A History of Muslim Philosophy


Part 5. The Middle-Runners

The School of Isfahan

Chapter XLVII

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 all serious research has ever been made into the spiritual and intellectual treasures of Twelver Shi'ism in any of the European languages. As a result, not only Westerns 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 centre 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), took refuge after the seventeenth 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 even the Muslims here, with one gap of a century and a half, managed to flourish up to the present century. It will reveal that just as Shi'ah art is one of the high points of Muslim art, so is the intellectual life of Shi'ism in this period one of the apogees of Muslim history, producing

1 A few authors like Goldziher, Donaldson, and E. G. Browne have touched ever, who has dwelt with serious intention into the Shi'ah intellectual world, in the 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 Shi'ah al-Din Shafii and Maturity.
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No longer molested by an external force and faced with a large number of practical social problems, *Shi`ah* theology, *Kadim*, which had always served as the walls of the citadel of the faith, 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 predominantly *Shi`ah* culture of Persia prepared the background for the flourishing of the doctrines of *utopi* gnosis (illuministic wisdom), philosophy, and the sciences. The efforts of the chain of sages after Khwajah Na`jir al-Din `Abd al-Majid, who had kept the study of these subjects alive, suddenly found the necessary environment for the development of this form of wisdom. We have connected this wisdom symbolically with the school of Ispahan, which spread throughout Safavid 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 Safavid capital, but also other cities like Shiraz, Kish and, Qazvin, and Tabriz. Furthermore, some of the most important figures like Shahab al-Din Amili, and Sayyid `Abd al-Walid, who played a vital role in the establishment of the *Kadim* in Persia, were from Amol near Damacus and Baghdad, two centres which had been preserving the *Shi`ah* tradition for centuries.

The *Shi`ah* have developed the *Ja`fari* school of Law named after the sixth Imam, Jafar al-Sadiq, as well as theology (*Kadim*) and other traditional studies, namely, language, history, Hadith and commentary upon the Qu’ran, jurisprudence (*Fiqh*), principles of jurisprudence (*Usul*), *Shi`ah* theology, and *Ahkam al-Tawarih* by Hasan Baqir Rumahi, *Zadab al-Tawarih* by Muhammad Musa bin `Abdu al-Karim, and the universal history *Nihayat al-Tawarih* by Morteza Taqipour.

1. The purpose of theology is to protect the truth of a revelation against false reasoning; its role is, therefore, defensive. It is the shield which protects the individual 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.

2. For a discussion of the meaning of *utopi* wisdom, refer to the chapter on Sufism. The *Kadim*. The reason why the pre-*Shi`ah* sages of Persia like `Ali `Abduh Ispahani and ibn `Abi Jumah as well as the *Shi`ah* authors themselves have been neglected in the Western world, is that the quality of their wisdom is primarily gnostic (*utopi*) like that of Shavkat al-Khulaf, the famous doctor of the *Qur’an* period, who only a century ago translated *Tawarih* into a science matching *Kadim* in its logical subtleties.


The School of Ispahan

*Hikmat*, this last being a combination of gnosis, theosophy, and philosophy which forms the main subject of our present study.

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*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, nor with theosophy which has unfortunately become identified in the English-speaking world with pseudo-spiritualist movements, nor with theology.1 As developed in the Safavid period and continued to the present day, *Hikmat* consists of several threads knit together by the matrix of *Qur’an*. The most important of these elements are the esoteric teachings of the *Imams*, especially as contained in the *Nab`i al-`Abd al-Bashir* by the first Imam `Ali, the *utopi* wisdom of Susrawardi which contains in itself aspects of ancient Persian and Hermetic doctrines, the teachings of the earlier Sufis, especially the gnostic doctrines of ibn `Arab`, 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 an essay 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 (Ma`sh`ayi`n), 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 `Rasbi`, the so-called terminating point of Muslim philosophy, and the Safavids prepared the ground for the intellectual revival of the school of Ispahan are usually not much better known outside Persia than the *Shi`ah* sages themselves. They include a series of philosophers and scientists like Khwajah Na`jir al-Din `Abd al-Majid, better known in the Western world as a scientist than a philosopher and theologian, Qasim al-Din `Razi`, Mir Sayyid `Sharif` Jurfani, Janal al-Din Dawani, and ibn `Turksh Ispahani,12 all of whom sought to reconstruct Muslim intellectual life through a gnostic interpretation of the writings of ibn Sina, Susrawardi, and the Sufis, and who carried further the attempts already begun by al-Fakhri, extended by ibn Sina in his *Qur’anic* commentaries, and carried a step further by Susrawardi, to correlate faith (*Iman*) with philosophy.13 The precursors of the *Shi`ah* sages include also a series of pure gnosis, 14

11 See the chapter on Sufism. Generally, *Hikmat* 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 *utopi* wisdom, see the chapter on Sufism.

13 It is unfortunate that in books treating of the relation between faith and reason in Islam like A. J. Arberry's *Resurrection* and *Reason in Islam*, London, 1957, most of those authors are not taken into serious consideration.

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both Shi'a 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. These Sufis include 'Abdul-Din Qasawi, Fakhr al-Din 'Irqi, 'Abd al-Razzaz Khashki, 'Ali al-Daulah Simniqi, 'Abd al-Rabbin Jamali, and two others who are especially important in introducing the gnostic doctrines of Ibn 'Arabi into the Shi'a world, ibn abr Jumboh and Mulla Haidar 'Ali Amilisi. One must also mention another great spiritual leader, Mustafa Jalal al-Din Rumi, whose influence has extended throughout Persia during the past seven centuries.

C MAJOR FIGURES OF THE SCHOOL OF ISGHAN

To write down even the mere names and works of all the important authors of the Sufi period would 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 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Burjini, a student of Ibn 'Arabi known as Mubarak al-Makari (d. 945/1538), the author of al-Najayj al-Insaniyya in theology and many other sciences and the commentaries, the two Majalis, Muhammad Taqi (1000/1594-1070/1659), the author of Rasul al-Mahajin, and his son Muhammad Bajir (1037/1628-1110/1699), the greatest of the Sufi theologians and scholars to whom we shall turn later.

As for the details of the doctrinal system of the 'Ashari, see T. Ruebner-Keckes, 

"La souffrance des prophètes, Paris, 1995; also ibid., Introduction to the Doctrine, tr. M. Matheson, Sh. Muhammad Asbati, Lahore, 1959, which is an excellent general introduction to the 'Ashari school of Sunnism. See also Corbin, L'imaginaire, very useful chapters on his ideas and their spread in the East.

98 The great Persian Sufi poet and sage has written several well-known summaries of Ibn 'Arabi's doctrine including the Laswili translated by Whitelock and the Khaledi, London, 1928, the Ambat al-Lawatiyya, and the Nadi al-Manziri.

The Kitab al-Majalis of ibn abr Jumbr and Jamali al-Asrati and Jamali al-Humayy of Mulla Baqir. 'Ali Amilisi are among the most important sources of Shi'a gnostic doctrines.

The best traditional sources for those earlier Shi'a authors are the Rasulat al-jami' of Muhammad Majd al-Din, formulas, and of more recent composition the Rashidun al-'Ashari of Muhammad 'Ali Tabrizi, 'Abd al-Asad, and the Nadi al-Manziri.

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and Hīdmat and soon became the leading scholar of his day and the Shaikh al-Islam of Isfahan. Despite his nearness to the Court and necessary participation in 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 1020/1612 while returning from the Hajj. 14

Shaikh Bahá’ al-Dín was the leading theologian and jurist of his time and the leader of the ‘ulama’ of Isfahan. He was at the same time an outstanding Sufi, one of the best of the Safavid poets who revived the Tájí style and wrote poetry in the tradition of Rúmí and Háfiz, the leading architect of the Safavid period, whose masterpieces like the Shaikh mosque of Isfahan still stand among the summits of Muslim architecture, 15 and the greatest mathematician and astronomer of his period.

In an age when the theologians, jurists, Iskandars, natural historians, sophists, logicians, and Sufis were well-marked groups, sometimes in external conflict with one another, Shaikh Bahá’ al-Dín was respected by all these groups, from the wandering dervishes, the galandars, to the shaykhs and jurists. He was considered the Shaikh of its own. His genius lay precisely in showing the nothingness of all sciences before divine gnosis, while at the same time saving a mastery of each science. Yet each of Shaikh Bahá’ al-Dín’s writings has become a standard source of reference in its own field. Some of his important works include Jami’-i ‘Abdina on theology in Persian; Fasí’ al-Samā’ilíyâh on Arabic grammar which is still in wide use; a treatise on the algebra, Khulashah f-hu-hu; 16 several treatises on astronomy including the Tawhidi al-Afrâk; a treatise on the astrolabe, ‘Ureal’ al-Wuthas; general Qârâ’o comments; many works on various aspects of the Shar’i’ah; the Kughâ’i, a collection of Arabic and Persian writings which ranks among the most famous Sufi works; and a series of mathâneâta like Bread and Sweet, Cat and Mouse, Milk and Sugar, and the Tâqî-Nâmah. 17

It is especially in the didactic poems, the mathâneâta, that the particular genius of Shaikh Bahá’ al-Dín for expressing sublime truth in simple language and in witty anecdotcs becomes manifest. In these poems his spirit is very similar to that of Maulâna Jalâl al-Dín Rûmî whom he follows in spirit as well as in form. In the long poem 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 esoteric view always faces and the necessity in the religious and social structure for esoteric knowledge. Shaikh Bahá’ also emphasizes throughout the work the supremacy of intellectual intuition over discursive knowledge. As an example we mention below the story of a Mu’tazilite and a Sufi who appears in the guise of a madman named Buhâlî.

During the reign of one of the Caliphs, a Mu’tazilite was chosen as the Imam of a mosque. One day Buhâlî 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, Buhâlî became infuriated but could not back his anger. The Imam continued his sermon by saying that both good and evil are by divine consent. Again Buhâlî became angry but once again succeeded in remaining quiet. The Imam added that on the Day of Judgment man would be actually able to see God. Upon hearing this, Buhâlî took out the brick from under his dress, threw it at the Imam breaking his head and ran away. The Caliph raging with fury was about to call for Buhâlî when Buhâlî himself 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. Buhâlî answered by pleading to the Caliph to give him permission to explain how by his act he had done nothing discreditable, and when given the permission addressed the bleeding Imam and said that since according to his own words a thing cannot harm its own kind, a brick cannot harm the Imam’s head since both are made of clay. Furthermore, he asked the Imam if he had felt any pain upon being hit on the head and if he could see the pain. Upon getting the reply that the Imam did not see the pain, Buhâlî asked how could a man unable to see pain, a creation of God, see the Creator. Finally, Buhâlî 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 Buhâlî, the symbol of intellectual intuition. 18

The writings of Shaikh Bahá’ al-Dín are also replete with passages about the nothingness of all human knowledge as against divine gnosis. For example, in the poem Nîn va Huahak (Bread and Sweet) he says:

Formal science is nothing but alteration; It results in neither intoxication nor contemplation.

14 Ibid., pp. 164–66.
15 Intoxication symbolizes ecstasy and spiritual union.
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It continually brings congelation to man’s nature.
What’s more, the Musulmān 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 thyself
With which science, O accomplished man!
There is no science but the science of love.25
The rest is the deception of the wretched Satan.
There is no science but the Qur’ānic 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 al-Rāzi.26
All who do not love the face of the beautiful
The saddle and the rein are appropriate for them.27
That is, he who does not have love for the Friend.
Bring for him the saddle and the headstall.28
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 divoree of the Beloved,
Is not a breast but an old chest.
A heart which is empty of the love of the Beautiful,
Count it as a stone with which the Devil cleans himself.
These sciences, these forms and imaginings.
Are the excrement of Satan upon that stone.
If thou allowest other than the science of love in thy heart,
Thou will be giving Satan the stone to clean himself.
Be ashamed of thyself, O villain,
That thou carriest the Devil’s cleaning stone in thy pocket.
Wash the tablet of the heart from the Devil’s excrement;
O! 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.29

The School of Iqṣāṣīs

How long with this jurisprudence and baseless theology,
Wilt thou empty thy brain? O! 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 next23
Called the left-over of the believer a remedy, O! 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.30

Not only does Shāfi‘i Bākhī 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 this 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 Nūs wa Ḥulūn, 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.
O! 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.

25 Musli̇m Jālī al-Dīn Rūmī is commonly referred to as Musḷi̇m in Persian.
26 This verse refers to Musḷi̇m’s well-known rejection of rationalism in favour of
gnosis (The leg of the rationalist is a wooden leg . . .).
27 Love synizeses gnosis or the science which comes through contemplation
and illumination rather than analysis and discursive thought.
28 Reference is to the famous theologian Imām Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī.
29 Reference is to the famous theologian Imām Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī and reference
is as constructed with that of the Greeks; the Hikmat-i Ḥadīth and the Hikmat-i Yânsūd.
30 Shāfi‘i Bākhī, Kulliyat, . . . . pp. 18–19.
31 This theme appears in certain Hermetic writings, the Acts of Thomas, the
Gral story, as well as in Islam in the visionary narratives of the Sīra and many
of Suhrawardī’s gnostic tracts like Qiyāq (Sharḥ al-Gharbîyya); see H. Corbin,
Avicenne et le récit visionnaire, Institut Franco-Iranien, Tehran, and A. Masićomeva,
Vol. II, Institut Franco-Iranien, Tehran, and A. Masićomeva, Paris, 1954, Problé-
mènes by H. Corbin.
32 Shāfi‘i Bākhī, Kulliyat, . . . . p. 23.
913
A city in the south of Arabia with which the name of the Queen of Sheba is associated.

Edwina, meaning beyond the world of cosmic manifestation. Sobhawardi refers to this point which is the top of the cosmic mountain Qaf as the "sky" of creation, see Sobhawardi, "Le brumoiement de l'oeil de Gabriél," tr. H. Corbin and P. Kraus, Journal Asiatique, juillet-sept., 1935, pp. 41-42.


It is said that he had much interest in the life of the bee and had accumulated a good deal of observational data about them.

The School of Iṣbahān

Mir Dāmād more than anyone else was responsible for the revivification of Ibn Sīnā's philosophy and ḥikmat wisdom within the context of Ṣūfism and for laying the ground for the monumental work of Mullā Ṣadrā. Mir Dāmād did much to revive what he referred to as the Yasaṇa wisdom (Yasaṇāni-ye Yasaṇi), the wisdom of the prophets, in contrast to the more rationalistic philosophy of the Greeks. He has been entitled the Third Teacher (Mu'allaq-ī Thalīṣī) after Aristotle and Tarkhā. The writings of Mir Dāmād, 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 Kāfri; works on Fiqī like Shīrī al-Naṣīfī al-Musahhāb on being, time, and eternity; al-Shīrī al-Mustafīn on the relation between the created and the eternal; Taqīn al-Din on being, creation, and God's knowledge; several other major treatises on Ḥikmat including the Qāshābī, Taghīfī, Jadbālī, and Sīrāt al-Mashā'ī; several Qur'anic commentaries like Amālā-qi Ḫālī; commentaries upon the Iṣbahānī of Muḥammād al-Din Tūsī and the metaphysics of the Shīrī; the Kādib al-Mashā'ī on gnosis; a collection of poems in Persian and Arabic including the Šabānī-ī Anwār, written under the pen name, Ḫaṣrī. After a life-time spent in writing, teaching, and reading the Qur'ān to which he was much devoted, and having prepared the ground for the whole group of sages, especially Mullā Ṣadrā, who were to carry his ideas to their ultimate perfection, Mir Dāmād died on the way between Naṣīr and Karbalā in Iraq in 1041/1631. The thought of Mir Dāmād is marked by two features which distinguish him from the other Ḥikmat of the period, the first the organization of his treatises and the second the notion of eternal creation, kudūbih-ī Ḫaṣrī, which is the central and ever-recurring theme in his writings. As for the organization of his works, like the Qāshābī and Taqīfī, it differs for the most part from

41 For an account of these and other students of Mir Dāmād, see H. Corbin, op. cit., pp. 345-46.

42 The "Yasaṇa philosophy" means the wisdom revealed by God to man through the prophets and through illumination; Yasaṇa (Yasaṇa) symbolizes the right or oriental (qāfīr) side of the valley in which Moses heard the message of God. It is, therefore, the source of divine illumination in contrast to the Occidental, the source of Peripatetic philosophy, the Occident symbolizing darkness and being on the plane of philosophy, i.e., rationalism. See H. Corbin, "Le raït d'initiation et Thérmétique en Iran," Bruns Fahr, Vol. XVII, 1949, pp. 136-37. For the symbols of the Orient and Occident in Ḫaṣrī wisdom see the chapter on Sobhawardi Qāyān.

43 This major work has been commented upon several times. One of its most curious commentaries is that of Muḥammād ibn All Rūdī-ibn Ṣāliḥī, one of the students of Mullā Ṣadrā; it runs over a thousand pages.

44 These last two works are among the important books on Ḥikmat in Persian, the other being in Arabic. Some manuscripts attribute Sīrāt al-Mashā'ī to Mir Dāmād's student, Sayyid Ahmad Ḫalī; although in the Jadbālī Mir Dāmād 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. 250ff.
that of the traditional Muslim books on philosophy and Hikmat which usually begin with logic and then proceed to natural philosophy (al-ilm al-falasifī), mathematics (al-ilm al-hiyātī), and theology (al-ilm al-bāqī). For example, in the Qibusṭāt 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’ān and the Hadīth, nature, time, and motion, criticism of logic, divine omnipotence, intellectual substances, chain of Being, and finally predetermination.

The second marked feature of Mr. Dāndūz’s exposition of Hikmat concerns the notion of time. It is well known that the question whether the world is created (bdī’ih) or eternal (ṣālih) 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. Mr. Dāndūz seeks a solution to this question by dividing reality into three categories: zaman, time, dahr, and sānūd; the latter two are kinds of eternity. This division is ontological and not just logical or theological.

The divine essence or ipseity (dhīl) 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 immanent relation between the essence and the attributes, which cannot be changed from either side, the attributes being a necessary determination (ar’ayyān) of the essence to itself by itself, Mr. Dāndūz called sānūd. 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-asr) as the ḥāfrūn call them, in turn generate the world of change. They are the immutables of this world, and each species is this world is a theory (al-asr) for its archetype. The relation between the immutable archetypes and the world of 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, Mr. Dāndūz calls dahr.

Finally, the relation between one change and another is called zaman ( zaman), in the sense of quantity and measure of change as Aristotle had already described it.

Since this world was brought into being through the intermediate world of

14 See for example the al-ḥāl or Naṣīf of Ibn Sīnā and the al-Khūṣūl al-Muṣawwar of Abu al-Bāsīt al-Baṣkīḍ. In some cases as in the Dāndūz Ṣawādāt’s, ‘al-ās’ of Ibn Sīnā and many later ṣīhār writings, the book begins with metaphysics and then proceeds to natural philosophy in the manner of Ḥaṭūm rather than Aristotle.

15 See Mr. Dāndūz, Qibusṭāt, Ḥāshī Māḥmūd Bāzirjī, ‘abāsī, 1315/1897.

16 For a general discussion of this question, see L. Gardet, La généralité religieuse d’Avicenne, J. van, Paris, 1951, pp. 38 ff.; and A. K. Coomaraswamy, Time and Eternity, Artibus Asiae, Arcadia, 1947, Chap. IV.

17 Mr. Dāndūz, Qibusṭāt, pp. 1-10.

18 Ibid., p. 7.

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the archetypes, its creation is dahr not zaman, 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. The creation of this world is, therefore, ḥaṭīf (i.e., dahr), and ḥaṭīfī and not ḥaṭīfī zaman, zaman, or zaman. Time has a reality in its own plane of being, but in the world of dahr, the world of the archetypes, time does not even exist. Moreover, the changing physical world (ṣānūd al-ṣālih) depends for its existence upon non-existence (ṣālih) in the world of the 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, in which it is no more than a conglomeration. Likewise, the world of dahr, of the archetypes, is non-existent in the divine essence, in the world of sānūd (the eternal world). In the divine essence (dhīl) there is neither zaman nor zaman, neither archetype nor body; God is alone in His majesty. Yet, zaman exists on its own level and zaman on its own. Sānūd is the cause of dahr and zaman is the cause of zaman, so that ultimately the divine essence is the cause of all things, while in its essence nothing may even be said to exist.

The Jāhādāt, the contents of which we will now briefly survey, is one of the works in which Mr. Dāndūz presents the complete cycle of his metaphysical ideas combined as usual with the Qur’anic text, the Ḥadīth, and his own verse. In the first jāhādāt or particle of fire, of which the word jāhādāt is the plural, Mr. Dāndūz divides the "book of divine existence," of the chain of Being, into two parts, one in which there is an effusion or stepheny (taṣākki) away from the divine essence and the other in which there is a return to the origin:

11 Mr. Dāndūz argues that time itself is the measure of the movement of the heavens and a condition for the existence of this world so that no one can speak of a time before the creation of the world; Qibusṭāt, p. 30.

12 For a comparison and affinity of these ideas with those of Ibn ‘Arabī, see La sagesse des prophètes, Chapters I and II.

13 In presenting this view of creation, Mr. Dāndūz draws heavily on earlier writings from Pinto’s Tennesse and the so-called Theology of Aristotle to the dhīl of Ibn Sīnā and the ḥaṭīf al-Muṣawwar of Abu al-Bāsīt. In each case he criticizes the view of the previous writers who considered the world either to be eternal in itself or created in time from outside. Mr. Dāndūz’s Dīwān fī Manāzil Arba’īyātīya is devoted to a discussion of the difference between the views of Pinto and Aristotle on the question of time and eternity drawing on Pinto’s Ḥaṭīf Jawāp ‘alā Bay‘ān. Mr. Dāndūz’s treatise is published on the margin of the Qibusṭāt, pp. 149-57.

14 The Jāhādāt (Beychay, lithographed edition, 1302/1884, pp. 203) begins with a poem in praise of "Allah al-ahī lṭā‘ī" the first lines of which are as follows:

O herald of the nation and the soul of the Prophet,
The ring of thy knowledge surrounds the ears of the intelligences.
O 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.
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the first extending from the divine essence to prime matter or kyle and the other from the kyle back to the origin of all existence. Moreover, each chain is divided into a longitudinal (śūla) order and a latitudinal (śūfi) order.26 The longitudinal order of the chain of effusion includes five essential degrees:

1. The degree of pure intelligences, the victorious lights (awārir-i qādira), the first member of which is the universal intellect (nād-i kull), i.e., the first light to issue forth from the Light of lights (nād al-awādir).

2. The degree of heavenly souls (muḥāsan-i ḥaqlīyak), the governing lights (awārir-i muḥāsāri), the first member of which governing the first heaven is called the universal soul (nafsi-kull).

3. The degree of the natural souls (muḥāsan-i nārisāni) and the archetypes of the heavens, the planets, the four nature, the elements, and compounds.44

4. The degree of bodily form (sirāt-i jāmiyyak), i.e., the Aristotelian form, which is an extended substance and is of one species.

5. The degree of kyle, from the matter of the highest heaven to that of the world of generation and corruption.47

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

1. The degree of the absolute body (jism-i mušklā) 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.45

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 (ahād-i 'alā), or the active intellect (nād-i 'alā) which gives being as well as form to the subhuman region.46

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 (muṣjiradāt) is called the world of the invisible (ghayb), or command (amār), or malakāt, or intellect (nafsa), or life (ghayb).

32. Subhāwānī also divides the angelic world into the longitudinal and the latitudinal orders, a division the influence of which upon Mr Dīmād is easy to discern. On the question of angelology the Subhāwānī mentions faithful to the ghaybī scheme combined with that of Ibn Sina. See the chapter in Subhāwānī Masī̄ḥī.

34. The natures refer to the warm and cold, wet and dry, and the elements to the four traditional ones, fire, air, water, and earth.

34. Mr Dīmād and Mulla Sādā, unlike Aristotle and his followers, posit some form of matter in every degree of formal manifestation.

34. Mr Dīmād mentions that there are 1,400 species of animals, 800 belonging to sea and 600 to land.


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(balāṭ), or light (nād), while the world of bodies is called the world of creation (khalq), vision (ghahdāt), or dominion (mulk), or death (mān), or darkness (qulād). 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.48 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 episcopalian light (nād-i ḥuṣnādā). 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 Ḥāriṣahs 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" (nūkh al-nawz) or the active intellect (nād-i 'alā) which gives being as well as form to the subhuman region.49

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 an 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 subhuman 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, Mr Dīmād turns to a discussion of unity (tasāhīd) starting from "there is no divinity but God" (la ilāha illā Allah) to "there is no being but He and no truth but Hu" (la maṣṣūdūs ilā Huwa wa la ḫawn ilā Huwa). For the real gnostic being every being is

43. Ibid., pp. 13-18.
45. Ibid., pp. 18-28.
49. Ibid., pp. 26f.
nothing but Being. Mir Dámdáq 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. 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 (zamáñ), and unity of the elements and compounds.

As for the generation of multiplicity from unity, Mir Dámdáq 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 itself, the intellectuation of the divine essence, and the intellectuation of its own essence. For Mir Dámdáq just as the number of intelligences is unlimited so are their possible relationships beyond the number determined by the Peripatetics. Likewise, the intelligences have a great many illuminations and effusions beyond the categories set forth by the Aristotelians, one intelligence being victorious (piẖar) and the other passive and receptive (naḵār). Each heaven as well as each body, simplex or composed, has its archetype (raẖ al-nawwār) in the world of divine command (ʿālām-i aʿām), 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 Dámdáq, following the ancient Işıkaq sages calls ḳāqalpa, the world of separated imagination (ḵwāqal-i munfaqal), or the purgatory (barāqkh). Human imagination is itself 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 Jābalds and Jābsals 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 descending chain, man must become familiar with the divine names, especially the Great Name (fām-i aʿām) which contains all the others. All the prophets

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74 In discussing taḵfīf, Mir Dámdáq draws not only on Ibn Sina and Rhazi but even on the Náhiji al-ʾAḥdab of the first century Islam, the Náhiji al-ʾAḥdab of the fourth Islam, and other ʿArabic sources. He regards Pythagoras as the Imam of the Semitic sages (Haykavnīš Sīnoj) and one who received his wisdom through revelation. This view going back to Philo is held among the greatest majorities of the Muslim sages and historians of philosophy.
75 Jadkuti, pp. 38ff.
76 This intermediary region plays an important role in the thought of Mulla Sadra and even more in the writings of Sheikh Ahmad Abáši, the founder of the Shákhís who still survive in Khurás.
77 These are two famous mythical cities through which initiates pass in their journeys and they appear often in initiate narratives in Persian.
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In establishing a relation between numbers, letters of the alphabet, and the heavens, Mir Dāmād, 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 (bājiya) meanings of the Qur’ān 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’ān which corresponds to the world of creation, the Qur’ān-i tadbirī, but also the Qur’ān which is the archetype of all manifestation, the Qur’ān-i faṣīḥa, i.e., the logos or the reality of Muhammad (‘ṣāliḥ al-Muhammadīyyah).

Mir Abu al-Qasim Fīrindizāda. The third of the famous triune rite of sages from Ipsahān,21 Mir Fīrindizāda 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 Pārāśārtha by Nīśān al-Dīn Pālūpāti, 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 Ṣūfī and the Qā’in of Ibn Sīna in Ipsahān where he died in 1060/1650.

The most interesting aspect of Mir Fīrindizāda’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 Sāfawī Court.22 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 luminous 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-jarrak), another on the arts and sciences in society (rashid) and, the book on Yoga already mentioned, Uṣūl al-ṣaḥāfa on Hindu wisdom, and a history of the Sāfawīs. Moreover, he, like Mir Dāmād and Ṣāḥib-i Bābāsī, was an accomplished poet showing the development in him of the gnostic element which is the only possible common ground between traditional philo-

21 The other two are Ṣāḥib-i Bābāsī and Mir Dāmād who were close friends of Mir Fīrindizāda and shared with him the respect and honour of the Sāfawī Court. For an account of the life of Mir Fīrindizāda whose complete name is Mir abu al-Qasim ibn Mirza BuIr qim Fīrindizāda, see Barahmat al-Adab Vol. III, pp. 231-32.

22 The story is told of him in most biographies that one day Bābā ‘Abd, 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 Fīrindizāda, knowing that the remark was meant for him, replied, "Your majesty, rest assured, I was present but I saw none of the ‘ahdah there." See Ṣafy al-'Arifī, p. 276.

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osophy and poetry. The most famous of his poems is a qasidah, based upon that of Nāṣīr ibn Khurshīd Dehlīwī, 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 Muhammad Silli Khākhkhālī and Ḥākim ‘Abdāl Dārāšī. Because of the importance of this poem in summarizing some of the basic elements of Hikmat as it was revived during the Sāfawī 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.23 The form below, if by the ladder of gnosia is trodden upward, becomes the same as its principle. No outward apprehension can understand this saying. Whether it be that of an abu Naṣr or of an abu ‘Ali Sīnā.24 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 opaque witness to this claim. If one can obtain these qualities25 from the sun, The sun is itself light and shines upon all things while keeping its unity. The intellectual form which is endless and immortal With or without all things is a totality and unity. 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 cannot 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 foreseen by the people of the world; Find the Truth and tread its path, if thou art righteous.

23 The text of this qasidah and the commentary by Khākhkhālī have been published in Tahrahān, lithographed edition, 1325/1907. This verse means the cosmic archetypes of Platonic ideas and their earthly reflections or shadows.

24 Reference is to Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā, the two early masters of sufi’s philosophy in Islam.

25 "Qualities" means multiplicity of forms which become evident only when light shines upon them.
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Whatever is outside thy 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 sweetness on the tongue is not like sweetmeat itself .... 
In this world and the next, with the world and without it, 
We can say all those 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. 

How good it would be if the sages before us had said everything completely, 
So that the opposition of those who are not complete? 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 Firdiši 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 on metaphysical principles. In his treatise on arts and sciences (sāma‘i‘yugā), he distinguishes twelve vocations or arts and sciences in society depending upon the subject with which each one deals. The subject of the arts and sciences he enumerates as follows: (i) The subject is universal and the discussion concerns knowledge as well as action from both of which there comes only good; (ii) the subject is universal and the discussion concerns both knowledge and action from both of which there comes evil; (iii) the subject is universal and the discussion concerns knowledge from which there comes only good; (iv) the subject is universal and the discussion concerns knowledge from which there comes only evil; (v) the subject is universal and the discussion concerns action from which there comes only good; and (vi) the subject is universal and the discussion concerns action from which there comes evil. To this list Mir Firdiši adds a series of arts and sciences the subject of which is no longer universal. These include (vii) those arts and sciences the subject of which is particular and the discussion

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concerns knowledge and action from which there comes only good; (viii) the subject is particular and the discussion concerns knowledge and action from which there comes evil; (ix) the subject is particular and the discussion concerns only knowledge from which there comes only good; (x) the subject is particular and the discussion concerns only knowledge from which there comes evil; (xi) the subject is particular and the discussion concerns only action from which there comes only good; and, finally (xii), the subject is particular and the discussion concerns only action from which there comes evil. 18

The first of the twelve 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., that of the enemies of Ishq and theology of those who, seeing differences in the expressions of the various sages, have denied the one truth which lies behind this diversity. 19 The fifth category is that of the jurists (fâsîl) who cultivate the practical sciences, and the sixth is that of their opposites like Mardik, 20 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 the opposite of the ninth and it includes those who make a false claim to know these sciences theoretically. The eleventh category concerns arts and sciences which are limited to a particular subject, and the twelfth its opposite which concerns the rejection of those 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 beka‘a 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.

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18 Ibid., pp. 13-54.
19 Mir Firdiši 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 (rāmūta) of Ishq, Hindu wisdom, and the Theology of Aristotle (i.e., the Enneads of Plotinus), all the different expressions will have the same meaning for him.
20 Mir Firdiši mentions Mardik as the person who by a false interpretation of the Avesta preached the communization of women and property. He also mentions the Carnianists (Qarminjâk) as belonging to this group.
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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 lesser is he who denies it. The categories outlined by Mirdudrizi reflect the hierarchy within â€œhikmat itself. In both cases the religious sciences like theology are considered to stand above the natural sciences, Â‘hikmat above theology, and the wisdom of the prophets and sages above all the other categories.

Mulla Muhsein Faizi-i Khajâ‘ - Muhammad ibn Shah Muhsein ibn Shah Muhsein, better known as Mulla Muhsein or Faizi-i Khajâ‘, is the most famous of the sages of the generation following that of Mir Dâmid, Shâhâbuddin ibn Khâjâ‘, and Mir Firduzi. Born in Khajâ‘ in 1007/1695, he spent seven years at Qum and then came to Sijistân to complete his studies with Mullâ Sadrâ, whose daughter he later married. He also studied with Mir Dâmid and Shâhâbuddin ibn Khâjâ‘ but was more closely associated with Mullâ Sadrâ. Just as Mir Dâmid produced a series of outstanding students, the best known of whom was Mullâ Sadrâ— the greatest of the Sîyast, their students turn in a separate chapter—Mullâ Sadrâ in turn produced a galaxy of famous students among whom Faizi-i Khajâ‘ and Mullâ 'Abd al-Razzâq Lâhî, both his sons-in-law, are the most important.48

The genius of Mullâ Sadrâ consisted largely in unifying the three perspectives of formal revelation or Â‘zir, purification of the soul leading to illumination (Â‘bâ‘), and rational demonstration (Â‘ilm al-fiqh) into a single universal vision in which all three 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 Qâdi Sa‘id Qumi, Mullâ ‘Ali Nuri, and Âºâ‘ Ali Sznitzi sought to correlate revelation and reason, and Âºâ‘ Muhammad Bâhidzâ‘i and Âºâ‘ Muhammad Rida’ Qâzâqâ‘i, reason and gnosis. Others continued the path trodden by Mullâ Sadrâ himself and emphasized the harmony of all the three paths mentioned above. Mulla Muhsein Faizi and 'Abu Mullâ Hâdi Sahwârâ, the most famous Persian thinker of the last century, belong to this last group. Mulla Muhsein’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 Â‘bâ‘ world to bring about a complete harmony between Law and spiritual life, Â‘zir and Â‘bâ‘.

In many ways Mulla Muhsein may be considered to be a Â‘bâ‘ Khâjâ‘, not only because of his preoccupation with harmonizing the exoteric and the esoteric views, but also for his treatment of a spiritualized ethics which forms 48 Mullâ Lâhî, known as Ayyûd, author of several important treatises on Â‘hikmat in Persian and Arabic—mentioned already, deserves a separate study as one of the major figures of this period. There are biographical accounts of him in R. G. Browne, op. cit., Vol. IV, pp. 408–90, 435. See also the introduction by Sayyid Muhammad Mâhidzâ‘i to the new edition of al-Mubâ‘â‘ir al-Jâkî, Vol. I, Islamiyât Press, Teherân, 1380 Solar, in which the significance of Faiz’s doctrines and in particular the present work on ethics is discussed.
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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. Being is the Truth which subsists by itself, while everything else subsists by It. Being is not just a mental concept, the meaning of Being in the mind 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 subjunct or a'ra'a at-tabi'tah, are in one respect identical with and in another distinct from essence. Each being subsists by one of the divine names and its existence consists in the invocation of that name. The archetypes, 'a'ra'a al-tabi'ah, have two aspects; on the one hand, they are the mirrors in which Truth is reflected, in which case they are hidden and Truth is manifest; and, on the other hand, 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 (Hikayeh). The perfect gnostic contemplates both mirrors; he sees the cosmos as a mirror in which Truth is reflected, and himself as a mirror in which both the cosmos and Truth are reflected. Mullâ Mubâsin advises the sage to take a further step in eliminating himself also so that there remains nothing but Truth.

Mullâ Mubâsin follows certain earlier Sufis in considering the world to be re-created at every instant, 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, each particle of it perishing 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 (tajdid) of a particular name. The name Allah is the supreme master (tabâ al-arab) of all the names, the theophany of which is the universal man (al-tasâ al-dalâm). Although the stages in which creation

comes into being are numerous, Mullâ Mubâsin 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, khâliqah; in the third are the divine acts and world of spirits which are the manifestations of Truth in the world of Lordship, rubbîqah; in the fourth is the world of the "ideas" and imagination (khâsi'il) 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. Everything in the physical world has its archetype in the world of imagination, while everything in the world of imagination has its archetype in the world of lordship, and 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 liver; an animal soul consisting of the faculties of the five senses originating in the heart; a sacred rational soul (nafs-i mutâhyî i qudîqah) with the faculties of meditation (zkir) and invocation (dzikir); and the universal divine soul (nafs-i khâliqah-i sadîqah), not possessed by all men, with the faculty of reaching the station of annihilation (fana') in the Divine.

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 fulfill the purpose of all creation and sustain the whole universe.

The universal man is either a prophet or a saint. Absolute prophethood (wâliwâ'î i sa'lîg) is the supreme station, the perfect "form" of unity, the first pen, and the Pole of Polis, qab al-a'qîb, upon which all the prophets and saints depend. The inner (batin) dimension of this prophecy is absolute sainthood (wâlîgîî i sa'lîg). Mullâ Mubâsin identifies absolute prophethood with the light of 'Alî. The prophethood of all prophets depends upon absolute prophecy as the sainthood of all saints depends upon absolute sainthood. Prophethood began with 'Alî and found its completion in the Propet Muhammad. Sainthood will reach its completion gradually until it culminates in the twelfth Imam, the Mahdi.

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Absolute prophethood is the treasure of all possible perfections and the whole cosmos is the expansion and manifestation of its inner qualities.64

Gnosis and illumination are themselves the fruit of the tree of prophethood. Mulla Muhsin insists that the source of Ḥikmat was originally the sacred spirit of the prophet; 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 Ḥakim can be considered the real heir to the saints and the prophets.65

Mulla Muhammad Baqir Majlisi.—One cannot terminate a study of the intellectual life of the Safavid period without mentioning the two Majlis, father and son, especially the son Muhammad Baqir who stands as one of the outstanding figures of the period. The first Majlisi, Muhammad Taqī (1003/1694-1070/1669), was one of the students of Shaikh-i Bahī and an outstanding theologian and Sufi of his time.66 His son, the second Majlisi (1057/1642-1110/1696), however, surpassed his father in fame and power and became the most dominant figure of Šī’ism. Having studied with his own father, Mulla Khādiq Qawmī, and Mulla Muhisin Faiz, he in turn became the master of over a thousand disciples including Sayyid Ni’matullah Jāzā’iri, well known for his many writings, especially the account of his own life as a student.

The second Majlisi is especially famous for reviving the various branches of the Šī’ah sciences and for assembling the writings of the earlier doctors of Šī’ism and prophetic hadith into encyclopedias which have henceforth become the main reference for all who undertake religious education in the Šī’ah madrasahs. The most important and famous of these is the Bihār al-‘Awmar summarized in the Bihār al-Bihār of Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qamīn, the lithographed edition of which occupies twenty-four volumes; Ḥaqq al-Yaqīn in ‘Uḍūd; Ḥayāt al-Qulūb, a commentary upon the Tadhkīl al-Akhīm of Khwajah Nasir al-Dīn Ṭūsī; and the Mi’rāt al-‘Uqūl, a twelve-volume commentary upon the Usūl al-Kullayn in which Majlisi for the only time in his writing career enters purely intellectual (‘aqīq) questions and treats of many essential religious subjects, especially eschatology and the conditions before the appearance of the Mahdi, from an intellectual rather than a purely "confessional" point of view.67

64 Ibid., pp. 101 ff.
65 Ibid., pp. 114-19.
67 For the writings and life of the second Majlisi, see Rashtānāt al-Adab, Vol. III, pp. 455-80; Dīvān Fāṭeh, Fāṭeh, 2 Vols., p. 1137. The Ta’if-i Qudās by

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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.68 Furthermore, supported by the Court and many of the theologians and doctors, he opposed the intellectual method of the Ḥakimī and philosophers with the result that both the Sufis and the Ḥakimī fell into disgrace and had much difficulty in official religious circles. The dynasty which had begun as the extension of a 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 Sa’dawī dynasty itself fell before the onslaught of the Afghāns, and Isfahān, 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 Ḥikmat, some features of which we have sought to outline here, did not die with the termination of the Sa’dawī dynasty. In the thirteenth/eighteenth century Sufism was revived in Persia by Ma’ṣūm ‘Ali Šah and Šah Tahir Dashti, two Ni’matullahī masters sent by Ridy’s ‘Ali Shāh from Deccan to Persia. It was persecuted for a period but began to expand with the establishment of the Ḥijārs. Likewise, the school of Ḥikmat continued through the students of Mulla Sa’dı and others from one generation to another until it produced Shaikh Ahmad Abasí, the founder of the Shaikhī movement.69 Haji Mulla Hādi Sahāvārī, and several other outstanding figures in the Ḥijār 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 Sa’dawī period to the present, to the understanding of whose teachings this chapter will serve as an introduction and as an incentive for further exploration.

Mirza Husain Nūrī is devoted completely to his life and writings. Majlisi wrote thirteen Arabic and fifty-five Persian books which altogether occupy nearly a million and a half lines.

68 He devoted a treatise, the Ṭapābāt, to rejecting Sufism.
69 Shaikh Ahmad is responsible for the last important religious movement within Šī’ism and should be studied separately as a founder of a particular sect. The leaders of this sect called the Shaikhīs claim to have knowledge of all things, and so each of them from the time of Shaikh Ahmad to the present has composed a large number of treatises on all the sciences. For a list of the works of Shaikh Ahmad and the other leaders of the Shaikhīs, see abu al-Qasim ibn Zain al-‘Ābidin ibn Khattab, Fakhr-i Khatūb-i Mardavī-i Abasí va Bīr-i Maṣ‘ūlā, 2 Vols., Sa’dawī Press, Kerman, 1337 Solar.
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BIBLIOGRAPHY


Chapter XLVIII

SADR AL-DIN SHIRAZI (MULLA SADRA)

A LIFE AND WORKS

The intellectual activity revived in Persia during the Safavid period, some features of which we have discussed in the previous chapter, "The School of Isfahan," found its culmination in Sadr al-Din Shirazi known to his compatriots as AKBAND Mulla Sadra and to his disciples as simply AKBAND or as Sadr al-Ma'allik, i.e., the foremost among the theosophers. This figure, about whom the whole intellectual life of Persia has revolved in the past three centuries and a half and who is one of the major expositors of Islamic intellectual doctrines in the Shiria 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 Safavids period, who have been interested in the intellectual life of the country, have recognized his importance and have been impressed by his fame.1 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 Muhammad, was born in Shiraz in about 979/1667.2 The only son of Ibrahim Shirazi. A member of the famous Qaww family of Shiraz, Ibrahim held the post of a wazir 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-ma'ani al-nafyaysh), especially metaphysics, and,

1 Comte de Gobeinon, one of the most observant of travellers who have 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 merite de Moulla Sadra reste celui que j'ai indiqué plus haut: c'est d'avoir ramene, rejoint, pour le temps ou il vivait, la philosophie antique, eu lui conservant les moins possible de ses formes avenceuses..." Gobeinon, Les religions et les philosophies dans l'Axe centrale, les Editions G. Grés et Cie, Paris, 1922, p. 192.

2 The date of Mulla Sadra's birth was unknown until quite recently when in the new edition of the Asfar, Tabakhibi collected a large number of handwritten manuscripts of the work. On the margin of one of the manuscripts dated 1197/1783 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 7th of Jamadi al-Dis 1037 A.H. when 38 years had passed from my life..." Therefore, the date of his birth can be established as 979/1667 or 980/1667.


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