle, De Anima, 3, 4 – 7; ibn Sina, Nafs, pp. 198ff.; Najat, pp. 163 – 65; Kitab al-Isharat w-al-Tanbihat (Le livre de theorems et des avertissements), ed. J. Forgot, Leyde, E. J. Brill, 1892, pp. 134 – 37; 'Uyun, pp. 44 – 46; bin Rushd, Nafs, pp. 69 – 72.

43. Q. 1, 73 – 148.

44. Q. 1, 73, 75, 82 – 85, 88 – 89, 94 – 95.

45. Q. 1, 75, 82, 84 – 88, 92, 93. 97.

46. Q. 1, 48ff., 151, 153 – 54.

47. Q. 1, 153.

48. Q 1, 151, 154.

49. q. 1, 149 – 59, 153 – 54.

50. Q 1, 155 – 56.

51. Q. 1, 157.

52. Q. 1, 157 – 61, 165.

53. Q. 1, 164.

54. Q. 1, 165ff. The sections translated by D.B. Macdonald (The Religious Attitude and Life in Islam, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1909, pp. 43ff.) remain the most exact rendering of the Arabic text.

55. Q. 1, 170:8 – 9.

56. Q. 1, 176:9 – 18. Cf. Macdonald, op, cit. p. 57.

57. Q. 1, 181, 186 – 87, 190, 192 – 93.

58. Q. 1, 196, 203 – 04.

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 *Athulujiyya* 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’adhdhin 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 it owns kind, a brick cannot harm the Imam's head since both are made of clay.

Furthermore, he asked the Imam if had felt any pain upon being hit on the head and if he could see the pain. Upon receiving the reply that 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, Bulhul 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 next[33]
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 Ispahan 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 all-Muntaha*,[44] several Qur'anic commentaries like *Amanat-i Ilahi*, commentaries upon the *Istihsar* 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'iyyat*), 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 (*tulil*) 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'aqqul*), 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 Safwids.

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] form 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'iyyah*),[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 conisisted 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' Qumshihi, 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 Muhisn may be considered to be a Shi'ah Ghazālī, 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 Ghazālī 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

Ghaz[illegible].[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 *Futuhat 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-Mohammadiyyah*) 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 Muhisn 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 kulliyyah-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 Safwid 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 Sheikhi 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 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 Suhraw2ardi 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 inIslam, 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 alpDaulah 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, Peris, 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 extateiqes 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 Asiac, 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 prophets, 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 Aristatalis 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 prais 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. Jadhaudat, 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 Sahifih-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 compete 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 Findirski, 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 why 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 Ihya’ al–Ihya’, 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 Ihya’.
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 ofthese 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 alp–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 creatreice..., Chap. 2.
92. Kalimat–i Maknunah, p. 61.
93. Ibid., pp. 74 – 75.
94. Ibid., pp. 167.ff.
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 Sheikhis 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 Sheikhis, 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.

Chapter 48: Sadr al–Din Shirazi

Sadr al–Din Shirazi (Mulla Sadra)[1]

A. Life and Works

The intellectual activity revived in Persia during the Safawid period, some features of which we have discussed in previous chapters, “The School of Ispahan,” found its culmination in Sadr al–Din Shirazi

known to his compatriots as Akhund Mulla Sadra and to his disciples as simply Akhund or as *Sadr al-Muti'allihin*, i.e. the foremost among the theosophers. This figure, about whom the whole intellectual life of Persia has revolved in the past three and half centuries and who is one of the major expositors of Islamic intellectual doctrines in the Shi'ah world, has remained until today almost completely unknown outside Persia, even in other Muslim countries. Many have heard of his name, and nearly all travellers to Persia since the Safawid period, who have been interested in the intellectual life of the country, have recognized his importance have been impressed by his fame,[2] yet no one outside a group of his disciples in Persia, who have kept his school alive until today, has done justice to his doctrines in presenting them to the world at large.

Mulla Sadra, whose complete name is Sadr al-Din Mohammad, was born in Shiraz in about 919/1571,[3] the only son of Ibrahim Shirazi. A member of the famous Qawam family of Shiraz, Ibrahim held the post of a vizier and was a powerful political and social figure in his native city. The young Sadr al-Din exhibited his exceptional intelligence from childhood and was given the best possible education in Shiraz.

Having completed his early studies, he became intensely interested in the intellectual sciences (*al-'ulum al-'aqliyyah*), especially metaphysics, and, therefore, left Shiraz for Ispahan which was at that time the capital and major seat of learning in Persia. In Ispahan he studied first with Baha' al-Din 'Amili, learning the transmitted sciences (*al-'ulum al-naqliyyah*) from him and later with Mir Damad who was his most famous master in the intellectual sciences.[4] Within a few years he became himself a recognized master in all the branches of formal learning especially in *Hikmat*[5] in which he soon surpassed his own teachers.

Not satisfied simply with formal learning, Mulla Sadra left the worldly life in general and retired to a small village named Kahak near Qum where he spent 15 years in asceticism and purification of his soul until, as he claims in his introduction to the *Asfar*, he became endowed with the direct vision of the intelligible world. He now came to "see" through illumination (*ishraq*) what he had previously learned theoretically from books.

Having reached both formal and spiritual perfection, Mulla Sadra returned once again to the world. Meanwhile, Allahwirdi Khan, the Governor of Shiraz, had built a large *madrasah* and invited Mulla Sadra to return to Shiraz as the head of the new school. Akhund accepted the offer and returned to his native city, making the school of Khan the major centre of intellectual sciences in Persia.[6] He remained there until the end of his life spending the last period of his terrestrial existence entirely in teaching and writing.

Despite his extreme piety which is shown by the fact that he made the pilgrimage to Mecca seven times on foot – he died in Basrah in 1050/1640 during the seventh journey – Mulla Sadra was often molested by some of the exoteric *'ulama'* who could not accept his gnostic interpretation of the doctrines of the faith and who denounced him publicly on more than one occasion. It was only the influence of his powerful family that made it possible for him to continue his teaching activities.

Mulla Sadra's life, then, can be divided into three distinct periods: the period of childhood and schooling in Shiraz and Ispahan, the period of asceticism near Qum at the end of which the composition of the *Asfar* was begun, and the period of teaching and writing which represents the result and fruition of the other two periods. His life is itself the testimony of one of the main aspects of his wisdom, that in order to be effective theoretical knowledge must be combined with spiritual realization.

The writings of Mulla Sadra, nearly all of which were composed in the last period of his life, are almost without exception of great merit and have been among the main sources from which the later generations of theologians, philosophers, and gnostics have drawn their inspiration. All his writings concern religious sciences or metaphysics, theodicy or *Hikmat*,[7] and are in a very clear and fluent style making them more easily understandable to the reader than the writings of his predecessors like Mir. Damad.[8] Since Mulla Sadra's writings are nearly completely unknown outside Persia, we take this opportunity to list the works which, according to the leading living authorities and the best historical evidence, were written by him.[9]

The works dealing with metaphysics and intellectual sciences include: *al-Asfar al-Arba'ad, al-Mabda' w-al-Ma'ad, Sirr al-Nuqtah* (possibly not authentic), *al-Shawahid al-Rububiyyah*, his most lucid and masterly work, *al-Hikmat al-'Arshiyyah*, glosses upon the *Hikmat al-Ishraq* of Suhrawardi Maqtul, commentary (*sharh*) upon the *Hidayah* of Athiri,[10] glosses upon the metaphysical parts of ibn Sina's *Shifa'*, *Fi Ittihad al-'Aqil w-alMa'qul, Fi Ittisaf al-Mahiyyah w-al-Wujud, Fi Bad' Wujud al-Insan, Fi al-Tasawwar w-al-Tasqid, Fi al-Jabr w-al-Tafwid, Fi Huduth al-'Alam, Fi Hashr, Fi Sarayan al-Wujud, fi al-Qada' w-al-Qadar, Fi Tashakhkhus, al-Masa'il al-Qudsiyyah, Iksir al-'Arifin, al-Waridat al-Qalbiyyah, al-Qawa'id al-Malakutiyyah, Hall al-Mushkilat al-Falakiyyah*, introduction to *'Arsh al-Taqdis* of Mir Damad, *al-Mazahir*, glosses upon *Rawashih al-Samawwiyyah* of Mir Damad, *Khalq al-A''mal, Kasr al-Asnam al-Jahiliyyyah, al-Mizaj, al-Ma'ad al-Jismanim, Tanqiyah* in logic, *diwan* of poems in Persian, and answers to various questions on philosophy.

The works that are primarily concerned with the religious sciences include the Qur'anic commentary: *Mafatih al-Ghaib, Asrar al-Ayat*, commentary upon a large number of the verses of the Qur'an, commentary upon a few prophetic *Ahadith fi Imamah*, glosses upon the Qur'anic commentary of Baidawi, glosses upon the Khwaja Nasir al-Din al-Tusi and upon Qushji's commentary upon the *Tajrid* (of doubtful authenticity), glosses upon the commentary of the *Lum'ah*, commentary upon the *Usul al-Kafi* of Kulaini, one of the four major sources of Shi'ah Law,[11] *Mutashabih al-Qur'an*, and a Persian treatise called *Sih Asl* on the soul and its destiny.[12]

Mulla Sadra composed also several quatrains in Persian, a few of which are mentioned in the traditional sources and some appear in his own handwriting on the first page of his commentary upon the *Hidayah*.[13] They deal mostly with the Sufi doctrine of the unity of Being (*wahdat al-wufid*), which may be considered to be the central theme of Mulla Sadra's doctrinal formulations. For example, in one of the quatrains he says,

The Truth is the spirit of the universe and the universe of the body,
And the orders of the angels are the senses of the body,
The heavens, elements, and compounds are its organs,
Lo! Unity is this, and the rest nothing but rhetoric.

In dividing the writings of Mulla Sadra into the intellectual and the religious ones, we do not in any way wish to imply that these two categories are completely separated in his view. On the contrary, one of the major achievements of Mulla Sadra consisted in uniting and harmonizing religion and the intellectual sciences. All of his works, even in philosophy, are replete with the Qur'anic verses in support of his conclusions, and all of his religious works, even the Qur'anic commentaries, are full gnostic and intellectual interpretations. One can only say that some of Akhund's writings are concerned more with religious questions and others more with intellectual ones.

Likewise, among the above-mentioned works some are more gnostic in character and others are presented in a more discursive language, although they all bear the fragrance of gnostic doctrines. Among writings which are of a more gnostic vein one may mention *al-Shawahid al-Rububiyyah, al-'Arshiyyah, Asrar al-Ayat*, and *al-Waridat al-Qalbiyyah*, and among those which are presented in a more discursive language are the *Sharh al-Hidayah* and the commentary upon the *Shifa'*.

Without a doubt the most important work of Mulla Sadra is the *Asfar al-Arba'ah*. It is comparable in dimension and scope to the *Shifa'* and the *Futuhat al-Makkiyyah* and in a way stands midway between the Peripatetic encyclopedia of ibn Sina and the compendium of esoteric sciences of ibn 'Arabi. The title of *Asfar* itself has been the cause of much difficulty to the few Orientalists who are acquainted with the book. The word *Asfar* is the broken plural for *safar* meaning journey as well as *sifr* meaning "book" from the Hebrew *sefer*. So it was that Gobineau considered the work to be a series of four books."[14]

Both views are, however, erroneous. Actually, *asfar* means journeys but not the account of travels in the ordinary sense of the word as Gobineau understood it to be. As Mulla Sadra himself mentions in his introduction to the book, the *Asfar* consists of the following four stages or journeys of initiatic realization (*suluk*): (1) the journey of the creature or creation (*khalq*) towards the Creator or the Truth (*Haqq*), (2) the journey in the Truth with the Truth, (3) the journey from the Truth to creation with the Truth, and (4) the journey with the Truth in the creation. This monumental work is, therefore, an account of the stages of the journey of the gnostic, systematized in a logical dress.

In content, the first book of the *Asfar* deals with Being and its various manifestations, the second with the simple substances, i.e. the intelligences, souls, and bodies and their accidents including, therefore, natural philosophy, and the third with theodicy, and the fourth with the soul, its origin, becoming and end. All these topics are treated in detail taking into account the voluminous.[15] In a sense, this vast *opus* is the culmination of a thousand years of contemplation and thought by Muslim sages as well as the foundation of a new and original intellectual perspective which issues forth from within the matrix of the Muslim tradition.

B. Sources of Mulla Sadra's Doctrines

According to Mulla Sadra, there are two forms of knowledge: that derived from formal instruction (*al-'ilm al-suwari*) and that which comes from intellectual intuition (*al-'ilm al-ladunni*). The first is acquired in school with the aid of a teacher, and the second based upon a greater degree of certainty than the first, is the science possessed by the prophets and saints through the purification of the soul and the catharsis (*tajrid*) of the intellect.[16] There are then, according to this view, two sources for Mulla Sadra's ideas, one formal and in a sense historical, i.e. manifested in history before him, and the other spiritual and invisible. Regarding this second source, which may be called his "guardian angel" or "hidden Imam," the source of all inner illumination, we have little to say except to emphasize its importance in Mulla Sadra's view.

It was the first category that we are primarily concerned here. There are five principal elements which are clearly detectable in the new analysis brought about by Mulla Sadra; they are also found, though less explicitly, in the doctrines of the Safawid sages before him. These elements include the philosophy of Aristotle and his followers, the doctrines of the Neo-Platonic sages, especially Plotinus whose *Enneads* the Muslims considered to be a work of Aristotle, the teachings of ibn Sina, the gnostic doctrines of ibn 'Arabi, and the principles of the Islamic revelation, especially the more esoteric teachings of the Prophet and the Shi'ah Imams.[17]

Among these sources the last two are of particular importance. Mulla Sadra created a new school of *Hikmat*, on the one hand, by putting the intuitions of the gnostics and especially of ibn 'Arabi and his followers into a logical dress and, on the other hand, by drawing out the philosophical and metaphysical implications of the teachings of the Imams especially as contained in the *Nahj al-Balaghah*, creating thereby for the first time what may be called a distinctly Muslim school of *Hikmat* based especially upon the inspired doctrines which form the very basis of Shi'ism.

Mulla Sadra, like Suhrawardi, held in great esteem the pre-Socratic philosophers and sages of Greece, both historical and mythological, and regarded Thales, Anaximander, Agathedemon, Empedocles, Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle as the last group of sages in the ancient world to have possessed wisdom in its entirety. He, like many other Muslim Hakims, considered Greek philosophy not to have started with Aristotle but to have ended with him and believed all the later Greek sages to have been masters of various arts and sciences other than metaphysics.[18]

For Mulla Sadra, therefore, Greek philosophy was essentially the wisdom of the Hebrew prophets inherited, systematized, and later in part forgotten by the Greeks, a wisdom which was integrated into the Muslim intellectual perspective and brought to full fruition in the light of the Islamic revelation. That is why Mulla Sadra wishes to reject some aspects of the teachings of either the Peripatetics or the Illuminationists he appeals so often first to the Qur'an and the Hadith and then to those fragmentary sayings of the pre-Socratic philosophers with which the Muslims were acquainted.

C. Mulla Sadra's Method and the Characteristics of His School

The particular genius of Mulla Sadra was to synthesize and unify the three paths which lead to the Truth, viz. revelation, rational demonstration, and purification of the soul, which last in turn leads to illumination. For him gnosis, philosophy, and revealed religion were elements of a harmonious ensemble writings. He formulated a perspective in which rational demonstration or philosophy, although not necessarily limited to that of the Greeks, became closely tied to the Qur'an and sayings of the Prophet and the Imams, and these in turn became unified with the gnostic doctrines which result from the illuminations received by a purified soul.[19]

That is why Mulla Sadra's writings are a combination of logical statements, gnostic intuitions traditions of the Prophet, and the Qur'anic verses. Through the symbolic interpretation of the sacred text he demonstrated the gnostic quality of the esoteric meaning of revelation and through intellectual intuition he made rational and discursive thought subservient to the universal truths of gnosis. In this fashion he achieved that synthesis of science and revelation in the light of gnosis and in the general perspective of Islam towards which Farabi and ibn Sina – the latter particularly in his Qur'anic commentaries – had aimed and which Ghazli, Suhrawardi and the whole chain of sages extended from the Saljuq to the Safawid period had sought to achieve from various points of view.[20]

In metaphysics or, more generally speaking, *Hikmat* itself, Mulla Sadra is credited with founding the third major school of Muslim "philosophy," the first two being the Peripatetic school, the greatest exponent of which in the Islamic world was ibn Sina, and the Illuminationistic or *ishraqi* school founded by Suhrawardi Maqtul.[21] Mulla Sadra adopted certain principles from each school as, for example, the hylomorphism from the Peripatetics and the gradation of Being and the celestial archetypes from the Illuminationists. Moreover, he added certain principles drawn from the teachings of the Sufis like ibn 'Arabi such as the continual becoming of the substance of the world and unity of Being which had never appeared as principles of any school of *Hikmat* and were never systematized in the logical language of the Hakims before Akhund's time. That is why Mulla Sadra is often credited with founding a new and original form of wisdom in the Muslim world is usually called *al-Hikmat al-Muti'aliyyah* as distinguished from *al-Hikmat al-Masha'iyyah* (Peripatetic philosophy) and *al-Hikmat al-Ishraqiyyah* (Illuminationist theosophy).[22]

D. Division of the Sciences

Before discussing the basic features of Mulla Sadra's doctrines it is useful to consider his conception of the relation of the sciences to one another and especially the meaning and significance accorded to *Hikmat*. In the introductory chapter of the *Asfar*, he divides the sciences, following the Peripatetics, into theoretical wisdom consisting of logic, mathematics, natural philosophy, and metaphysics and practical wisdom consisting of ethics, economics and politics.[23]

In the treatise *Iksir al-'Arifin*, he outlines a somewhat more complete and in a way more original division of the sciences.[24] According to this scheme, the sciences (*'ulum*) are either of this world (*dunyawi*) or of the other (*ukhrawi*). The first is divided into three categories: the science of words (*'ilm al-aqwal*), the science of acts (*'ilm al-af'al*) and the science of states of contemplation or thought (*'ilm al-ahwal* or *afkar*).

The science of words comprises the sciences of the alphabet, word-construction, syntax, prosody, poetics, and the meanings of terms in logic. The science of acts consists of what belongs to various material objects from which the arts of weaving, agriculture, and architecture come into being, what is of a higher degree such as the art of writing, the science of mechanics, alchemy, etc, what belongs to providing a living for the individual and the society from which the sciences of family, law, politics, and the *Shari'ah* are created, and, finally, what belongs to the acquisition of spiritual and moral virtues and the casting away from evil from which the "science of the path" (*'ilm al-tariqah*), i.e. Sufism, comes into being. As for the science of thought, it consists of the sciences of logical demonstration, the science of arithmetic, the science of geometry including astronomy and astrology, and the sciences of nature including medicine and the various sciences dealing with minerals, plants, and animals.

The sciences of the other world which are not accessible to the ordinary intelligence of men and are not destroyed with the death of the body include the knowledge of angels and intellectual substances, the knowledge of the Preserved Tablet (*lauh al-mahfuz*), and the knowledge of the Exalted Pen (*al-qalam al-a'la*), i.e. of the divine decree and of the first determination of the divine essence which Mulla Sadra, following the earlier Sufis, calls also by the name of the reality of Mohammad (*al-haqiqat al-Mohammadiyyah*). These sciences also include the knowledge of death, resurrection, and all that pertains to life hereafter.[25]

Among the pursuits with which man can occupy himself in this life, none stands in as exalted a position as *Hikmat* the divisions of which we have outlined above. And among its branches none is as important and principled as metaphysics or the science of the principle of things, so that this branch of knowledge alone is often considered worthy of being called *Hikmat*. Mulla Sadra defines this science as "coming to know the state of the essence of beings as they are, to the extent of human capacity" or " a man's becoming an intellectual world (microcosm) corresponding to the objective world (macrocosm)," or, to quote still another definition, "the comprehension of universals and catharsis from the world of matter."[26]

The above definitions imply that *Hikmat* is a purely intellectual form of knowledge in which the knower himself undergoes a certain transformation in the process of knowing and his soul becomes a mirror in which the cosmic hierarchy is reflected. With such a conception then it is no wonder that Mulla Sadra spent so much of his life in teaching and writing about *Hikmat* only and regarded all the other sciences as its subsidiaries.

E. Principles of Mulla Sadra's Doctrines

In discussing the basic principles of *Hikmat* as understood and expounded by Mulla Sadra, we have chosen to mention those major principles of his thought which distinguish him from his predecessors and which are the characteristic elements of his metaphysics. The doctrines of the Peripatetic and Illuminationistic schools as well as the ideas of ibn 'Arabi and his followers form the common background for the metaphysics of Mulla Sadra.

There are four topics in each of which Mulla Sadra has departed from earlier philosophical perspectives and which form the principles of his whole intellectual vision. These four subjects concern (1) being and its various polarizations, (2) substantial motion or the becoming and change of the substance of the world, (3) knowledge and the relation between the knower and the known, and (4) the soul, its faculties, generation, perfection and final resurrection. We shall consider these questions in the above mentioned order, emphasizing in each case the particular complexion given to these subjects by Mulla Sadra.

1. Unity and Polarization of Being

The cornerstone of Mulla Sadra's doctrines is the principality and the unity and gradation of Being. As we have already mentioned,[27] one of the major points of contention among Muslim philosophers and theologians concerned the question whether Being or the quiddities (*mahiyyat*) of things are principal. We saw that the Muslim Peripatetics like the Sufis believed in the principality of Being, i.e. the objective reality of Being independent of mental abstractions and considered the quiddities to be nothing but accidents, while the Illuminationists beginning with Suhrawardi Maqtul and followed by Mulla Sadra's own teacher, Mir Damad, developed a "metaphysics of essences" and held the opposite view that existence is an accident and that the essences are principal. In this debate Mulla Sadra sided definitely with the Peripatetics and Sufis in accepting the principality of Being, and opposed the Illuminationists.

On the question of unity and gradation of Being, however, Mulla Sadra departed from peripatetic teachings completely. In the view of the Muslim Peripatetics the being of each thing is in essence different and distinct from other beings while it is principal with respect to its own quiddity. According to Akhund, however, Being is the same reality in all realms of existence, it is a single reality but with gradations and degrees of intensity. Just as we say the light of the sun, the light of a lamp, or the light of a glow-worm and mean the same subject, i.e. light, but with different predicates, i.e. under different conditions of manifestation, so in the case of Being, the being of God, of a man, of a tree, or of a heap of earth are all one Being or one reality but in various degrees of intensity of manifestation.[28]

Moreover, Being, no matter where it manifests itself, appears always with its attributes or armies (*'asakir*), as they are traditionally called, such as knowledge, will, power, etc.[29] A stone, because it exists, is a manifestation of Being and, therefore, has knowledge, will, power, and intelligence like men or angels. However, since at the level of a stone the manifestation of Being is very weak, these

attributes are hidden and not perceptible.[30]

The various beings in the world of manifestation are limitations of the one reality or Being. These limitations are abstracted by the mind and become the forms of quiddities (*mahiyyat*) of things, and when transposed into the principle domain, they become the Platonic ideas or archetypes. Unlike Being which is objectively real and in fact is the reality of the cosmos, the *mahiyyat* are accidents of Being abstracted by the mind without having a reality independent of Being. Even the archetypes (*al-a'yan al-thabitah*) possess a form of Being which in this case is God's knowledge of them.

What distinguishes the earthly manifestation of things from their celestial archetypes is not a gradation of the *mahiyyat* from more subtle to more gross modes of existence, as certain followers of the Illuminationist school believe. Rather, it is the intensity of Being which determines the level of existence of each creature. If the light of Being shines upon the form or quiddity of a man with a greater intensity than now, he will become the man of the intermediate world (*barzakh*) and if the intensity is greater still he will become the celestial man identified with his heavenly archetype.

Absolute Being itself, which is the proper subject for metaphysics, is above all limitations and, therefore, above all forms or *mahiyyat*, above all substances and accidents. It is the "Form of forms" and the Agent of all acts. By manifesting Itself longitudinally (*tuli*) It brings into being the various orders of Being from the archangels to terrestrial creatures and by manifesting itself latitudinally (*'ardi*) It creates the various members of each order of Being.[31] Being is the reality of all things so that the knowledge of anything is ultimately the knowledge of Its being and, therefore, of Being itself. Likewise, the archetypes exist eternally through God's knowledge without which they would have no share whatsoever in Being.

Since Being is unity in multiplicity and multiplicity in unity,[32] it partakes of logical distinctions and divisions while remaining in essence indivisible and above all polarizations. Mulla Sadra goes into great detail about the various divisions and categories of Being and in fact most of the first book of the *Asfar* is concerned with them. We mention here a few of the division which Akhund discusses with great rigour in his writings, especially in the monumental *Asfar*.

One division of Being is into connective being (*al-wujud al-irtibati*) and self-subsistent being (*al-u'ujud al-nafsi*). Connective being is that which connects a subject with a predicate as in the statement, "Man is a rational animal." Self-subsistent being is one which stands independently by itself and is not simply the means of connecting two terms. This category of being which exists in itself is in turn divided into three kinds: that which is objective existence is not the quality of something else and is called substance (*jauhar*), that which is the quality of something else and is called accident (*'ard*), and, finally, that which has need of no cause outside itself, i.e. the Being of God. From another point of view Mulla Sadra considers the being of all things other than God to be the connective being (*wujud al-rabit*) and only the Being of God to be Being *per se*.[33]

Another division of Being adopted by Mulla Sadra is that of the necessary (*wajib*), possible (*mumkin*),

and impossible (*mumtani'*) beings which nearly all the Muslim philosophers and many theologians coming after ibn Sina and following his example, have accepted.[34] If the intellect considers a being and finds that the meaning of being is essential to it, i.e. lies in its essence, and that there are no causes outside it which have brought it into being, that being is called the Necessary Being. If it has need of a cause outside itself it is called possible being. Moreover, the attribute of possibility pertains to its quiddity as well as to its being. The possibility of its quiddity concerns its relation to *its particular being*, and the possibility of its being pertains to its relation to *the Necessary Being*. The *being* or existence of each object, therefore, depends upon the being of God and the knowledge of anything upon the knowledge of the root or principle of its own being. Since the root or basis of the Necessary Being is unknowable, the knowledge of the being of things remains also unknowable to us and it is only the quiddities or *mahiyyat* which we can know.

These quiddities, as already mentioned, are the limitations placed upon being and abstracted by the mind. The intellect in perceiving any object immediately analyses it into being and quiddity, the latter consisting of the limit determination of the former. It is only in the case of the Divine Being that such an analysis cannot be made because Absolute Being has no *mahiyyah*. One can say that It is without *mahiyyah* or that Its Being and *mahiyyah* are identical.

The quiddities in themselves are only mental concepts without a separate objective existence so that the effects produced by things come from their being and not from their quiddity. Likewise, cause and effect are categories of being which in one case becomes the cause and in the other the effect of things.

The *mahiyyat* are either particular or universal; the latter either exist before or are abstracted by the intellect from particulars.[35] The universals which exist independently of all particulars are the archetypes of Platonic ideas upon the reality of which Suhrawardi Maqtul had insisted against the view of the Peripatetics. Mulla Sadra likewise criticizes Aristotle and ibn Sina for considering the Platonic ideas to be nothing but the forms of things impinged upon the divine intellect. He insists upon the reality of the archetypes in a spiritual world that is completely independent of the world of particulars as well as of all mental images formed in the human mind.[36]

Akhund praises Suhrawardi Maqtul and accepts fully the reasons he had given for the existence of the Platonic ideas or "masters of the species" (*arbab al-anwa'*). There is a spiritual man in the spiritual world who is the real cause for the activities and ontological qualities of the terrestrial man; likewise in the case of other species each has an intelligible idea or archetype which governs all the activities and life of that species on earth.

The archetype is in essence one with its particulars but differs from them in characteristics which arise from the substance or "matter" of the particulars. The archetype appears different in each stage (*taur*) of manifestation while in the realm of reality it is one and the same truth. The beings of this world are the reflections and shadows of the archetypes so that they are like them and share in their reality and at the same time are different from them in being less real and farther removed from the source of Being.

One of the principles for which Akhund is famous is called *imkan al-ashraf* or "the possibility of that which is superior." According to this principle, just as each being in treading the path of perfection passes through various stages from the lowest to the highest, so it is necessary that for each imperfect being in this world there be degrees of being in the higher stages of the cosmic hierarchy, since each being has descended from the divine Principle through intermediate states of being. For example, the being of man on earth in his present state of imperfection necessitates the being of man in the intermediary world of souls, and the latter the being of the spiritual man in the intelligible world. According to this principle, therefore, the very existence of quiddities in their earthly state of souls or the world of inverted or reflected forms (*al-amthal al-mu'allaqah*) and these in turn necessitate their existence in the spiritual world of simple intellectual substances.

After showing the *mahiyyat* are in reality limitations of being, Mulla Sadra goes on to assert that the logical distinction made by Aristotle and all the later philosophers between substance and the accidents which together form the ten categories concerns only the *mahiyyat*; Being properly speaking, is neither substance nor accident but above both. When we say of a thing that it is such and such a substance or that its particular quality and quantity are its accidents we refer only to its *mahiyyahi* and not to its being.

The relation of cause and effect, however, contrary to that of substance and accidents, concerns only the being of things.[37] All things in the universe have a cause and an effect and since everything is a manifestation of Being, every effect is but an aspect of its cause and cannot in essence differ from it. That is why the well-known principle that from unity only unity can issue forth, *ex uno non fit nisi unum*, must be true. From the divine essence which is simple and one, only a simple being can issue forth. Mulla Sadra calls the first manifestation of the divine essence extended being (*wujud al-munbasit*), the first intellect, the sacred effusion (*faid al-muqaddas*) or the Truth of truths (*haqiqat al-haqa'iq*) which he considers to be one in essence but partaking of degrees and stages of manifestation.[38]

He divides reality into three categories: of the divine essence, of "Absolute Being" which he identifies with extended being, and of relative being which that of the creatures is.[39] The cause of all things, therefore, is extended being which in turn the first determination of the divine essence. God is, thus, the Cause of causes and the Ultimate Source of all effects to be seen in the universe, because all causes and effects arise from the beings of things and all beings are in reality the stages of the One Being.

To terminate our discussion of the polarizations of Being in cosmic existence we must also consider the question of form and matter. On this question Mulla Sadra sides with the Peripatetics and is against the Illuminationists in accepting the theory of hylomorphism. In his view, however, matter is not limited to the corporeal domain. Rather, it is the aspect of potentiality which manifests itself in all the realms of existence according to the conditions of that particular realm. Bodies have a matter belonging to the corporeal world, and souls (*anfas*), a matter conformable to the subtle world of the psyche, moreover, in each world matter is a lower degree of being of the form with which it is united and for that reason accompanies it in all realms of existence until the highest realm which is the world of pure intelligences

(*mujarradat*). That is why, as Akhund expresses it, matter has love for form which forever compels it to seek union with it (form). Only in the intelligible world, which is also called the *'alam al-jabarut*, are the spiritual realities completely separated from and free of all species of matter, even the most subtle.

2. Substantial Motion

The question of potentiality leads to that of motion because motion, as Aristotle said, is becoming actual of that which is potential. Mulla Sadra rejects the possibility of sudden change from one substance to another which the Peripatetics accepted along with gradual change. Rather, he considers all change to be a form of motion and introduces the idea of substantial motion (*al-harakat al-jauhariyyah*),[40] which is another of the well-known principles associated with his name, as a basis of his whole outlook from which he goes on to prove the creation of the world in time, bodily resurrection and many other doctrines that will be discussed in the course of this chapter.

It is well known that the Muslim Peripatetics, following Aristotle, limited motion to only four of the ten categories, i.e. quantity (*kam*), quality (*kaif*), place (*makan*), and substance,[41] the last understood only in the sense of generation and corruption. Ibn Sina rejected completely substantial motion in any sense other than instantaneous coming into being and passing away and argued that since the essence of a thing depends on its substance, if that substance were to change; its essence would also change and lose its identity.[42]

Following the Sufis, Mulla Sadra considered the world to be like a stream of water which is flowing continually and believes motion to be nothing but the continuous regeneration and re-creation of the world at every instance.[43] According to him, it is not only the accidents but the substance of the universe itself that partakes of motion and becoming, i.e. continuous re-creation and rebirth.[44] In order to prove this assertion, Akhund makes use of several arguments. For example, he writes that it is an accepted fact that accidents have a need of a substance upon which they depend for their being and properties. Their subsistence depends upon the subsistence of their substance and their creation and regeneration upon its creation and regeneration. Therefore, every change which takes place in the accidents of a body must be accompanied by a corresponding change in the substance; otherwise the being of the former would not follow the being of the latter. Or, in other words, since the effect must be the same as its cause, the cause or substance of a changing accident must itself be changing.

In addition, it is known that all beings in the universe are seeking perfection and are in the process of becoming and change in order to overcome their imperfections. Since divine manifestation never repeats itself, God creates new theophanies at every moment in order to remove imperfections and bring new perfections to things. The matter of each being, therefore, is continuously in the process of wearing a new dress, i.e. being wed to a new form, without, however, casting away its older dress. It is only the rapidity of this change that makes it imperceptible and guarantees the continuity and identification of a particular being through the stages of substantial motion.

According to Mulla Sadra, each body consists of matter and two forms: one, the form of the body which gives matter dimensions and the possibility of accepting other forms, and the other the form of the species (*surah nau'iyyah*) which determines the species and identity of the body. Each of these two forms is at every instant changing, and matter is taking on new forms at every moment. Moreover, at each stage of substantial change the totality of a being which itself consists of form and matter may be considered to be the matter of the aspect of potentiality for the next stage the actualized aspect of which then becomes the form.

The power or force which motivates this change in nature which is a force hidden within the cosmic substance. In fact, since Being comes before nothingness, motion in this world comes before rest through the force immanent in the cosmos. Needless to say, this motion is limited to the degrees of cosmic existence in which matter is present, i.e. to corporeal and subtle manifestation, and does not extend to the world of pure intelligences or archetypes which are beyond all change.

Substantial motion itself has also the two aspects of change and permanence. Each form has two faces, one in the world of archetypes and the other in nature, the first permanent and the second in continuous renewal. The substance of the world itself is, therefore, the intermediary between permanence and change; it possesses two aspects, one which is continuously in motion and the other, which Mulla Sadra identifies with the intelligences, above all change.

Time, for Akhund as for Aristotle, is the quantity of motion, which, in a world of continuous substantial motion, becomes an inherent feature of cosmic existence.[45] It is, more specifically, the measure of the substantial motion of the heavens but not the measure of their rotation as held by the Peripatetics. The heavens, according to Mulla Sadra, are in continuous contemplation of the perfection of their beloveds, i.e. the universal intellects which at every instant cause a new form to be projected upon the essence of the universal souls. The cause of celestial motion is, therefore, the desire to reach perfection, a goal which, because of its limitlessness, makes celestial motion endless. The heavens are in continuous creative worship, their motion being a sign of their contemplation of the divine by means of the intelligences, and their causing generation and growth in nature through their illumination being a sign of their act of creation. The whole world, therefore, both in its gross and subtle domains, partakes of substantial motion, and time is the measure of this motion as it occurs in the heavens where it is most regular as well as regulatory.[46]

Mulla Sadra makes use of the principle of substantial motion to explain many of the most intricate problems of metaphysics and physics including the relation between permanence and change which we have already mentioned, the creation of the world, the creation of the soul, and various eschatological questions. This principle can, therefore, be regarded as one of the distinguishing features of his doctrinal formulation.

As to the question of creation Akhund opposes the simple creation *ex nihilo* of the theologians who believe the world to have been brought into being in time from utter nothingness. Likewise, he rejects the

view of the Peripatetics who believe the world to have been created only in essences or in *principio* but not in time and the view of Mir Damad about *al-huduth al-dahri*.[47] Mulla Sadra believes that creation is in time (*al-huduth al-zamani*) because through substantial motion the being of the universe is renewed at every moment or, more explicitly; that the world is created at every instant, so that one can say that the being of the world depends upon its non-being at a previous moment. Where he differs from the theologians is that his conception of creation *ex nihilo* is complementary to the view that the archetypes of the world of creation exist changelessly in the intelligible world and that the world is connected with its divine origin through a permanent hierarchy.

This hierarchy begins with the first determination of the essence which Akhund, following the Sufis, calls the reality of Mohammad.[48] This is followed by the pure intelligences which are completely separated from matter and potentiality, the last of which is the giver of forms to the universe and the governor of the world of generation and corruption.[49] This last intellect is like a mill that grinds out new forms at every moment to feel the *hyle* of the world. It governs the world according to divine decree and gives revelation to prophets an inspiration to saints. Following the intelligible hierarchy there is the world of cosmic imagination or inverted or reflected forms or the purgatory between the intelligible and the material domains and, finally, the visible universe. The world is, therefore, created in time in the sense that its being is renewed after a moment in which it "was not"; at the same time it is the terminal state of an immutable hierarchy which through the subtle and angelic realms of being relates the visible cosmos to its divine source.

3. Divine and Human Knowledge

From what we have already said, it is clear that for Mulla Sadra knowledge forms the very substance of cosmic manifestation itself and is moreover the gate to and means of salvation for the soul. Like all other gnostics Akhund considers knowledge and being, or, from another point of view, the knower and the known,[50] to be essentially the same and identifies the being of things with God's knowledge of them.[51] God knows His own essence and His essence is none other than His being, and since His Being and essence are the same, He is at once the knower, the knowledge, and the known.

In the case of pure intellects or forms that are completely divorced from matter also, the intellect and the intelligible are the same, the difference in the two instances being that, although knowledge of the intellects is identical with their being, it is not identical with their quiddities, since their being surpasses their quiddities, whereas in the case of God's knowledge is identical both with Being and quiddity, since God's quiddity is the same as His Being.[52]

Mulla Sadra rejects the Peripatetic notion that God's knowledge of things is the projection of their forms upon His essence as well as the idea followed by many Illuminationists that God's knowledge is the presence of the very forms of things in His essence. Rather, he uses the gnostic symbol of a mirror and considers the divine essence a mirror in which God sees the forms or essences of all things and in fact, through the contemplation of these forms or archetypes in the mirror of His own essence, He brings all

things into being. Moreover, since the forms of all creatures, universal as well as particular, are reflected in His essence, God has knowledge of every particle of the universe.[53]

Mulla Sadra divides knowledge (*'ilm*) into acquired (*husuli*) knowledge and innate (*huduri*) knowledge and, like the Illuminationists, divides the latter category into the knowledge of a thing in itself, of a cause of its effect, and of an effect of its cause. Perception is for him a movement from potentiality to actuality and an elevation in the degree of being in which the perceiver or knower rises from his own level of existence to the level of existence of that which is perceived through the union between the knower and the known which characterizes all intellection.

As for acquired knowledge or the knowledge of the human soul of things other than itself, it is not a reflection of the forms of things upon the soul and the soul does not have a passive role in the act of knowing. Rather, since man is a microcosm composed of all degrees of existence, his knowledge of things comes from the contemplation of these forms in the mirror of his own being much like divine knowledge with the difference that God's knowledge leads to objective existence (*al-wujud al-'aini*) of forms, while man's knowledge leads only to their mental existence (*al-wujud al-dhihni*). Otherwise, man's soul has a creative power similar to that of God; its knowledge implies the creation of forms in the soul – forms the subsistence of which depends upon the soul as the subsistence of the objective universe depends upon God.[54]

According to Mulla Sadra, mental existence or the presence in the mind of forms that yield knowledge of things as well as knowledge of itself is above the categories of substance and accidents and is identical with Being Itself. The knowledge that the soul has of things is just like the illumination of the light of Being. This knowledge established the form of that which is perceived in the mind, as Being establishes and manifests the forms and quiddities of things externally. Moreover, it repeats in an inverted order the degrees of cosmic manifestation. Just as cosmic existence originates from the divine essence through the world of the intelligences and consists of the degrees of cosmic souls, bodies, forms, and matter, so knowledge begins from the senses, then rises to the level of the imagination, apprehension, and finally intellection ascending the scale of Being to the summit from which the whole of universal manifestation has descended.

4. Soul, Its Origin, Becoming and Entelechy

Another of the important changes which Mulla Sadra brought about in the formulation of *Hikmat* was the emphasis he laid upon the importance of psychology or the science of the soul (*'ilm al-nafs*) above and beyond what Peripatetic philosophy had accorded to it. Moreover, he removed the discussion of psychology from physics or natural philosophy and made it a branch of metaphysics and a study that is complementary to the science of the origin of things.[55]

The soul (*nafs*), according to Mulla Sadra, is a single reality which first appears as the body (*jism*) and then through substantial motion and an inner transformation becomes the vegetative soul, then the

animal soul, and finally the human soul. This development occurs from within the substance of the original body without there being any effusion from the heavenly souls or the active intellect.[56] The substance of the human sperm is at first potentially a plant, and then as it grows in the womb it becomes actually a plant and potentially an animal. At birth, it is actually an animal and potentially human, and finally at the age of adolescence it is actually human potential either an angel or a disciple of the devil.[57]

All these stages lie hidden within the first substance or germ which through substantial motion traverses the degrees of being until it becomes completely divorced from all matter and potentiality and enjoys immortality in the world of pure intelligences.[58] The soul is, therefore, brought into being with the body but it has spiritual subsistence independent of the body.[59] Or, to be more precise, the soul at the beginning "is" the body which through inner transformation passes through various stages until it becomes absolutely free from matter and change.

The soul in each stage of its journey acquires a new faculty or set of faculties. As a mineral it has the faculty of preserving its form and as a plant, the faculties of feeding, growth, and the transformation of foreign substances into its own form. As an animal the faculties of motion and various forms of desire are acquired, and as a higher animal it develops in addition to the external senses the inner faculties of memory and imagination.[60] Finally, in man the five inner faculties: *sensus communis* (*hiss al-mushtarik*) which perceives forms, apprehension (*wahm*) which perceives meanings, fantasy (*khayal*) which preserves forms, memory (*dhakirah*) which preserves meanings and the double faculty of imagination (*mutakhayyilah*), and thought (*mutafakkirah*) which in the first case governs the sensible and in the second the intelligible domains, are also acquired.[61]

Throughout its development it is the same single soul which in one case appears as sight, in another as memory, and in yet another as desire. The faculties are not something added to the soul but it is the soul itself, or, in a more esoteric sense, being itself which appears in various forms in each case.[62] The soul passes through this stream of becoming – this world – and the parts of its course are marked by the archetypes or Platonic ideas that distinguish one species from another. It wears a new dress and a new guise at each point of the stream but the traveller is throughout one and the same.[63]

Although the enumeration of the inner faculties of Mulla Sadra is essentially the same as that made by previous Muslim authors borrowing it from Aristotle, there is one point in which Mulla Sadra departs from the Peripatetics completely. It is well known that Aristotle considered only the universal intellect to be immortal and the Muslim Peripatetics like ibn Sina accorded immortality only to the intellectual part of the human soul. Mulla Sadra, following certain Sufi and hermetic teachings, asserts that the faculty of imagination enjoys also a form of immortality or at least existence independent of the body. He considers the universe to consist of three domains: the intelligible world, the sensible world, and an intermediate world (*barzakh*) of imagination which is macrocosmic as well as microcosmic.

The faculty of imagination in man as well as in some of the higher animals is, according to Akhund, a microcosmic counterpart of the cosmic imagination and has the power of creating forms. Upon the death

of the body, this faculty, like the intellectual part of the soul, enjoys a form of life of its own and may in fact lead the soul to the intermediate world if it is the dominant element in the soul.

Mulla Sadra, like other Sufis, compares the soul to the cosmos on the one hand and to the Qur'an on the other, identifying the higher states of being of the soul with the esoteric meanings of the Qur'an.64 There are seven degrees of existence for the soul as there are seven heavens and seven levels of interpretation of the Qur'an. These degrees he enumerates as nature (*tab'ah*), soul (*nafs*), intellect (*'aql*), spirit (*ruh*), secret (*sir*), hidden secret (*khafi*), and the most hidden state (*akhfa*) which is that of perfect union with God.65 Each corresponds to a state of being, the totality extending from the life of nature or the senses to the divine life of union with God.

According to Mulla Sadra from another point of view the soul has two faculties, the practical (*'amali*) and the theoretical (*'ilmi* or *nazari*), which the latter at first is dependent upon the former but later becomes completely independent. The practical faculty consists of four stages: making use of the Law (*Shari'ah*) of various religions sent to guide mankind, purifying the soul from evil qualities, illuminating the soul with spiritual virtues and the sciences, and finally, annihilating the soul in God, beginning with the journey to God and then in God and finally with God.66

As for the theoretical faculty it, too, is divided into four stages: the *potential* or *material* intellect (*'aql al-hayulani*) which has only the capability of accepting forms, *habitual* intellect (*'aql al-malakah*) which knows only simple and preliminary truths such as the truth that the whole is greater than its parts, the *active* intellect (*'aql bi al-fi'l*) which no longer has need of matter and concerns itself solely with intellect demonstrations and is either acquired or bestowed as a divine gift and finally the *acquired* intellect (*'aql al-mustafad*) which is the active intellect that has been united with the divine origin of all existence and is the highest degree attainable by man and the purpose of cosmic existence. These stages are also road-marks upon the path trodden by the soul without implying any form of multiplicity; the soul remains the one traveller traversing all these stages on the road to perfection, the fruit and end of which is union with God.

Mulla Sadra deals with eschatology in great detail in many of his works and departs completely from the usual philosophical language in the treatment of this subject. His language is primarily that of the Qur'an and the hadith and of the gnostics. According to Akhund, the relation of this world to the next is like that of the mother's womb to this world. While the child is in the mother's womb he is actually in this world as well, but being separated from this world does not know of its existence. Likewise, man, while in this world is also in the next but the majority of people are unaware of the invisible world. Only the gnostics "see" the other world while they are here on Earth and that is because for them terrestrial existence has become transparent.

Akhund divides cosmic being into five classes each of which has a destiny and an end proper to its nature:67 the pure intelligences separated from all potentiality, the intelligences which govern the heavens, the various psychic entities belonging to the world of the imagination such as the *jinn* and

certain parts of the human soul, animal and vegetable souls, and, finally, minerals and elements. The separated intelligences subsist forever in the divine essence and are never separated from it. As for the rational soul (*al-nafs al-natiquah*), it is either perfect, as the souls of the heavens and of some men, and, in both cases, returns to God, or else it is imperfect. In the latter case it is either devoid of all desire for perfection as in the animals and those human beings who have committed much evil in this life, or it is desirous of perfection like many persons who, having chosen the wrong path, realize their mistake and wish to be guided towards the Truth.
In the former case the soul, like other psychic entities belonging to the intermediary world, after separation from the body becomes united with the forms of the intermediary world of imagination (*'alam al-mithal*);68 in the latter case the soul suffers after its separation from the body until it is finally purified and united with God.

Plants are either used as food by men and animals and, therefore, share in their destinies, or have an independent existence, in which case, after the end of their terrestrial existence, they join their archetypes in the world of pure forms. Likewise with minerals and the elements, they too become united with their intelligible counterparts after their terrestrial existence terminates. In fact, these terrestrial beings are united with their archetypes even while they are on Earth, but only the gnostics are aware of this reality.

As for man's bodily resurrection on the Last Day, Mulla Sadra considers it to be one of the great mysteries of metaphysics revealed only to those who have reached the highest stage.69 He accepts bodily resurrection which he interprets in a particular fashion. It is known that man's individuality and distinguishing characteristics come from his soul and not from his body because the substance of the body changes every few years without in any way destroying the unity of human beings. Of the faculties of the soul, however, intellection and imagination are innate to it, while the vegetative and animal faculties such as the external senses and passions are received by it through the body.

According to Akhund, in the next world all souls will receive the power to create external forms as prophets and saints do here in this world. For example, each soul can create the pleasure received through sight from within itself without the need of what appears to us here as an external organ. In other words, the organs of the body which appear as "external" to the soul are created from within the soul in the next world so that the resurrection of the soul is really complete with body according to all the meanings we can give to the word "body."

Difference between paradise and hell lies in that the souls in paradise have the power to bring into being all the forms that are beautiful and pleasant, all the flowers and *houris* of paradise, while the impure souls in hell have only the power to bring into being ugly and unpleasant forms and are in fact forced to suffer by the very forms they will have created. Mulla Sadra adds, however, that ultimately the pains suffered in the inferno will come to an end and, as ibn 'Arabi had said, the fires of hell will freeze and all will return to the divine origin of things.70

F. Significance of Mulla Sadra and His Influence

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the importance of Mulla Sadra lies not only in rekindling the lamp of learning and reviving the intellectual sciences fully for the first time in the Muslim World after the Mongol invasion, but also for uniting and harmonizing revelation, gnosis, and philosophy together. Some authors have criticized Mulla Sadra for taking certain principles from ibn ‘Arabi, Farabi, and Suhrawardi Maqtul and have, therefore, refused to accept his “originality.” But as Aristotle has said so justifiably, there is nothing new under the sun. One cannot create metaphysics of one’s own as if the metaphysics were a mechanical invention. The principles have always been and always will be the same. What determines the originality of author in a traditional civilization like that of Islam is his ability to re-interpret and reformulate the eternal verities in a new light and thereby create a new intellectual perspective.

Regarded in this way, Mulla Sadra must certainly be considered to be one of the most significant figures in the intellectual life of Shi‘ah Islam. Coming at a moment when the intellectual sciences had become weakened, he succeeded in reviving them by co-ordinating philosophy as inherited from Greeks and interpreted by the Peripatetics and Illuminationists before him with the teachings of Islam in its exoteric and esoteric aspects. He succeeded in putting the gnostic doctrines of ibn ‘Arabi in a logical dress. He made purification of the soul a necessary basis and complement of the study of *Hikmat*, thereby bestowing upon philosophy the practice of ritual and spiritual virtues which it had lost in the period of decadence of classical civilization. Finally, he succeeded in correlating the wisdom of the ancient Greek and Muslim sages and philosophers as interpreted esoterically with the inner meaning of the Qur’an.

In all these matters he represents the final stage of effort by several generations of Muslim sages and may be considered to be the person in whom the streams, which had been approaching one another for some centuries before, finally united.[71]

More specifically, Mulla Sadra was able to harmonize his doctrinal formulation with the teachings of Islam in such a way as to over-come all the major difficulties which the Peripatetic philosophers met in the face of the teachings of the Qur’an and for which al-Ghazzali criticized them so severely.[72] Of particular significance was his divorcing metaphysics to a large extent both from Ptolemaic astronomy and Aristotelian physics. While in Europe, Galileo, Kepler, and Newton were destroying the homogeneity of Aristotelian cosmology and physics and in this way weakening the medieval Christian world-view which was closely linked with it, Mulla Sadra, through his doctrine of substantial motion and through considering the science of the soul to be independent of physics, separated metaphysics to a large extent from medieval natural philosophy.

This separation, although perhaps not of immediate significance in the 11th/17th century Persia, which was still immune from European ideas, became of great importance in the later centuries. As the modern scientific world-view became more and more accepted in Persia during the Qajar period, the separation

brought about by Akhund between metaphysics and natural philosophy helped to preserve the traditional wisdom in the face of attacks by modernists whose only weapon was modern scientific theories connected with the world of matter. In this way also, Akhund rendered great service to the Muslim intellectual sciences and helped their preservation until today.

There is no doubt that nearly the whole of the intellectual life of Persia during the past three and half centuries has centred on Mulla Sadra. Of his immediate students, Mulla Muhsin Faid, ‘Abd al-Razzaq Lahiji, and Qadi Sa‘id Qumi, all of whom are among the leading figures of Shi‘ah Islam, we need say little here for they have already been discussed in a previous chapter.[73] It need only be added that these men in turn produced a generation of students who extended the teachings of Akhund far and wide.[74] In the Qajar period, after a short interim of anarchy caused by the Afghan invasion, the school of Mulla Sadra was once again revived, the most famous of its members being Jaji Mulla Hadi Sabziwari, Mulla ‘Ali Nuri, author of one of the most important commentaries upon the *Asfar*, Sheikh Ahmad Ahsai’i, founder of the Sheikhi movement and the commentator upon Mulla Sadra’s *Masha‘ir*, Mulla ‘Ali Mudarris Zunuzi, author of a significant work *Bada’i‘ al-Hikam* in Persian and glosses upon the *Asfar*, and Mohammad Hidaji, also the author of a commentary upon the *Asfar*.[75]

The influence of Akhund is to be met with wherever the traditional school of *Hikmat* is still preserved and taught in Persia.[76] All the adherents of this school have regarded Mulla Sadra as their master and it is no exaggeration to say that Akhund stands along with Farabi, ibn Sina, al-Ghaz□l□, Nasir al-Din Tusi, Suhrawardi Maqtul, and ibn ‘Arabi among the principal formulators of the Muslim intellectual sciences and, though not well known outside Persia, is no less a figure than his more famous predecessor.[77] In him the many spiritual streams of the earlier centuries met and united in a new river which has watered the intellectual soil of Persia during the past four centuries; his teachings are as alive today as they were at the time of their formulation.

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Teheran, lithographed edition, 1282/1865; *Asrar al-Ayat*, Teheran, lithographed edition, 1322/1904; *Hashiyah 'ala Sharh Hikmat al-Ishraq*, Teheran, lithographed edition, 1316/1898; *al-Mabda' al-Ma'ad*, Teheran, lithographed edition, 1314/1896; *Mafatih al-Ghaib*, Teheran, lithographed edition; *al-Masha'ir*, Teheran, lithographed edition, 1315/1895; *Sharh Ilahiyat al-Shifa'*, Teheran, Lithographed edition, 1303/1885; *SharhUsul al-Kafi*, Teheran, lithographed edition; *al-Shawahid al-Rububiyyah*, lithographed edition, 1286/1869; *Kasr Asnam al-Jahiliyyah*, ed. M. T. Danish Pazhuh, University Press, Teheran, 1340 Solar; *Sih Asl*, ed. S. H. Nasr, University Press, Teheran, 1340 Solar; S. J. Sajjadi, *The Philosophical Vocabulary of Sadr al-Din Shirazi*, University Pressm, Teheran, 1380/1960; S. H. Nasr, "Mulla Sadra dar Hindustan," *Rahnama'yi Kitab*, vol. 4, Dai, 1340 Solar; Akbar Sairafi, *Tarikh-i Falasifih-i Islam*, Danish Press, Teheran, 1315 Solar; Mohammad Hussain tabataba'i, "Musahibih-i Ustad 'Allamih Tabatabi'i ba Professor Henri Corbin dar Barih-i Shi'ah," *Salanih-i Maktab-i Tashayyu'*, No. 2, Qum, 1339 Solar; Abu 'Abd Allah al-Zinjani, *al-Filsuf al-Farsi al-Kabir Sadr al-Din al-Shirazi*, al-Mufid Press, Damascus, 1936; M. Horten, *Das Philosophische System des Schirazi*, Strassburg, 1913.

1. This chapter has been written with the invaluable help of Hajj Mohammad Hussain Tabataba'i, one of the leading authorities on the school of Mulla Sadra in Iran today, the author of the 20-volume Qur'anic commentary al-Mizan and the editor and commentator of the new edition of the Asfar.
2. Comte de Gobineau, one of the most observant of travellers who has visited Persia during the past few centuries, was quite aware of Mulla Sadra's significance although not quite well acquainted with his ideas, for in a well-known passage he writes, "Le vrai, l'incontestable metite de Moulla Sadra reste celiui pue j'ai indique plus haut: c'est d'avoir ramine, rejeuni, pour le temps ou il vivait, la philosphie antique, en lui conservant les moins possible de ses forms avicenniques..." Gobineau, Les religions et les philosophies dans l'Asie central, Les Editions G. Gres et Cie, Paris, 1923, p. 102.
3. The date of Mulla Sadra's birth was unknown until quite recently when in preparing the new edition of the Asfar, Tabataba'i collected a large number of handwritten manuscripts of the work. On the margin of one of the manuscripts dated 1197/1782 with marginal notes by Mulla Sadra himself, the authenticity of which cannot be doubted, there appears this statement, "This truth was revealed to me on Friday, the seventh of Jamadi al-Ula 1037 A.H. when 58 years had passed from (my life)..." Therefore, the date of his birth can be established as 979/1571 or 980/1572.

For the traditional accounts of the life of Mulla Sadra and his works, see M.B. Khunsari, Raudat al-Jannat, Teheran, lithographed edition, 1306/1888,vol. 2, pp. 331 – 32; M.A. TABRIZI, Raihanat al-Adab, Sa'di Press, Teheran,1331/1912, vol. 2, pp. 458 – 61; Mir Khwand, Raudat al-Safa,Teheran, lithographed edition, 1270/1853, vol. 8, p. 120; T. Tunikabuni, Qisas al-'Ulama', 'Ilmi Press, Teheran, 1313/1895, pp. 329 – 33, and Agha Buzurg Tihrani, al-Dhari'ah al-Gharra Press, najaf, 1355/1936, on dealing with various writings of Akhund.

As for secondary sources see M. Mudarrisi Chahardihi, tarikh-i Falasifih-i Islam, 'Ilmi Press, Teheran, 1336 Solar, vol, 1, pp. 179ff; A. A. Zinjani, al-Filsuf al-Farsi al-Kabir Sadr al-Din al-Shirazi, al-Mufid Press, Damascus, pp. 212 – 18, no. 3, 1951, pp. 318 – 27; J. 'Ali Yasin, Sadr al-Din al-Shrazi Mujaddid al-Falsifat al-Islamiyyah, al-Ma'arif Press, 1375/1956,andthe introduction by M.R. mazaffar, in the new edition of the Asfar, Da'ir al-Ma'arif al-Islamiyyah, Qum 1378/1958.

For an account of the life and doctrines of Mulla Sadra in European languages,see Gobineau, op. cit., pp. 91 – 103; E. G. Browne, A Literary history of Persia, University Press, Cambridge, 1924, Vol. 4, pp. 429 – 30; and m. Horten, Die Philosophie des Islam, Verlag Ernst Rheinhardt, Munchen, 1924, pp. 57ff. Also Browne, A year Amongst the Persians, Adam & Charles, London, 1950, pp. 141 – 43.

4. Concerning Baha' al-Din 'Amili and Mir Damad, see the preceding chapter.

To know the names of the masters of a Hakim is important because learning Hikmat from “within” is impossible without a master for the majority of even of those who are gifted to pursue it. One can learn certain ideas from books alone but to really understand what Hikmat means and what the various authorities meant by various expressions there is a need of a master who himself learned the doctrines from another master and so on going back to the early masters. The Hakim is, therefore, as insistent upon the authenticity of his chain of masters as a verifier of hadith is about the ismad of a tradition or a Sufi master about the isilsilahi or chain of his tariqah.

5. We have already discussed in detail in previous chapters the meaning of this term as used here, i.e. a combination of gnosis, illuminationist and Peripatetic philosophy which is neither theology nor philosophy as currently understood but theosophy in the proper and original sense of the term and not in its present usurpation by various pseudo-spiritualist groups.
6. The Khan school which is one of the most beautiful edifices of the Safawid period had fallen into ruins for some years when about ten years ago the Bureau of Archaeology of the Persian Government undertook the task of repairing it. It is now operating once again as a madrasah for traditional learning.
7. He in fact criticizes ibn Sina for having spent his time composing works on other sciences like mathematics and medicine.
8. The story is told in most of the traditional sources mentioned above that Mulla Sadra once asked Mir Damad why he was respected by all the religious authorities while Akhund, despite his powerful family, was molested so much by some of the ‘ulama’. Mir Damad answered that although they were both saying the same thing, he hid his ideas within so many difficult expressions that only the elite would be able to understand them while Mulla Sadra wrote so clearly that anyone with a knowledge of Arabic could detect the trend of his ideas.
9. See also Raihanat al-Adab, pp. 458 – 61, where 50 works by him are mentioned, and A. A. Zanjani, op cit., pp. 19 – 22 where he mentions 26 metaphysical and philosophical and 17 religious works some of which are of doubtful authenticity. Refer also to J. ‘Ali Yasin, op. cit., pp. 58 – 62, where 26 works are named.
10. The Kitab al-Hidayah dealing with the complete cycle of Hikmat, i.e. logic, natural philosophy, and metaphysics was composed by the seventh/13th century Persian author, Athir al-Din Mufaddal ibn ‘Umar al-Abhari, it soon became one of the basic books of instruction in the madrasahs. The tenth/16th century commentary upon it by Kamal al-Din Mibudi was the best known before Mulla Sadra composed his own commentary upon it.
11. The Usul al-Kafi was also commented upon by Majlisi as we have mentioned in the previous chapter. The commentary of Mulla Sadra which is of a more intellectual nature is one of the most important Shi‘ah works written in the Safawid period and is perhaps his most significant religious composition.
12. The unpublished treatise the manuscript of which exists in the Majlis Library (MS. 103) in Teheran is the only known prose work of Mulla Sadra in Persian, all the other above mentioned writings being in Arabic.
13. The manuscript of the Sharh al-Hidayah in the Mishkat Collection at Teheran University, MS. 254, is in Mulla Sadra’s own handwriting, several quatrains appear in the opening pages which are without doubt his own.
14. E.G. Browne, op. cit., vol 4, p. 430.
15. The 1282/1865 Teheran lithographed edition with the commentaries of Sabziwari on the margin runs over 1,000 large pages and the new edition by Mr. Tabatabai’i with running commentary by himself and several other Hakims of the Qajar period including Sabziwari and Mulla ‘Ali Nuri is planned in nine 400-page volumes of which three have appeared so far. The Asfar which is used in graduate school of theological faculty in Teheran University is taught over a three year period and then only a part of the First Book is covered. It is said that Haji Mulla Hadi Sabziwari, the greatest Persian Hakim after Mulla Sadra, taught the complete Asfar to his advanced disciples over a six year period.
16. Mulla sadra, Mafatih al-Ghaib, al-Miftah al-Thalith, al-Mashhad al-Thamin.
17. See the preceding chapter in which the formative elements of Shi‘ah intellectual life leading to Mulla Sadra and of the Safawid sages have been discussed.
18. See Asfar, Teheran, lithographed edition, 1282/1865, Book 2, Section 4. Mulla Sadra writes that these pre-Socratic philosophers actually spoke in a symbolic language (ramz) and implied by their theory that the world was composed of a single element, the doctrine of the unity of Being or wahdat al-wujud which is the basis of the gnostic doctrines of ibn ‘Arabi. Mulla Sadra, in fact, identifies the water of Thales with the nafas al-Rahman or the breath of the Compassionate

which the Sufis consider to be the ultimate substance of the universe. These early Ionians who are considered by some today to be the founders of the modern quantitative sciences of nature appear to the Muslims in a different light as expositors of universal gnosis and those whom, as Mulla Sadra writes, "have adopted the light of Hikmat from the lamp of prophecy."

19. For an account of the relation of Mulla Sadra to Shi'ism and his success in unifying the three above-mentioned elements, see M. H. Tabataba'i, "Musahibih-i Ustad 'Allamih Tabataba'i ba Professor Henri Corbin dar Barih-i Shi'ah," Salanih-i Maktab-i Tashayyu', No. 2, 1339 solar, pp. 61 – 64. This is one of the most important works written recently by a Shi'ah authority on the general perspective of Shi'ism and the various sciences developed by the Shi'ahs, and is the result of a series of meetings between him and H. Corbin in which the latter posed several basic questions about the spiritual attitude of Shi'ism and the relation between Shi'ism and Hikmat and Sufism. The book was written in answer to H. Corbin's questions and contains a wealth of precious knowledge about the intellectual life of Shi'ism.

20. It may at first seem surprising that Mulla Sadra wrote a treatise against those who called themselves Sufis. But if we consider the social and political conditions of the later Safawid period in which Sufism was greatly disdained by political authorities and much of it had become body without a soul, we can perhaps understand some of the motifs for Mulla Sadra's attack on it. However, the "Sufis" whom Mulla Sadra attacked were not the Sufis proper but those who were seeking to destroy the exoteric truths and bring about social anarchy in the name of esotericism that they themselves did not possess. Otherwise, there is not the least doubt of Mulla Sadra's connection with Sufism – although he preferred to use the name gnostic ('arif) rather than Sufi – nor can one doubt in any way to the gnostic quality of his doctrines.

21. See the chapter of Suhrawardi Maqtul.

22. If we have translated Hikmat as philosophy in one case and as theosophy in the other, it is because the meaning of the term includes both the wisdom belonging to the rational and mental plane or philosophy and the wisdom which transcends the level of the ordinary human mind and which, properly speaking, belongs to the angelic order and cannot be called philosophy as the term is currently understood in European languages.

23. See J. Muslib, Falsafih-i 'Ali ya Hikmat-i Sadr al-Muti'allihin, vol. 1, Unversity Press, Teheran, 1337 Solar, p. 3.

24. Sadr al-Din Shirazi, Rasa'il, Teheran, lithographed edition, 1302/1884, pp. 279 – 86.

25. Mulla Sara adds at the end of this discussion that the causes for the difference of view among various schools regarding different sciences are four in number: (1) differences in the science of unity leading to the creation of sects like the atheists, etc., (2) the science of prophecy leading to separation between Muslims, Christians, Jews, and other religious groups, (3) the science of Imamate leading to division between the Shi'ahs and Sunnis, and, finally, (4) the science of jurisprudence leading to the creation of various schools and interpretations of law. Mulla Sadra adds that the main cause of multiplicity lies in misunderstanding the science of unity and the science of the soul or the science of the beginning and end of things. Rasa'il, pp. 287 – 88.

26. J. Muslih, op. cit., pp 1 – 2.

27. See Chapter 19 on Suhrawardi Maqtul.

28. Mulla Sadra regards light as a perfect and intelligible example of the unity and gradation of Being and praises the Illuminationists on this point. See the first of the Asfar.

29. See Seyyed Hossain Nasr, "The Polarisation of Being," Pakistan Philosophical Journal, vol. 3, no. 2, October 1959, pp. 8 – 13.

30. The doctrine of the unity and gradation of Being in Mulla Sadra is not new, it was expressed clearly five centuries before him by ibn 'Arabi. Mulla Sadra, however, was the first person to give it a logical dress and introduce it as a principle of Hikmat as distinct from pure gnosis which does not concern itself with various logical distinctions.

31. I dividing the hierarchies of universal existence into longitudinal and latitudinal orders Mulla Sadra follows the scheme of ishraqi angelology, which was discussed in the chapter on Suhrawardi Maqtul.

32. What distinguishes the gnostics from the Hakims in this subject is that the former formulate the illuminations they receive which differ depending upon the degree of their inner realization. One gnostic in a certain state of contemplation (hal) may have been aware of only the creatures or multiplicity as a reflection of unity, another of only God or unity, and a third of unity in multiplicity. The Hakims, however, from a theoretical and more logical point if view, do not take particular perspective of the traveller upon the path (salik) into consideration and have even criticized some of the gnostics for

considering multiplicity to be completely unreal.

33. By this latter distinction, Mulla Sadra implies the difference which exists, or at least used to exist, in European languages between Being and existence. All creatures exist but only in the case of God can one, properly speaking, say that He "is." See Seyyed Hossein Nasr "The Polarisation of Being," op. cit., pp. 8 – 13.

34. See ibn Sina, Kitab al-Shifa' (Ilahiyyat), Teheran, lithographed edition, pp. 291ff.

35. The feature which distinguishes particulars from one another and determines all other qualities in them is, according to Mulla Sadra, their degree of being.

36. Mulla Sadra writes that it was Hermes who learnt about the truth of the "Platonic ideas" when he became illuminated by the light of the intelligible world and separated from the world of the senses. In this state Hermes met an illuminated figure in the spiritual world who taught him all the sciences and when he asked the figure who he was, the figure answered, "I am thy perfect nature (ana taba'aka al-tam)," Asfar, p. 121. For a study of the rich symbolism of "perfect nature," which means the celestial or angelic part of the human soul, see H. Corbin, "Le recit d'initiation et l'hermetisme en iran," Eranos Jahrbuch, vol. 17, 1949, pp,. 121 – 88.HHHHHHHHH

37. For the general discussion on cause and effect, see J. Muslih, op. cit., pp. 85ff.

38. It is this "simple being" or the supreme intellect which the Sufis before Mulla Sadra identified with the reality of Mohammad. See ibn 'Arabi, La sagesse des prophetes, tr. T. Burckhardt, Albin Michel, Paris, 1955, pp. 181ff.

39. According to a principle – which is another of the well-known doctrines formulated by Mulla Sadra and is called basit al-haqiqah kull of al-ashya', i.e., Truth in its state of simplicity contains all things – the divine essence in its state of simplicity and "contraction" contains all realities within itself. This is indeed a direct consequence of the principle of the unity of Being; it if there is but one Being and the whole universe is nothing but Being, the universe and all its realities are contained in a state of "contraction" in that One Being.

40. See J. Muslih, op. cit., p. 100. This distinction may seem to differ from what was said previously. But it must be remembered that the divine essence cannot be limited to Being, which is its first determination as well as the principle of universal manifestation. It is this distinction to which Akhund is referring here.

41. Mulla Sadra placed a lot of emphasis upon this point that he discussed it not only in the First Book of the Asfar but in many other chapters of the work and nearly all of his other books as well. See also H. A. Rashid, Dau Filsuf-i Sharq wa Gharb, Parwin Press, Ispahan, 1334 Solar, pp. 50ff. and J. Muslih, op. cit., pp. 128ff. Mulla Sadra in the second Book of the Asfar and other places insists that he is not the first among the Hakims to have introduced this idea but that the pre-Socratic philosophers had indicated although not explicitly the existence of substantial motion. Moreover, he gives the Qur'anic verses such as "Do ye create it or are We the Creator? We mete out death among you, and We are not to be outrun, that We may transfigure you and make you what ye know not" (51:59 – 61, Pickthall's translation) in support of his view.

42. See ibn Sina, Danish-Nameh-i 'Ala'i (Tabi'iyyat), University Press, Teheran, 1331/1912, pp. 3ff. Aristotle also in De Generatione et Corruptione (319b, 31 – 320a, 2) divides motion into the four categories of quantity, quality, place, and substance and speaks of substantial change as one of the processes which characterize the sub-lunary region. But the substantial change Aristotle means only generation and corruption and for that reason later Muslim philosophers did not even apply the term "motion" to it and considered motion to belong only to the categories of quantity, quality, locomotion, and posture.

Mulla Sadra, however, considers substantial motion to be an inner transformation of things somewhat in the alchemical sense in which there is not simply a coming into being and a passing away but a process through which a new state of being is reached. Moreover, substantial change for the Aristotelians is sudden and instantaneous while for Akhund it is gradual like other forms of motion. Also, substantial change in the Aristotelian sense is limited to the sublunary region, while for Mulla Sadra the whole of gross and subtle manifestation partakes of substantial motion. Akhund's conception of substantial change therefore cannot be identified with that of Aristotle and should not be confused with it because of similarity in terminology.

For an analysis of Aristotle's doctrine of motion, see also H. A. Wolfson, Crescas' Critique of Aristotle, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1929, pp. 512ff.

43. Ibn Sina, Shafa' (Tabi'iyyat), pp. 43 – 44.

44. The idea that God annihilates and re-creates the world at every moment is one that is shared by the majority of the Sufis. Jalal al-Din Rumi expresses it:

"Every moment the world is being renewed, and we
unaware of its perpetual change.
Life is ever pouring in afresh through the body
it has the semblance of continuity."

R. A. Nicholsan, Rumi, Post and Mystic, George Allen Unwin, London, 1950, p. 117. See also T. Burckhardt, Introductio to Sufi Doctrine, tr. D. M. Matheson, Sheikh Mohammad Ashraf, Lahore, 1959, chap. 4.

45. Substantial motion is essentially a rebirth because it always means the attainment of a new state of Being.
46. From what we have said above it is clear that in Mulla Sadra's view motion is principal, for it is an inherent characteristic of corporeal and even subtle existence, and time is subservient to it contrary to the view of many previous philosophers who considered motion to be subservient to time. Mulla Sadra's conception of time as the quantity of substantial motion, which is itself the renewal of cosmic existence, bears much resemblance to the doctrine of Abu al-Barakat al-Baghadadi for whom also time is the measure or dimension of existences. See S. Pines, Nouvelles etudes sur Awhad al-Zaman Abu'l Barakat al-Baghdadi, Librairie Durlacher, Paris, 1955, Chap. 2.
47. In Fasl 33 of the first book of the Asfar, Akhund writes that all bodies are limited within the four dimensions of length, breadth, depth, and time, and are differentiated by the division inherent in time, while their unity is preserved through celestial archetypes or Platonic ideas.
48. See Chapter 47.
49. See Mulla Sadra, al-Waridat al-Qalbiyyah, Rasa'il pp., 243 – 49.
50. The world of change here as in the case of Suhrawardi Maqtul means the whole visible universe and not only the sublunary region of the Aristotelians. According to Mulla Sadra, the difference between the sublunary region composed of the four elements and the heavens composed of ether lies only in that the matter of the heavens is more subtle than the gross matter of the terrestrial environment and is governed by pure souls that are free from the passions of earthly souls.
51. The principle that the intellect, intelligence, and the intelligible are one (ittihad al-'aqil w-al-ma'qul) is another point in which Mulla Sadra opposed the previous Muslim philosophers. This principle, which was accepted by the Neo-Platonists, was rejected by ibn Sina (see Isharat, Haidari Press, Teheran, 1379/1959, vol. 3 pp. 292 – 93) and other Peripatetics.

Akhund, while acknowledging his debt to Porphyry and earlier Greek philosophers (see his Rasa'il, p. 319), considered himself the first among Muslims to have reinstated this principle which is made a cornerstone of his intellectual edifice. Actually, Afdal al-Din Kashani and before him Abu al-Hassan 'Amiri in his Kitab al-Fursul fi al-Ma'alim al-Ilahiyyah had accepted this principle (see M. Minosie, "Az Kaza'in-i Turkiyyah," Revue de la Faculte des Lettre, Universite de Teheran, vol. 4, no. 3, Mars 1957, p. 50) but it was Mulla Sadra who first systematized this principle and demonstrated it clearly. For a discussion of the principle of the union of the intellect and the intelligible, see Asfar, pp. 277ff.

52. "God's knowledge of things is identical with their being" (Mulla Sadra, al-Shawahid al-Rububiyyah, Teheran, lithographed edition, 1236/1820, p. 36).
53. See Mulla Sadra, Sharh al-Hidayah al-Athiriyyah, Teheran, lithographed edition, 1315/1897, pp. 308 – 09.
54. See his Rasa'il p. 240, where he quotes the Qur'anic statement that "not a particle of dust in the heavens and earth is hidden from God's knowledge" as support and consequence of his conception of divine knowledge.
55. Akhund adds that in the case of prophets and saints, the creative power of the soul becomes so great that like God Himself it can even create objective and external forms.
56. The whole of the fourth book of the Asfar is devoted to the science of the soul where the soul takes on a meaning totally different from the quasi-material substance of the Aristotelians.

Mulla Sadra often speaks of the complete science of things as mabda' w-al-ma'ad, the origin and end, and has even a book by this name. He identifies the science of mabda' with theodicy and metaphysics and that of ma'ad with psychology

and eschatology.

57. The view of Mulla Sadra regarding the growth and perfection of the soul resembles the alchemical view in which the power to reach perfection is considered to lie within matter itself and not outside it.
58. Mulla Sadra, al-Shawahid al-Rububiyyah, pp. 152ff.
59. That is why Akhund writes that "the first seed of the universe was the intellect and the last stage is also the intellect which is the fruit of the same tree" (ibid., p. 165.)
60. This principle which In Arabic is called jismaniyat al-huduth wa ruhaniyat al-baqa' is another of the doctrines for which Mulla Sadra is famous.
61. We have not enumerated these faculties in detail because Mulla Sadra follows the earlier Muslim authors especially ibn Sina on this point. See Chapter 66 on "Natural History" regarding the various faculties.
62. Al-Shawahid al-Rububiyyah, pp. 134ff.
63. By emphasizing the immanent aspect of the development of the soul, Mulla Sadra does not forget the transcendent factor, for in the treatise Iksir al-'Arifin he writes the Arch-angel Israfil blows life into the body and gives it the power of sensation and motion, that Mika'il enables the body to assimilate food and sends it its sustenance, that Jibril gives it instruction regarding the revelation and acts of worship and finally that 'Izra'il enables the soul to abstract forms from matter and to separate itself from the body. Rasa'il, pp. 306 – 07.
64. Concerning the traditional conception of cosmic becoming, see A. K. Coomaraswamy, "Gradation and Evolution," Isis, 35, 1944, pp. 15 – 16; 38, 1947 – 48, pp. 87 – 94.
As for the unity of the soul which form the gnostic point of view is identified with the divine essence or self, see A. K. Coomaraswamy, "On the One and Only Transmigrant," Journal of the American oriental Society, June 1944, No. 3, pp. 19 – 43.
65. According to a famous hadith of the Prophet, accepted by the Shi'ahs and the Sunnis alike, the Qur'an has seven levels of meaning the last known only God. It is from the esoteric interpretation of the revealed book that Mulla Sandra and Sufis before him have drawn the gnostic doctrines inherent and hidden in the Islamic revelation as they are in all other revelations.
66. Iksir al-'Arifin, Rasa'il, p. 295. This terminology is a very old in Islam, it was adopted by the early Sufis from the traditions of the Prophets and Imams.
67. Al-Shawahid al-Rububiyyah, p. 140.
68. Mulla Sadra, Risalah fi-al-Hashr, Rasa'il pp. 341 – 58.
69. In the case of animals, after death they join the masters of their species (rub al-nau') or archetypes except the higher animals who have the faculty of imagination developed in them. They have an independent existence in the world of cosmic imagination without, however, being distinct individually as in the case of people.
70. See Mulla Sadra, al-Mabda' w-al-Ma'ad, Teheran, lithographed edition, 1314/1896, pp, 272ff.
He criticizes both the naturalists who deny the existence of the soul after death and the Peripatetics who accept only the resurrection of the soul but not of the body.
71. This esoteric view expressed in his commentary upon the Usul al-Kafi as well as in the Asfar was one most attacked by the exoteric 'ulama'. The religious perspective which appeals essentially to the sentimental or passionate aspect of human nature must insist upon "eternal" punishment and reward in order to have its laws accepted in human society. Only the exoteric view meant for the saintly and appealing to the contemplative aspect of man, can take into consideration the relatively of heaven and hell with respect to the divine essence without in any way denying the reality of "eternity" of reward and punishment in the life hereafter with respect to human existence here.
72. For the background leading to Mulla Sadra, see chapter 47 on "The School of Ispahan in this work. See also Mulla Muhsin Faid, al-Mahajjat al-Baida', vol. 1, Islamiyyah Press, Teheran, 1379/1959, introduction by Sayyid Mohammad Mishkat , pp. 10 – 23, in which the background leading to Mulla Sadra as well as the distinguishing principles of his own doctrines is discussed.
73. It will be remembered that al-Ghazzali in his al-Munqidh min al-Dalal considered the philosophers to be infidel on three points: their rejection of resurrection of bodies, their limiting God's knowledge to universals, and their belief in the eternity of the world. See. W. Montgomery Watt, The Faith and Practice of al-Ghazzali, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1953, p. 37.

From what we have discussed of Mulla Sadra's doctrine it is clear that he accepted the resurrection of bodies, God's knowledge of particulars, and creation of the world in time though not quite in the sense as that of the theologians.

74. Mulla Sadra's doctrines were especially influential in India to which country one of his disciples by the name of Mohammad Salih Kashani migrated – after reaching a wild sate of ecstasy during one Mulla Sadra's lessons –and where he attracted many disciples. The works of Mulla Sadra have continued to be taught in the Islamic schools of the Indian sub-continent, especially his Sharh al-Hidayah which came to be known by the author's name as Sadra. Many glosses have been written on it by various philosophers and scholars in India such as Mohammad Amjad al-Sadiqi (d. 1140/1727), Mulla Hassan al-Lakhnawi (d. 1198/1783), Mohammad A'lam al-Sindili (d. 1250/1834), and 'Abd al-'Ali Bahr al-'Ulum who lived in the 13th/19th century. Numerous manuscripts of these and other glosses on the Sharh al-Hidayah are to be found in such libraries as the Raza Library of Rampur and the Khuda Basksh Library in Patna (see the Catalogue of Arabic and Persian Manuscripts in the Oriental Library at Bankiput, vo. 20 (Arabic MSS), Bihar and Orissa, 1936, MSS. No. 2351, 2386, 2371 – 78).

75. See Chapter 47 on "The School of Ispahan."

76. For a list of the names of Mulla Sadra's disciples in the Qajar period, see Raihdnat al-Adab and Gobineau, op. cit., pp. 103ff.

77. Iqbal's statement that, "It is, moreover, the Philosophy of Sadra which is the source of the metaphysics of early Babism" (Development of Metaphysics in Persia, London, 1908, p. 175) is true only in a negative sense in the same way as the doctrine of the Rhenish mystics might be considered to be the source of the Protestant revolt during the Renaissance.

Part Six: Political Thought

Chapter 49: Ibn Khaldun

A

The consideration of ibn Khaldun's political philosophy within the context provided by a work on the history of Muslim philosophy, and in a chapter concluding the history of Muslim political philosophy in the classical period, must face and attempt to clarify the complex problem of the precise character of the political aspect of ibn Khaldun's new science of culture, and its theoretical and practical implications when contrasted with the various philosophic practical sciences and Muslim legal sciences that share the same subject-matter.

In this attempt, the investigator is faced with the dilemma that, although ibn Khaldun shows intimate acquaintance with these philosophical and legal disciplines and with the writings of his predecessors on them, he does not present himself in his major work either as a philosopher or as a writer on legal matters, does not choose to continue either the Greek and Muslim tradition of political philosophy or any of the traditional Muslim legal sciences, and does not make a direct or thematic contribution in the form of a treatise on any of these disciplines. He considers his main contribution to be an almost wholly new

science based on natural philosophy yet advancing beyond traditional natural philosophy by using certain conclusions of natural science to construct a complete science of culture.

The investigation of culture inevitably led ibn Khaldun to the investigation of the phenomenon of government, which is both a constituent part and the "form" (*surah*), i.e. the organizing principle, of culture. The third section of Book One of the "History" is devoted to this subject, and its title indicates the various problems which it investigates, "On States, Kingship, the Caliphate, and Sovereign Ranks, and the States Occurring in These – Containing Fundamental (Propositions) and Supplementary (Inquiries)."[1] Since government is the form of culture as a whole, we also find extensive discussions of this subject in all the other sections of Book One, including the section on the sciences. This treatment of political matters is not, however, an independent discussion and is not based on premises of its own but forms an integral part of the science of culture.

Ibn Khaldun himself distinguishes his new science, and his investigation of political matters within the scope of this science, from the traditional political science or political philosophy of his Greek and Muslim predecessors and also from the Muslim legal sciences. After recapitulating the substance of his own investigation of politics, an attempt will be made in this chapter to understand how he characterizes his new endeavour and justifies his departure from the well-established philosophical and legal traditions. We shall find that what appears at first to be an effort simply to distinguish between the science of culture and political philosophy and the legal sciences, progressively takes the form of a critique of, first, certain propositions, and, secondly, of the entire subject-matter of political philosophy and of dialectical theology though the critique of the latter discipline is less pronounced and more implicit.

In this connection, ibn Khaldun raises a number of problems crucial for understanding the character of both his own sciences of culture and of the entire history of Muslim political philosophy and dialectical theology. In attempting to explore some of these problems, we have restricted ourselves to the issues that are indispensable for a fuller understanding of ibn Khaldun's position and have presented them in a perspective that seems to us to serve this purpose best. In characterizing the political thought of his predecessors, ibn Khaldun does not pretend to be an impartial historian, he assumes the role of a severe critic. The criticism is not based on blind faith or love for contention, but on certain theoretical and practical considerations.

B

In the section devoted to political authority and institutions,[2] ibn Khaldun remains loyal to the specific character of his new science. He begins with, and thereafter repeatedly recalls, the premises he had posited for the science of culture as a whole.[3] The dominant theme of his discussion of political life is the explanation of the natural causes, powers, properties, stages, and accidents inherent in the properties of the human soul, and how they leadoff necessity to the formation of political life and subject it to certain natural and necessary laws of human association.[4]

Like culture as a whole, political life is considered by ibn Khaldun to be a generated natural being. The methods he follows in determining its characteristics are, therefore, adopted from natural science in general, and from biology in particular.[5] Genetically, he follows the development of political life through its various stages: how it is generated, grows, reaches its maturity, sickens, and dies. In biology, the efficient cause of this movement is taken to be the soul and its temper (*mizaj*). In culture, ibn Khaldun considers the efficient cause of the movement to be a specific property of the human soul, i.e. social solidarity (*'asabiyyag*) which is a combination of the natural feeling for one's relatives and friends, and of the need for defence and survival. It cements a group together, dictates the need for a ruler, leads to conflicts with other groups and generates the power of conquest leading to victory over others, its initial power determines the extent of this conquest, and the fulfilment of appetites and desires, finally, weakens it and leads to the disintegration of political power.[6]

This genetic method is supplemented by the analytical method through which ibn Khaldun distinguishes and compares the various forms of political power, and the institutional arrangement within each form. Apart from the purely natural regime in which a tyrant or small bands or groups give free rein to their appetites , there are two major types of regimes: (a) rational regimes in which the appetites are ordered by the agency of human reason for the sake of a more peaceful and permanent enjoyment of worldly things, and (b) regimes of divine Law in which prophet-legislators, through the power of their souls to communicate with the "unseen" (explained in the sixth premise), posit laws which order the affairs of men and the enjoyment of both worldly things and things of the soul useful for man's welfare in the world to come. This inquiry is supplemented with a description of the various institutional arrangements and offices in both types.[7]

Throughout this discussion, ibn Khaldun insists that his treatment of political life is not to be confused with the treatment of political life in the Islamic legal sciences which aim at determining the legal prescriptions to be followed by adherents to the Islamic Law, with the sayings of popular wisdom which do not explain the nature of political life, or with political science or political philosophy which aims primarily at determining how man ought to conduct himself to achieve happiness and perfection.

In summarizing the Third Book of the *Laws*, al-Farabi informs us that Plato explained that all the *nomoi* are subject to generation and corruption and regeneration, and that he explained the growth of cities, the development of the arts, and the origins and development of governments.[8] In this context, al-Farabi employs the two central terms which have come to be associated with ibn Khaldun's new science, i.e. *'umran* and *'asabiyyah*.[9] Since al-Farabi indicates that generation and corruption are inherent in *all* the *nomoi* and in all cities all the time (i.e. they occurred in the past, occur now, and will occur in the future), he is also alluding to the fact that Muslim governments and laws are equally subject to these natural laws.

The context within which this and similar discussions occur, however, indicates that, for the political philosophers, the explanation of the natural origins and the generation and corruption of regimes is not

an independent inquiry but a subservient branch of the art of legislation and, ultimately, of political science; its aim is to provide the legislator with the necessary knowledge upon which to base his decisions in laying down such laws as are appropriate to the particular group for which he is legislating under particular circumstances.

In contrast, the immediate and apparent context within which ibn Khaldun's inquiry into political affairs is pursued is not the art of legislation or political science, but the science of culture which he develops as an independent science. His major contribution consists in pursuing this inquiry with relative freedom from the art of legislation and of political science or the art of determining how men ought live, and in elaborating all the natural properties and concomitants of political life necessitated by man's natural constitution. Furthermore, he is the only Muslim thinker who has shown, explicitly and in detail, that Muslim history and Muslim regimes are indeed subject to these natural laws of generation and corruption, and, therefore, has insisted that the proper understanding of Muslim history pre-supposes the natural understanding of the essential properties of man and human association in general.

C

In defending the legitimacy of his new inquiry into political matters, ibn Khaldun does not attempt to present it as a new version of political philosophy or as a substitute for, but rather to explain the distinction between the new inquiry and the established practical philosophic sciences. This distinction is made on the ground of certain basic differences which ibn Khaldun invokes at appropriate places in the course of his inquiry. The examination of these differences will shed light on the fundamental character of both Muslim political philosophy and ibn Khaldun's new science of culture.

Immediately after formulating the basic principles of the new science,[10] and asserting its relative independence and newness, ibn Khaldun sets out to show that "it does not belong to the science of rhetoric, for the subject of rhetoric is convincing speeches, useful in attracting the multitude toward a certain opinion or turning them away from it."[11] "Nor does it belong to the science of 'political government' (*siyasat al-madaniyyah*), for political government is the administration of the household or the city as is obligatory (*bima yajib*) according the requirements of ethics and wisdom so that the multitude be made to follow a course leading to the protection and preservation of the (human) species. Thus, its subject differs from the subject of these two arts which are perhaps similar to it."[12]

Only after having stated this difference does ibn Khaldun proceed to suggest that the new science "is, as it were, newly discovered." This suggestion is offered reluctantly on the ground that he could not find it in the works of the Greek wise men available to him, a fact which seemed to him to be in need of some explanation, "The Wise men perhaps were concerned in this with the fruits (of the sciences), and the fruit of this (science) is, as you saw, in (the correction of historical) reports only. Even though its problems in themselves and in their proper spheres are noble, its fruit is the rectification of (historical) reports which are weak (or not significant: *da'if*). That is why they deserted it."[13]

Ibn Khaldun's claim for the relative independence and newness of his science seems thus to be intimately related to his success in distinguishing it, and setting it apart, from rhetoric and political science, or to his success in showing that it does not belong to either of them. This he does through delimiting the subject-matter of these two disciplines by emphasizing their ends or results or "fruits," i.e. imparting certain opinions to the multitude and governing it according to the requirement of ethics and wisdom. The direct fruit of the science of culture, in contrast, is not convincing the multitude or making it follow an ethical or wise course or way of life (which in turn requires the knowledge of what the ethical virtues are, the practical wisdom of the legislator and the ruler, and the ability to convince the multitude), but simply the understanding of the nature and properties of man and human association or culture, an understanding which is pursued with the specific aim in rectifying historical reports.

The science of culture is not an art concerned with how man ought to live, how society is to be rightly governed, or how the multitude is to be convinced, but a scientific inquiry into how man actually lived in the past, and the natural causes determining the modes of human association ad necessitating the activities and ways of life pursued in the diverse human societies about which we possess historical reports, in order to be able correctly to judge the soundness or falsity of these reports.

This leads ibn Khaldun to a second distinction between the science of culture and political science with respect to the inherent character of their subject-matters and, consequently, to their conclusions. It was shown that the premises of the science of culture are drawn exclusively from the conclusions demonstrated in the natural sciences. Subsequently, ibn Khaldun claims the same natural and necessary character for the entire subject and for the conclusions of this science. In contrast, political science, having as its objective the right conduct of government according to the requirement of ethics and wisdom, does not restrict itself to these natural and necessary premises, but is concerned further with what is ethically or philosophically good for human society, and seeks to convince the multitude of the necessity or obligation of accepting it.

Ibn Khaldun insists that such matters cannot claim the natural and necessary character of the subject-matter of the science of culture. Because political science is concerned primarily with how man ought to live and how human society ought to be governed, it upholds principles which are not, strictly speaking, natural or necessary (i.e. grounded in the science of Plato's and al-Farabi's treatment of the laws, is subsidiary and accidental to their attachment to these other principles.

Ibn Khaldun does not then restrict himself to distinguishing between the new science and the traditional political science, to justifying the need for the new science of culture, and to showing that it has a relatively independent and legitimate subject-matter of its own; he makes, and repeats, certain observations about traditional political science which are not necessarily called for as far as his immediate task is concerned. At first sight, these observations seem to present traditional political science under unfavourable light, to suggest certain fundamental theoretical disagreements between ibn Khaldun and Muslim political philosophers, and to prove the superior character of the new science as

compared to the traditional political science. Yet ibn Khaldun's own modest estimate of the "fruits" of the science of culture is a warning against accepting these conclusions at their face value. In order to explore his intention, we must first understand the issues involved.

The central issue which ibn Khaldun repeatedly invokes in this connection is the proof of the "necessity" of prophecy, and of the Prophetic religious Law, adduced by Muslim political philosophers. Upon the first reference to this issue, ibn Khaldun cites what is mentioned by wise men in their proof of the necessity of prophecies, what is mentioned in the fundamentals of jurisprudence (*Usul al-Fiqh*) in proving the necessity of languages, and what the jurists (*fuqaha*) mention "in the justification of legal prescriptions through their purposes."[14]

In all of these disciplines, the jurists attempt to present a natural proof for the necessity of a legal or conventional prescription, and they seem to argue as follows: men must co-operate in society, therefore, they necessarily need a ruler who must be a prophet, men by nature need to express their intentions, therefore, they necessarily need the easier method of doing this, which must be a language, must preserve their species and their social life uncorrupted, therefore, they must abstain from adultery, murder and injustice. The necessity of prophecy thus appears to be based on the same kind of argument and, consequently, to have the same status, as the necessity of language, and of the injunctions against adultery, murder, and injustice.

Now, all these have some basis in nature. But they cannot be traced directly or exclusively to nature, and they are not produced by nature in a necessary manner. They are, rather, the product of human convention and law, or of a divine Law. That they are not strictly speaking, natural or necessary, becomes evident when we consider the diversity of languages and differences and conflicts among the various legal arrangements (including those claiming divine origin) in different communities. The mistake of these jurists consists in beginning with the nature of man and society, showing the need for some such conventions and laws, and concluding that this is sufficient proof or the exclusively natural and necessary character of conventions and laws.

While the proof of the "necessity" of prophecy shares in this general mistaken way of argumentation, it is in a class by itself, and we need to follow ibn Khaldun's regulation of it more closely. According to him, the philosophers begin with the demonstration of the necessity of a government and a ruler. This demonstration he accepts as valid and adopts as the first premise of his science. However, "The philosophers (*Falasifah*) make an addition to this demonstration when attempting to establish prophecy by rational argument, and that it is a natural property of the human being. Thus, they confirm this demonstration (i.e. the indispensability of the ruler) up to its conclusion and that humanity cannot escape being under restraining and reconciling rule (*kukm wadi'*).

Then they sat, after that, 'That rule comes to be by a (divine or religious) Law (*Shar'*) imposed by God and introduced by one (member) of the human species distinguished from them (i.e. the rest) by the special (properties) of His guidance with which God entrusts him in order that submission to him and

acceptance from him take place, so, that ruling among them be completed without disacknowledgement or (angry) reproach.' This proposition by the philosophers (*hukama'*) is, as you see, not demonstrable, since existence and human life may become complete without that (Law and prophet) by (virtue of) what the ruler imposes by himself or by (virtue of) the (social) solidarity (*'asabiyyah*) by which he is enabled to conquer them (i.e. his subjects) and make them follow his path.

Thus the People of the Book and the followers of the prophets are few compared to the Magians who have no (revealed) Book, for they (the latter) form the majority of the inhabitants of the world. Despite that, they possessed States and monuments in addition to (simply) having lived, and they still have these to this epoch in the intemperate regions of the north and the south, in contrast to human life in confusion and without a restraining and reconciling (ruler) at all, this is impossible. By this becomes plain to you their mistake concerning the obligatory (character) of prophecies, and that it (this obligation) is not rational; rather, it is apprehended by the Law, as is the doctrine of the ancestors of the community."[15]

On the surface ibn Khaldun's argument is extremely simple, if not naive. The supposed demonstration of the philosophers is based on the minor premise that every ruler must rule with a divine Law.[16] This is evidently false, since a ruler can rule by virtue of royal authority alone, and even a simpleton knows that there have been innumerable rules without divine authority. This simple fact could not have escaped the notice of the philosophers on this level.

D

There are two possible philosophic approaches to the study of man and society: the first, which is characteristic of ibn Khaldun's science of culture, is through the natural sciences, the second, which is the characteristic approach of the Greek and Muslim political philosophers, is through a consideration of the end of man. Since the end of man, his perfection or happiness, pre-supposes the understanding of the place of man within the cosmos of which he is a part, this latter approach comes after metaphysics or divine science (*'ilm ilahi*) in the order of the investigation.[17] The first approach is based exclusively on natural science and does not admit any premises that cannot be demonstrated therein. It can, therefore, be properly called a "natural" science of politics. The second approach is based on metaphysics or the science of divine things and can, therefore, be called meta-natural or "divine" politics.[18]

The comprehensive works of ibn Sina, which ibn Khaldun specifically has in mind in discussing the issue, present us with two features significant for understanding ibn Khaldun's exposition.

(1) They all include two discussions of political matters, the first coming at the end of the natural sciences (in the sections corresponding to Aristotle's *De Anima*), and the other at the end of the divine science.[19] Ibn Sina's works thus point to the fact that both "natural" and "divine" political sciences owe their origin to the philosophers. Yet in studying ibn Sina's "natural" version of political science, we come to realize the significant difference between him and ibn Khaldun: ibn Sina restricts himself here to the natural foundations of man's political life and does not proceed to develop a full-fledged science of

society or politics on that foundation alone. He seems thus to suggest that these natural foundations are not sufficient for understanding the full scope of man's political life and cannot offer the proper directives concerning how he is to conduct himself as a political animal. Such an undertaking will have to wait until after the completion of divine science, or, as ibn Khaldun explains, it needs "additional" arguments which cannot be presented prior to the investigation of the world and of the place of man within it.

(2) Further, in his "Parts of Rational Sciences," ibn Sina specifies that the aim of the practical part of philosophy or wisdom is not the attainment of certainty about existents, but "perhaps" of opinions and not opinions simply but opinions for the sake of realizing the good.[20] In addition, that part of political philosophy which deals with political government studies all classes of governments, good and bad, those based on kingship as well as those based on prophecy and divine Laws.[21] Although political philosophy may favour the political government based on prophecy, it transcends any particular class of political arrangements. These issues, however, are not raised in the exposition of the "divine" version of political philosophy in his comprehensive philosophic works, instead, he purports here to offer not a discussion of the total subject of political philosophy or the various classes of opinions and action in all political regimes, but what appears to be rational justification, or the "obligatory" character, of a specific class of political regimes, i.e. that which is originated by a prophet-legislator.

The final four chapters of the *Shifa'*, for instance, indicate that ibn Sina would treat the proof of prophecy, and the prophet's call to God and the return to Him, prayers and their utility in this world and the next, the foundation of the city and the household, and legal prescriptions relating to them (discussed within the framework of prophetic legislation) and successors to the Prophet (Caliphate and Imamate) and other matters relating to governments and ethics.[22] The whole discussion is, thus, centred on prophecy and pre-supposes its "obligatory" character.

Ibn Khaldun's first and foremost observation on the total scope of the subject-matter of "divine" political science is that it is not natural (*tabi'i*) or necessary (*daruri*), by which he means the same thing and it is fundamentally this: Considering the natural constitution of man as a political animal, we do not find the revelation, divine governments, and the concern with resurrection and reward and punishment, to be necessary conditions of his survival, for the formation of society, and for the continued existence of both. Religion does not belong to those requirements that form the indispensable minimum for the existence and preservation of society, it is not the sufficient condition, nor even one of the sufficient conditions, required for social life in order that may exist and continue.

Man's natural constitution and the character of society do not make it absolutely mandatory upon man to be a member of a religious community and to obey the prescriptions of a divine Law.[23] Given human nature, prophecy and revelation are possible phenomena. Supposing that a prophet does come and that he possesses, in addition, the ability to rule, to command obedience, and to legislate, there will come to exist a divine Law. And given certain climatic and other conditions, his Law must include certain opinions, such as that prophecy is necessary. These opinions are *legally* "obligatory" or binding upon the

followers of that Law; the source of this obligation is not human nature and the nature of society, or unaided human reason, but a specific divine revelation and a specific divine Law.

Thus, what induces ibn Khaldun to reject the natural and necessary character of religion and divine Laws, and, consequently, of the whole subject-matter of "divine" political science, is not merely that divine government, like man-made language and injunctions against adultery, murder and injustice, is conventional or legal in character.[24] For, despite their conventional character, it could be shown that, unlike divine government, all the rest are necessary conditions for the existence and preservation of any society,[25] and that the authority of unaided human reason is sufficient to prove that. (Ibn Khaldun says, for instance, that the authority of human reason is "sufficient" for "forbidding injustice."[26]) Divine government is not only legal convention, it does not even belong to those legal conventional arrangements that form the indispensable minimum required for the existence and preservation of society and which can be said, therefore, to be natural and necessary convention.

Ibn Khaldun's second major observation is that the premises and, consequently, the conclusions of "divine" political science are not rationally demonstrable (*burhani*), i.e., unaided human reason cannot achieve certainty concerning such subjects as the obligatory character of divine revelation and the divine Law, the necessity of believing in the opinions about God, resurrection, and reward and punishment, or the necessity of performing the actions prescribed in a divine law, such as worship. The authority for the obligatory character of these opinions and actions is the divine law itself. Divine Laws, however, command and do not demonstrate (at least not rationally) the necessity of holding the opinions and of performing the actions commanded.

So far as human reason is concerned, these commands remain undemonstrated, i.e. they continue to hold the status of belief or opinions. Whether these opinions are true or false, generally accepted or not, practically good and useful or bad and harmful, or whether they are preferable or objectionable, is not here the issue; rather, it is the obligation (set up by those who pretend to have shown that these opinions are rationally obligatory) does not impose itself on human reason. The only obligation that seems to be convincing is the legal obligation set up by divine Laws. Unlike demonstrated conclusions, undemonstrated opinions do not by themselves compel the assent of human reason; in order to be accepted, they need an additional force, which in this case is provided in divine Laws.

We are not in a better position to understand the reason why ibn Khaldun distinguishes at the outset between his new science of culture, on the one hand, and the practical philosophic sciences, the legal sciences and popular wisdom, on the other, and why, in discussing the six premises of the new science, he distinguishes between what can be demonstrated and what cannot be demonstrated within the sciences of nature. Only in the science of nature are we able to arrive at demonstrated conclusions about what is natural and necessary for man and society. The conclusions of all these other sciences are undemonstrated opinions.

This is also the case with the conclusions of the divine science or the science of divine beings. The fact

that “divine” political science is based on premises derived from divine science deprives all of its conclusions of their demonstrable character. This is also the reason why ibn Khaldun mentions rhetoric as the first of the practical philosophic sciences. Since the practical sciences deal with opinions, and opinions do not compel assent immediately, an art is needed which is capable of convincing men to accept certain opinions and to reject others. This is precisely the function of rhetoric. In the practical sciences, the philosophers do not follow the method of demonstration; they are not, strictly speaking, philosophers but rhetoricians.[27]

E

Ibn Khaldun’s critique of “divine political science presents a curious paradox: it defends religion against the mistakes of theologians and it defends philosophy against the mistakes of philosophers. His defence of religion consists in establishing revelation and divine Laws as the exclusive source for beliefs in the substance of the doctrines relative to prophecy and divine government, yet he objects to every kind of theology or the effort to prove these doctrines rationally. His defence of philosophy consists in the bold assertion that, in as far as reason is concerned, the political doctrines purporting to support religion cannot claim a status higher than that of undemonstrated opinions, and he exposes the philosophers who claimed that they were presenting properly a philosophical support or defence of religious doctrines, or had succeeded in turning philosophy into a rational theology. From this it appears that ibn Khaldun’s critique is not directed against philosophy, but against theology, not against philosophers as philosophers, but against philosophers in their role as theologians, dialecticians, and rhetoricians.

This critique is based on the distinction between religion or, more specifically, religious beliefs and practices based on a particular revelation and divine Law, and philosophy or, more specifically, the body of scientifically demonstrated conclusions based on rational inquiry. It is characteristic of ibn Khaldun that he upholds the legitimacy of both religious knowledge and scientific philosophic knowledge in their proper spheres, and contests the theoretical legitimacy of all disciplines that occupy an ambivalent position between the two and profess to demonstrate their agreement. Such disciplines, which according to him belong to sophistry and rhetoric rather than either to religion or scientific philosophy, are primarily the dialectical theology of the Mutakallimun and the political theology of the philosophers.

Religiously, ibn Khaldun identifies himself with the early Muslims or the pious ancestors who rejected all attempts at rational justification of religious beliefs and practices as unnecessary, if not dangerous, “innovations.” But since these pious ancestors were innocent of the philosophic sciences, they could not be considered his true precursors. Philosophically, he supports his position, not only on the basis of the requirements of scientific demonstration, but by invoking the authority of the philosophers who followed the method of verification (*muhaqqiqun*). He thus shows a predilection for pure religion and pure philosophy over against any kind of theology which is necessarily a confused mixture.

It is noteworthy that in the crucial passage where ibn Khaldun criticizes the divine science and the

political theology of the philosophers, he mentions al-Farabi and ibn Sina but not ibn Rushd.[28] Of Muslim philosophers, it was precisely ibn Rushd who (like ibn Khaldun) was a recognized religious judge (*qadi*) and a philosopher who criticized al-Farabi and ibn Sina for imitating the dialectical theologians, and who wrote the most celebrated treatise on religion and philosophy the main theme of which is the defence of the legitimacy of religion and philosophy in their proper spheres, and which is a devastating attack upon the combination of religion and philosophy in the form of theology.[29]

It is not possible here to enter into the historical and doctrinal developments that led to ibn Rushd's new attitude towards theology. For our immediate purpose we need only note that in this decisive respect ibn Khaldun is following in the footsteps of one of the most illustrious Muslim predecessors. Therefore, his position could not be construed to be anti-philosophic or based on any lack of understanding of the intentions of al-Farabi and ibn Sina. To understand his specific reasons for criticizing them, we must now analyze his treatment of Muslim dialectical theology (*Kalam*), and of the divine science and political theology of the "philosophers."

"Dialectical theology," says ibn Khaldun, "involves arguing for the beliefs of faith with rational proofs, and answering the innovators who deviate in (their) beliefs from the ways of the ancestors and the followers of orthodoxy."[30] The beliefs of faith consist of such things as the attributes of God, the truth of revelation and prophecy, the angels, the spirits, the *jinn*, resurrection, paradise, hell, etc. Unlike things that have rationally ascertainable natural causes, these are ambiguous matters, the reality of which reason cannot ascertain. Therefore, it must be left to the divinely-ordained legislator (the Prophet) to determine them and teach them. The general run of believers, like the deaf and the blind, must accept the authority of their fathers and teachers, and since they cannot establish the truth of these matters, they must follow the general accepted opinions about them, based on the command of their prophet-legislator.[31]

More important, however, is the fact that these beliefs are not theoretical assertions but part of a way of life within a system of divine government intended for the happiness of the believer. Their purpose is not mere knowledge or belief or assent or faith. Perfection, according to the legislator, consists of "perfect faith" or the habit firmly rooted through practical repetitive action (worship, obedience, and the submissiveness), until believers possess the established attribute moulding their souls. Beliefs are not primarily intended to be known, but to "be possessed," their purpose is not knowledge, but practical utility, their end is not theoretical perfection, but the happiness promised by the legislator.[32]

The proper function of dialectical theology is to defend beliefs with rational arguments, but since this is not necessary for faith, it is only useful when these beliefs are endangered by innovators. At that time, dialectical theology had a useful function to perform. Once innovators are suppressed (rational argument being one of the tools used in this fight),[33]dialectical theology has no further reason to exist; indeed, it can be harmful, since it gives the impression that rational arguments are somehow necessary for accepting beliefs. This is false both because (except in the case of rational attacks upon them) beliefs do not need rational support and because that rational support offered by dialectical theology is only

dialectical, sophistical, or rhetorical (i.e. based on common opinions), it has no scientific value.[34]

While discussing the emergency of dangerous innovations, ibn Khaldun notices a certain identity of origin and a certain parallelism between the opinions of the innovators (the Mu'tazilites and the Shi'ites) and the writings and opinions of the philosophers "which are in general at variance with the beliefs of the divine Law."[35] He indicates that innovators in Islam studied the works of the philosophers. But it seems also that the philosophers in turn took notice (e.g. in their rational proof of the obligation of having successors or Caliphs to the Prophet)[36] of the opinions of the innovators or of the Mu'tazilite and Shi'ite theologians, and presented identical or similar opinions, or that philosophers presented themselves to the Muslim community in the guise of Muslim theologians purporting to give a rational support for certain Muslim beliefs and more specifically of those beliefs, held by the heterodox minorities, which were closer to their own views.

Be this as it may, ibn Khaldun was also aware of the radical difference between the content and the ultimate intentions of the views of the philosophers and those of theologians of all shades. That is why he devotes special chapters to the exposition of divine science and of the philosophy centred on this divine science.

In contra-distinction to all dialectical theologians, philosophers suppose that "all" existence can be apprehended by "mental contemplation and rational syllogisms."[37] It thus appears that they include all "spiritual" being in their contemplation; hence, they purport to give (in divine science) a rational, syllogistic knowledge of God, the soul, resurrection, etc., or of the religious beliefs revealed and commanded by the prophet-legislators. Unlike dialectical theologians, however, philosophers do not begin with religious beliefs revealed and commanded by the prophet-legislators. Unlike dialectical theologians, however, philosophers do not begin with religious beliefs as revealed by the prophets and attempt to elucidate them or support them rationally; their position is that reason can know these matters independently of revelation. Being philosophers, they also believe that the rational syllogistic knowledge of these matters of superior to divine revelation and, therefore, must be made the final judge of the correctness of revelation, or that "the rectification of the beliefs of faith is through contemplation, not though tradition (hearing: *sam'*), for they (i.e., the beliefs) belong to the apprehensions of the intellect."[38]

But philosophy does not content itself with presenting theoretical knowledge as a superior alternative to the religious belief; philosophy is also a way of life, and the philosophers contend that true happiness consists of complete theoretical knowledge, or "the apprehension of all existents...through this contemplation and those demonstrations," together with the improvement of the soul and the acquisition of the virtues (all of which can be known and established by the sole agency of reason. In contrast to the religious way of life and the happiness of the philosopher "is possible for the human being even if no divine Law comes down." For the lovers of wisdom, the blessed life means theoretical knowledge and living according to the dictates of reason, and eternal suffering means ignorance.[39]

In presenting the content of their theoretical knowledge and of their way of life, however, philosophers

have committed grave errors, not only from the more apparent standpoint of religion, but also from the standpoint of philosophy itself. Philosophy says that scientific knowledge has to conform to certain conditions and that scientific demonstration is possibly only within the limited range of what can be humanly experienced and known. Yet philosophers in general, and al-Farabi and ibn Sina in particular, seem to speak about all sorts of "spiritual" matters: the One, the source of all beings, the emanation of beings, the states of the soul after departing from the body, its return to the source joining the active intellect, and resurrection.

Further, they present these matters in a manner suggesting that they are the philosophical parallels to, or the true meaning of, religious beliefs and even "that the joy resulting from this apprehension is *identical* with the happiness promised (by the prophet-legislator)."[40] Yet their great master, Plato, had said, "As to divine (things), no certainty can be realized concerning them; rather, they are spoken of in accordance with what is most fitting and proper" – he means "opinion."[41]

Since Plato was indeed the great master of al-Farabi and ibn Sina in their exposition of divine matters, and the *Timaeus*[42] and the *Laws* were their models, we are faced again with question why the philosophers, including Plato, should find it necessary or useful to speak profusely concerning matters of which one cannot achieve certainty; why, having done this, al-Farabi and ibn Sina did not indicate clearly that they were only giving the most fitting and proper "opinions" about these matters, and why, finally, they gave the impression that these opinions were the equivalents or the fitting interpretations of religious beliefs – in short, why they presented fitting opinions in the guise of demonstrated conclusions on religious beliefs. The exploration of this theme is an indispensable pre-requisite for a sound understanding of Muslim political philosophy. For the present, we shall restrict ourselves to the following observations with the intention of clarifying ibn Khaldun's position.

In this section on "divine science" (*'ilm ilhai*) in the "Enumeration of the Sciences," al-Farabi divides this science into three parts: the first two examine existents as existents and the principles of the demonstrations of particular theoretical sciences (logic, natural science and mathematics), respectively. The third part examines incorporeal existents, their number, order, and progression to the most perfect One, explains the attributes of this last and perfect incorporeal existent, explains "that this which has these attributes is the one which must be believed to be God," makes known the descending order of existents beginning with Him, explains that the order of the existents involves no injustice or irregularity, and finally "sets out to refute corrupt opinions" about God.[43]

The relation between political science, treated by him in the following chapter and the last function of divine science is not immediately clear, although the inclusion of dialectical theology (*Kalam*) as part of political science leaves no doubt as to the political importance of the opinions of the citizens concerning incorporeal existents. In his strictly political writings, on the other hand, he does set up a detailed theology for the inhabitants of the city.[44] But there he does not speak about the relation between this theology and the examinations conducted in divine science. We conclude that al-Farabi leaves the

problem of the relation between divine science and political theory set up for the inhabitants of the city ambiguous, at least in his more public writings.

At first sight, ibn Sina appears to have followed a different course. In all of his works that deal with the whole subject-matter of philosophy, he presents the conclusions arrived at in divine sciences as making "obligatory" the existence of the prophets, the legislation of divine Laws, and even the contents of the beliefs and practices legislated in these Laws.[45] It is true, as ibn Khaldun observes, that ibn Sina begins his second version of political science with a recapitulation of the conclusions arrived at in the first (natural) version of political science and seems to be building the "obligatory" character of prophecy and divine Laws upon that natural basis; but ibn Khaldun correctly notes that the "proof" of the obligatory character of prophecy and divine Laws is not based on the nature of man as explained in *De Anima*, but on the additional examinations conducted thereafter in divine science.

Ibn Sina's presentation of his political theology is indeed based on rational considerations, but not on the rational consideration of the nature of man as in *De Anima*; rather, it is based on the attributes of "the First Cause and the angels." Being what divine science has presented the First Cause and the angels to be, it is obligatory that they should send prophets and divine Laws.[46] Since divine science is a rational science, the obligation set up here seems to be rational, not legal; God and the angels are not bound by Laws but by their very nature. Thus, ibn Khaldun is again justified in interpreting this rational obligation to mean natural necessity, and in wondering why God and the angels do not uniformly act in accordance with what is purported to be their very nature, why they have not fulfilled their obligation to the overwhelming majority of mankind and why only on rare occasions have there been prophets and divine Laws.

Ibn Sina seems indeed to argue in the context that the realization of prophecy is necessary as a preparation for the existence of the "good order" or of man's possible perfection, a perfection which he assumes to have become evident as the proper end of man in divine science, but this raises the further question whether prophecy and divine Laws, as they are known to exist, are preparations for this type of perfection. We are, thus, forced to note that despite the apparent clarity of his presentation of the relation between his divine science and his political theology, ibn Sina leaves many questions unanswered, or that his presentation is as ambiguous as that of al-Farabi. There is, thus, ample justification for ibn Khaldun's criticism. Following Plato, he explains that these ambiguities follow from the fact that in divine science itself the philosophers have not attained, or at least have not presented, certain knowledge, but only fair and fitting opinions. Therefore, their political theology has the same character.

Ibn Khaldun raises this issue in the most acute and critical fashion, he reveals that the philosophers, in presenting fair opinions and undemonstrated conclusions concerning the way to theoretical perfection and happiness, could only defend them by means of dialectical and rhetorical arguments, and, dialectical theologians, they do in fact assume the same role as the dialectical theologians when presenting and defending these opinions. In taking his bearings on these matters, ibn Khaldun distinguishes between

philosophy properly so-called, i.e. the philosophic sciences which do in fact pursue the method of demonstration and about the conclusions of which, when properly arrived at, there can be no doubt, and philosophic theology (the greater portion of divine science) and political theology (or "divine" political science) which are in fact the philosophic versions of dialectical theology (*Kalam*). He accepts the former (i.e. logic, natural science, mathematics), while rejecting the latter.[47]

Ibn Khaldun's theoretical reason for this rejection is justified but cannot be considered sufficient. For granting that ultimately the theology and divine political science of the philosophers are in fact likely images and opinions presented in the guise of rational beliefs, it remains to be shown that these images and opinions are not only contrary but in fact inferior to the religious beliefs of the community in which they were being propagated. From the standpoint of demonstrative science, religious beliefs and philosophic or rational opinions enjoy the same status – they are all opinions. The quotation from Plato, however, indicates that opinions are not all alike: they can be distinguished as being more or less fitting or proper. The philosophers hold, in effect, that their rational opinions are more fitting or proper than religious beliefs and that their way of life, their virtues, and their happiness are more truly such than the way of life, the virtues and the happiness, pursued on the basis of divine Laws. Ibn Khaldun is silent on this subject; he does not attempt a direct refutation of this contention.

Instead, he explains that the philosophic way of life contradicts the religious way of life which is based on faith and obedience to the commands of a prophet-legislator, that the content of the happiness pursued by the philosopher, and that the attempt to equate or harmonize the two is an impossible task and one which is fraught with danger for the religious community – it breaks the protective wall around it, leads to doubts and scepticism about the beliefs of faith, and turns the faithful away from the tasks appointed for them by their prophet–legislator.

The philosophers were not justified in preaching their opinions to the Islamic community. Whatever their intention about reforming the beliefs of the Islamic community might have been, they had only sown confusion in the minds of the faithful, and led to the emergence of mistaken notions about the distinct purposes of religion and of philosophy. Their own way of life and their own happiness are of no concern to the religious community, and since they assert they can pursue this way of life and attain happiness regardless of the existence of divine Laws and of a religious community, they had no compelling reason to sow the seeds of confusion and dissension within the religious community and endanger its peace.

Political life, as practiced in all human communities, has to take into account the nature of all men, and should be directed to the common good of the multitude. This requires a ruler and a law based on the rational understanding of their common needs and interests in this world, or a divine Law based on their common good in this world and the next. But in every case, it is mandatory that the ruler and the law should set up opinions and actions in the forms of commands to be obeyed without qualification. The philosophic life, however, transcends all established laws. The real "meaning" of political science, "according to the wise men" themselves, is to lead a way of life in which "they dispense with rulers

altogether," their "virtuous city" is not an association of men subject to commands serving their common interest, and they talk about it as a supposed or hypothetical city whose realization is highly improbable.[48]

The philosophic life is then radically different from the ordinary political life of the citizens. It requires rare natures and rarely accomplished arts. The philosopher is essentially a solitary being, and the best he can hope for are few kindred spirits within a vast majority of men leading different ways of life and pursuing different ends. Since he needs to live in a political community, ibn Khaldun offers him this opportunity, but within clearly defined limits: he is not to interfere in the political life of the community in his capacity as a philosopher, not to attempt to reform the opinions of this community, not to communicate his opinions or propagate his way of life among the multitude, and he is to relinquish his role as a theologian and as a divine politician. He should restrict himself publicly to practicing the demonstrative sciences (logic, natural science, mathematics) and the useful arts (e.g. medicine, music and jurisprudence). But, above all, he should, like ibn Khaldun, uphold in no uncertain terms the Law of his community and obey it. The philosopher must present himself to his community in the guise of an ordinary citizen.

F

For certain thinkers, polemic is a method of examination and investigation, a way of entering into a dialogue with their predecessors, and a means of uncovering what lies behind or beyond the garb with which their predecessors chose to clothe their thought or in the manner in which they expressed it. When, in addition, this polemic is presented to the reader to draw attention to the theoretical difficulties encountered by the author and his proposed direction for finding a solution, and to an audience which the author intends to convince to accept or reject certain opinions or a course of action, the polemic necessarily gains a formal complexity difficult to comprehend without a sustained attention to the diverse, and perhaps conflicting, purposes which is designed to serve. Ibn Khaldun's polemic against ibn Sina is an instructive example.

Muslim philosophers, dialectical theologians, and mystics, like the jurists, the pious leaders of the community, and the common run of Muslims seem to accept the superior character of the opinions and actions legislated by prophets in general and their own Prophet in particular. The unsophisticated Muslim believes in the opinions of the Prophet and performs the actions commanded by him because of his faith in their divine origin, his expectation of rewards, and his fear of punishment in the world to come, the pious leaders of the community defend and promote, by exhortation, example, and threat of punishment, communal obedience and devotion to the beliefs and the way of life of their community, the jurists formulate and elaborate the prescriptions of the Law of their community, the mystics devote themselves to practical exercises designed to facilitate the institution of the verities beyond the beliefs and legal prescriptions designed for the common run of Muslims, the dialectical theologians protect the beliefs and the ways of life of their community against rational doubts and attacks, and the philosophers attempt to

present an additional rational ground for the coming of the prophet and the setting up of the opinions and actions he commands.

Ibn Khaldun, too, presents himself as the defender of Muslim beliefs and the Muslim way of life. But, instead of choosing to join the apparent consensus of all the parts of the community, or to re-establish such a consensus where it is lacking through harmonizing apparently conflicting views, he labours to make implicit conflicts explicit, to show that the apparent consensus conceals some fundamental differences, and to intensify these conflicts and differences by a show of vigorous partisanship. He is the partisan fighting for the simple, unsophisticated beliefs and the way of life of the common run of Muslims, and for the undiluted, unexplained, and unsupported faith, against the useless and dangerous efforts of mystics, dialectical theologians, and philosophers, to defend, explain and support Islam. What were the fruits of the victory, so intensely coveted by him?

On the scientific and theoretical plane his immediate aim is to disentangle the confusion between dialectical theology, mysticism and philosophy. This confusion or mixture (*khalt*), as we learn from his account, reigned in these disciplines in his time, and those primarily responsible for it were the "modern" school of dialectical theology and the later extreme rational mystics.[49] This objective is achieved through the reassertion of the legal character of dialectical theology and mysticism. Both must accept the beliefs and the way of life of the community and unquestionable basic axioms, they should make no pretension to extra-legal or properly rational knowledge of the nature of things: dialectical theology is to restrict itself to the defence of the beliefs and practices of the community when these are questions, and mystics should keep their supposedly intuitive achievements to themselves.

Since this confusion has been harmful to philosophy (it was in danger of losing its distinctive character and of becoming a tool of dialectical theology and mystical exercises), philosophers should contribute to it by presenting themselves to non-philosophers in the guise of dialectical theologians and mystics, as ibn Sina had done: philosophy is to exercise greater circumspection.

What induced the philosophers to present a rational support for prophecy and divine Laws was no doubt the realization that a community living in accordance with such Laws is superior to other communities – to communities without God or gods, without concern for the welfare of the soul, and without hope of a life to come. This has a demonstrative rational foundation (it is shown in the science of nature that the soul is higher than the body), and it is at the basis of ibn Khaldun's division of regimes into "rational regimes" and "regimes of Law."

But to say that the soul is higher than the body, that prophecy is possible, and that a regime without a divine Law, and to say that prophecy and prophetic Laws are obligatory, or that reason can prove or support the commands, the beliefs, and the virtues, set up by a legislator – these are two radically different things: the former set of propositions has solid support in the investigation of the nature of man and society, the latter has no such support.

A strictly natural, rational, and demonstrative approach to man and society is then faced with the dilemma that, while it can attain certainty about the necessity of society, the need for a ruler, and the preservation of peace through a minimal practice of justice, it can attain no such certainty about morality, virtues, or rules of conduct. Morality and virtues of character are not, strictly speaking, natural or necessary; they have no natural basis, no ground in nature. There is not a single universally valid rule of conduct. Rational morality has no secure foundation or justification in nature, and rational moral laws are not essential to man's nature or to the nature of society.[50] There can, consequently, be no theoretical science of ethics or politics except in the extremely limited sense developed by ibn Khaldun in his science of culture.

But although not simply natural, rational, and universal, morality, virtues ad general rules of conduct are not simply against nature. Society, to flourish and to be preserved, requires the common pursuit of practical ends, and these require in turn a morality and virtues readily accepted and commonly agreed upon by all, the majority or the better part of society. This is not the morality of the philosopher. The philosopher sees human perfection in theoretical knowledge. Theoretical activity has its own immediate reward. The rewards of the practice of moral virtues, in contrast, are neither evident nor immediate. They must be based on less evident rewards, such as glory or honour, or future rewards such as happiness promised to the just and the virtuous in the world to come.

The philosophic study of ethics and politics, if it is intended to go beyond the perfection and the happiness reserved for the philosopher and possible only through philosophic way of life or the life of theoretical activity, has to assume the character of a practical discipline and to have as its object the generally acceptable opinions about goodness and happiness, e.g. that moderation is good, that the pleasures of the soul are superior to the pleasures of the body, or that the future rewards of virtue are preferable to the immediate rewards of vice. The aim of such a practical philosophy, however, is not knowledge but action, i.e. the practical pursuit and realization of the good.

Yet philosophy, since it does not rule in cities, lacks the practical implementation of what it considers fair and fitting; therefore, the need for a ruler, a legislator, a law, and a tradition as instruments for the execution of moral duties and obligations. It is thus not philosophy, but the legislator, the legal prescriptions, and the embodiment of the law in the traditional way of life of the community that are the efficient cause which forces the citizens to lead a virtuous way of life. The law, and not practical philosophy or reason, is what redeems that lack of ground or necessity in nature: it supplies the justification, the obligation, and the authority that compel the citizens to hold fast to fair and fitting opinions entailing the renunciation of their natural and compelling desires which opinion alone is unable to achieve.

Divine Laws revealed to prophet–legislators have the additional force of being based on the belief in their divine origin, in the over–powering will of God, and in the certainty of the rewards and punishments in the world to come, they are thus the most efficient laws and offer the most compelling ground for

accepting as valid what cannot be demonstrated by nature and reason.

The attempt to offer a natural and rational explanation of the beliefs embodied in these Laws, as practised by dialectical theology, mysticism, and philosophy, is unwise and dangerous. It may, in certain cases, strengthen the faith of the believers in the commands of a divine law, but it may also weaken that faith by bringing to light certain discrepancies between these commands and what is rationally most fitting and proper. Since, ultimately, there is no naturally or rationally demonstrative and compelling ground for these commands, the multitude will be made aware of this fact and this will lead to the loss of unquestioned faith in them and since the multitude are incapable of knowing or pursuing the human perfection attainable by theoretical activity, they will pursue sham and pseudo-scientific activities: the citizens will lose their civic or religious virtues without finding the happiness reserved for the true philosopher.

Ibn Khaldun's theoretical consideration of the nature of man and society thus results in a practical teaching aimed at the protection of the Muslim religious community and its divine Law against the confusion and disruption resulting from the vulgarization of philosophy. This practical teaching is founded on the consideration of the respective character of rational morality and the law, but in recommending it to the Muslims of his time, ibn Khaldun supports it by the more acceptable authority of the Prophet, the pious ancestors, and the consensus of the leaders of the community, i.e. he presents it as a legal injunction. Whatever the theoretical status of his critique of the social role of philosophy may be, his practical recommendation to the faithful must be obeyed because of its legal character.

Ibn Khaldun did not consider the critical issue for the Muslim community of his time to be the rational justification or support of its divine Law. Indeed, he thought that this issue was a luxury which his community could not afford because it was faced with problems that involved its very existence. Long periods of cultural decline and disintegration were threatening to dissolve the fabric of society. What the community and its leaders needed most was clarity concerning the elementary and natural foundations of human association or culture and the understanding of the natural and necessary conditions without which no society can exist at all. Muslims had for centuries lived as members of a religious community under the aegis of the divine Law until they came to forget other forms of social life and the fact that religion and the Law cannot continue to exist except when based on a solid foundation of social solidarity, royal authority, and other indispensable natural conditions.

The Prophet and the early Muslims were clearly aware of that and acted accordingly. But in ibn Khaldun's time, this was no more the case. Therefore, he set out to teach his compatriots and co-religionists the telling lessons of history, and his new science of culture and his investigation of the natural basis of political life within this science were intended to explain to his readers those elementary, indispensable natural conditions which Muslims and their rulers need to consider if they are to succeed in preserving their religious community and divine Law. They may not need philosophy to explain and support their religion and Law, but they are in desperate need of it for understanding the natural

foundation of their religion and Law, and this in turn is an indispensable condition for preserving their way of life.

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1. Q. 1 278ff. Cf. Book Four, Part Four, Chapter 46 for bibliographical information about ibn Khaldun's works and other works cited in the footnotes. Complete bibliographical information will be given in this chapter only for works not already cited.
2. Q 1, 278, 2, 201
3. Q 1, 278: 5 – 7, 337 – 38, 398:3, 415:5, 2, 126.
4. Q 1, 247 – 48, 291:15 – 16, 293, 294:16 – 18, 299 – 300, 309, 336 – 38, 342; 2 19:4 – 5, 65ff, 93ff, 106 – 07, 128.
5. Q. 1 299 – 300, 305 – 06, 309ff.
6. Q 1, 291:15 – 16, 293, 294:16 – 18, 299:14, 331:1 – 2, 342; 2, 93ff , 108ff.
7. Q. 1, 342ff; 2, 126ff.
8. Talkhis Nawamis Aflatun ("Compendium Legum Platonis"), ed. Franciscus Gabrieli ("Corpus Philosophorum Medii Aevi, Corpus Platonieum, Plato Arabus," Vol. 3), London, The Warburg Institute, 1952, pp. 16 – 18.
9. Ibid., pp. 17:4, 18:2 and 6, 24:10, 33:13, 41:6.
10. Q. 1, 61; cf. above, Chap. 46.
11. Cf. Q. 3, 322, where ibn Khaldun refers to the flowing prose used "in rhetorical (speeches) and prayer, and encouraging and frightening the multitude," and also 324 where he indicates the political use of such rhetorical speeches.
12. Q. 1, 62:3 – 10.
13. Q. 1, 63:5 – 8.
14. Q. I, 63 – 64.
15. Q. 1, 72:7 – 73:5.
16. Q. 1, 345 – 46.
17. Ihsa' al-'Ulum (La statistique des sciences), ed. Osman Amin (2nd ed., Cairo, Dar al-Fikr al-'Arabi, 1949), pp. 102ff.
18. In al-Farabi's "Enumeration of the Sciences," political science (which includes the art of jurisprudence and the art of dialectical theology) comes at the end immediately following divine science. Following the same scheme, all of ibn Sina's comprehensive philosophical works relegate political science to the very end to be treated as an ancillary to divine science. This argument is based on the consideration that the subject of divine science includes the study of "spiritual" beings, and is, thus, in a position to correct the false opinions about them in the city, and that, for ibn Sina in particular, the "branches" (furu') of divine science are concerned with the study of revelation, miracles, resurrection, and reward and punishment; cf. al-Farabi, Ihsa', pp. 99 – 101; ibn Sina, Aqsam al-'Ulum al-'Aqliyyah (The Parts of Rational Sciences) in Tis' Rasa'il, Cairo, Matba'ah Hindiyyah, 1326/1908, pp. 112 – 16.

A political science concerned with the opinions and actions of a religious community must, therefore, follow the study of the principles of these opinions and actions in divine science. Ibn Khaldun, who clearly saw the close relation between divine science and the "divine" version of political philosophy, adopts, as we shall indicate, an equally critical attitude towards both.

19. Uyun, pp. 40 – 46, 59 – 60; cf. pp. 16 – 17; Isharat, pp. 119 – 37, 176 – 222; Najat, pp. 157 – 93, 284, 38: “Nafs,” Shifa’, pp. 157 – 268, “Siyasah,” Shifa’ (La sociologie et la politique dans la philosophie d’Avicenne”) ed. Mohammad Yusuf Musa (“Memorial Avicenne” 1), cairo, Institute Francais d’Archeologie Orientale, 1952, pp. 8 – 27.
20. Aqsam al-‘Ulam, p. 105.
21. Ibid., pp. 107 – 08. This philosophic discussion of the prophetic regime, according to ibn Sina, is contained in Plato’s works on the nomoi.
22. “Siyassah,” Shifa’, pp. 8ff.
23. For a more detailed discussion of this problem, cf. Leo Strauss, “The Law of Reason in the Kuzar” in Persecution and the Art of Writing, Glencoe, Illinois, Free Press, 1952, pp. 95 – 141, and Natural Right and History, Chicago, the University of Chicago Press, 1953, pp. 156 – 64.
24. Cf. above, pp. 966 – 67.
25. Not that a particular language, etc., is necessary, but the some language is necessary.
26. Q. 1, 346:4 – 5.
27. Cf. above, p. 965; Q. 3, 73.
28. Q. 3, 213.
29. Fasl al-Maqal (Traite decisf), ed. L. Gauthier, 3rd ed., Alger, Editions Carbonel, 1948, pp. 20ff.
30. Q. 3, 27:1 – 3.
31. Q. 3, 29 – 30.
32. Q. 3, 31 – 35.
33. Al-Farabi , Ihsa’, pp. 108 – 13.
34. Q. 3, 40 – 42, 45 – 49.
35. Q. 3, 40, cf. also 41
36. Q. 1, 345 – 46.
37. Q. 3, 210:2 – 5, 211:15 – 17.
38. Q. 3, 210:5 – 6. Here we see another similarity between the philosophers and the innovating theologians (the Mu‘tazilites): the latter sought to “understand” and “interpret” religious beliefs through reason.
39. Q. 3, 210:7 – 8, 211 – 12.
40. Q. 3, 121, 213 – 18.
41. Q. 3, 215:12 – 13.
42. The quotation from Plato apparently refers to Timaeus 28C; cf. Rosenthal’s translation of Q. vol, 3, p 252, n 1029.
43. Isha’, pp. 99 – 101.
44. Cf., e.g., Ara’ Ahl al-Madinat al-Fadilah (“Der Musterstaat”), ed. Fr. Dieterici, Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1895, pp. 5ff.
45. “Siyasah,” Shifa’, pp. 12ff Conisder the frequent repetition of wa-yajibu (and it is obligatory) through the text.
46. Ibid., p. 9:8 and passim.
47. Q. 3, 212 – 20.
48. Q. 2, 127.
49. Q. 3, 121 – 24.
50. Since the attack of al-Ghazl and ibn Rushd on ibn Sina, the latter’s star declined, especially in western Islam. To attack ibn Sina was fashionable, not only in theological, but in philosophical circles as well. The significance of ibn Khaldun’s attack, however, consists in uncovering those fundamental, bitter, and practically dangerous philosophical truths which philosophers before him, precisely because they identified themselves with the philosophers, could not utter.

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